

## Book Reviews

**THE CATHOLICITY OF THE REFORMATION** *By Carl E. Braaten & Robert W. Jenson, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1996. ISBN 0- 8028- 4220; Pp. x+177; USD 12.00.*

The title summarises the thesis of the book : the Reformation had catholicity at heart and not schism. It is an attempt at rereading Luther and the reformation with a view to an ecumenical rapprochement.

Since catholicity would include liturgy, authority, pastoral ministry, day-to-day lived faith of the people of God, the articles focus on these issues. How much is Luther 'Catholic' forms a chapter by itself. But the burden of the theme is analysed in the first and last chapters of the book: the Church as *Communio*.

We have in the II Vatican Council an attempt at describing the degrees of catholicity, the summit being the eschatological reality. Luther himself acknowledges the reality of the Church of Rome, not as something to be reviled at, but as truly holy because it has sacraments, the Scriptures and the ministry of the Church. Many early reformers were speaking in favour of a 'Protestant Catholicism'. More recently theologians like Tillich wanted a marriage of 'the Protestant principle' with 'the Catholic substance'.

The different Churches have basically agreed that the fellowship in the Church is trinitarian in model and that is a communion subsisting in a network of local Churches. The pastors are to be ministers of unity and specifically presidents at the eucharist.

A close study of 'the Catholic' Luther reveals how he was really Catholic at heart, and that the schism was only an avoidable tragedy.

The Catholic Church is very much aware of the need for 'inculturation'. The chapter on the Reform of the Mass describes how Luther and Calvin adapted their Mass and prayers to the cultures of Europe without being absorbed by them. Luther's reform of the mass consisted mainly in removing the idea of sacrifice and good works from it and retaining the elements of praise and thanksgiving.

In the chapter on the Pastoral Office, the author (an Evangelical Lutheran) while claiming that they have the apostolic succession in the gospel, concedes that at the time of the reformation bishops, as the Church defined them were not available in their situation. But he readily acknowledges that they should also recognize the tradition of episcopacy in their Churches. That is a lot of give and take!

What of Lutheran pietism? While it was genuinely biblical, it has not survived because it forgot its Catholic roots. Piety is as much a matter of loving God as it is of what one does.

This is in brief the message of the book. The ecumenical effort of the authors is indeed praiseworthy. But it is a matter of worry for the reviewer that after the Churches' years of painstaking efforts at ecumenical explorations and understanding, "When the Son of Man comes will he really find faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:8).

A. Arulanandam, S. J.

**Reflections on Outlines of Bible Faith Doctrines :** *By Kenneth S. Ferdinand, ISPCK, Delhi, 1996, Pp. xii + 188. Rs. 40.*

The author deals with "19 fundamental Christian doctrinal topics" (xi) "in the light of the pure Word of God" (xii) and adds 2 more on other beliefs (Christian and Hindu) "to sound a warning note about pitfalls" (xii)!! It is a "brief text-book form exercise, especially for the 19-23 age group" (xi), affirms the author. While admiring the author's "text-book knowledge" of the Bible, one cannot but point out the "pitfalls" of this whole exercise. The Bible is not a proof-text; and it was not intended to be so. Hence citing verse after verse, quote after quote (there are hundreds of them), does not carry conviction. The basic defect of the whole exposition is that it is fundamentalistic, based on a too literalistic interpretation of the text. It does not take into consideration the sociological, cultural, historical, geographical, archeological, literary studies of more than a century which have come to the aid of the understanding of "the living word" and its appropriation in personal lives of the believer. Worse still is that the author is completely ignorant of the developments which have taken place in the Roman Catholic Church since Vat II. His knowledge of the R. C. Church has not moved beyond the 16th c! Although the author avows that "his purport is neither confrontation nor condemnation" (xii) of other denominations as well as other religions, the reader is willy nilly led only to this conclusion. Zeal for one's beliefs is good; but fanatical zeal will lead only to hatred and bigotry between those in "the fold" and those outside. I hope the author did not intend that! Or did he? It is not to the praise of ISPCK "to promote christian knowledge" via wilful ignorance of the study of the Bible and via harsh judgements on other people's tenets. I am reminded of Augustine's words: "In essentials unity; in others liberty; in all things charity".

**R. J. Raja, S. J.**

**Dear Dad :** By Doug Webster, Pauline Publications, 143, Waterfield Road, Bandra, Mumbai 400 050; 1997; Pp. 214; Rs. 58.

The purpose of "this book is to give you (Dads) an inside look at your child's heart so you will draw closer to your child, whatever his or her age" (22). The author, Executive Director of the National Institute of Youth Ministry in the States is the most fitting Dad and Doctor to pen this book. Sixteen years of committed work among the youth and the adults and over a thousand interviews with the kids of both sexes stand a guarantee to the wisdom and insight this book provides for both Kids and Dads. The eleven key-messages which the author [has culled out from both his interviews and experiences are put in the 4 major sections of the book under the titles "The Kid's monologue" (chs. 2 to 6); "The Kid's dialogue" (chs. 7 to 9), "The Kid's epilogue" (chs. 10 to 11), and "the Kid's epiphany" (ch. 12).

The section on *Monologue* which deals with the child from birth upto pre-teen years describes in their own words the cries of the children *to connect*, to be with Dad. This monologue stages then gives place to the stage of *Dialogue*, especially in the teenage years, in which the Kid wants to *relate* with the Dad and expects the one-way relationship so far held valid to pass on to a give-and take form from both. From the mid-teen to the late-teen years the [Kid finds herself/himself in the third stage, that of *Epilogue* in which there is a cry for release, to grow up and out from the family, *to be free* and independent, in one word to be an *adult*. The last stage, *Epiphany* is one of Joy, gratitude and celebration from the part of the young woman/man for the drama of growth which she/he has experienced from the Dad.

All this is not without pain or "priority shifts" (112) from the side of Dad. The "five-minute [fathering possibilities" (111) about which the author speaks are not only

worth the trouble but necessary in the rearing up of children. The book makes an interesting reading as the author switches on swiftly from Dad to Kid and from Kid to Dad thus eliminating the monotony in presenting a dry as dust research stuff. He is also ingenuous in drawing out unspoken messages for Dads from the spoken words of Kids; and he does not fail to say a word or two of right advice to Kids.

The Christian educator in him comes out unobtrusively in many a page of the book (17.51.72-73.88-90. 142-145 etc.) All in all, except for a few Americanisms, the book makes an interesting reading and will serve as a *Vade mecum* for all parents, educators, priests, religious, formators etc. I would strongly recommend this book for all those who have to accompany children and young adults in their formative years-at home, in school, in church etc.

**R. J. Raja, S. J.**

**How I Pray :** *By John Wilkins (Ed.); St. Paul's, Mumbai 400 050; 1996, Pp. 102; Rs. 35.*

John Wilkins has done a wonderful job in putting together 16 experiences of prayer, 8 from Catholics and 8 from members of other Churches, experiences from such different quarters as an Archbishop (pp. 23-28) and a civil servant (pp. 63-68), a provincial superior (pp. 40-45) and a journalist (pp. 51-57), a housewife (pp. 29-33) and a monk (pp. 18-22), a medical practitioner (pp. 85-90) and a poet (pp. 95-99) etc, as these appeared in the Catholic Weekly, *The Tablet* during the season of Lent in 1992 and 1993. No one's prayer is like another's and yet something of each person's prayer comes as a challenge to the careful reader. Some of them complement your prayer, some agree with your way of prayer, some open new avenues for your prayer, some question the way you give yourself to prayer, some

even reproach your slovenliness and indifference to prayer. I may say that all of them touched me, influenced me and urged me to take my prayer seriously. They taught me various ways of prayer without themselves intending to teach me to pray. It was a pleasant surprise for me to discover that most of them come back strongly on time-tested topics such as intercessory prayer, Jesus' prayer or the *mantra prayer*, use of the Scriptures, especially the Psalms, listening prayer, action prayer, use of places and images to facilitate attention and concentration in prayer etc. The Archbishop of Canterbury has said "Disclosing how one prays is a little like undressing in public - more of you is revealed than you would like and you are not sure if others will appreciate it" (p 23). I can assure the Archbishop that after reading the whole book I not merely appreciated it but learned a couple of things as to get down on my knees and move on quietly from the "I-Him" situation through the "Him-I" status to the "Him" alone position in prayer. Surely the book has been an eye-opener for me and I believe it will be the same for many a sincere reader who is a seeker after prayer. The selective list of bibliography given at the end of the book is an added invitation to the discovery of the world, God and oneself in prayer. I would recommend the book to the libraries of religious houses, seminaries etc.

**R.J. Raja, S.J.**

**The Word Encountered:** *By J.F. Kavanaugh, S.J., Meditations on the Sunday Scriptures: Orbis, Maryknoll, N. Y. 10545; 1996: Pp. xii + 130; US \$ 12.*

The book containing 56 reflections, starting with Advent and closing with the Feast of Christ the King is a collection of meditations which appeared in the Jesuit Journal *America* for the "B" cycle of Sunday readings used for the liturgy of the Word. In each of these meditations the author elucidates well his principal tenet that "There is no

end to the ways that the Word of God can more fully take on our flesh" (p. 1). That his "encounter with the scriptures has been profoundly influenced" (xi) by his Jesuit training and friends in the Society is amply proved by his references to the Spiritual Exercises (pp. 47-48, 50, 85, 125-127, 129 etc) and his personal experiences in the Society (pp. 45, 59-61, 82-107, 122 etc.). Besides, these reflections are enriched by a variety of allusions to poets (p. 58), philosophers (37, 43), psychologists (17, 67), theologians (57), novelists (66, 72-74), literary writers (77) etc. which scan the given biblical text from varied perspectives. What is noteworthy also are the thought-provoking titles (egs. "First the Savor, Then the Sending", "The Great Refusal", "Floods and Deserts", "An Embodied God", "Prophetic Dying", "The Burden of Baggage", "Jesus NO Boy-o", "Faith, Yes, But", "The Sadness of Many Securities", "The Terror of Love" etc) in which the author encapsulates the Readings and around which he focusses the attention of the "prayers". A very useful book for those who have learned to and are willing to pray the Sunday scriptures. The price surely may be too high for Indian pockets!

**R. J. Raja, S. J.**

**Evolution Creation or what?** *By Christie J. Eliezer, ISPCK, Delhi 110 006; Pp. X. 125; Rs. 50.*

This book is a survey upto 1994 of the progress of debate between Creationism and Evolutionism. The author concludes the book with his own personal view of "creative evolution" by which he affirms that human beings are the product of divine creation *and* evolution. The first two chapters give the historical background of the theory of evolution as proposed by Darwin and the opposition raised against it in the U. S. The next 4 chapters (III to VI) somewhat difficult to read even for the initiated in this realm, are arguments pro and con evolution from various authors

even upto 1994. In the last chapter (VII) the author substantiates his conclusion of "creative evolution" once again by many citations from various authors. There are quite a few spelling mistakes which a careful proof-reading could have avoided (cf. p. 6 - Naturele for Naturelle, p. 15. Mathus for Malthus, p. 23 Manunkey for monkey, p. 41 em-bronic for embryonic, p. 56 ex-amples for examples, p. 75 amomg for among, p. 81 he for the, p. 83. replace for re-placed etc). An upto date bibliography on the subject at the end is an added bonanza for the reader.

**R. J. Raja, S.J.**

**Inculturation :** *By Julian Saldanha, St. Paul's, Mumbai*  
400 050; 1997; Pp. 134; Rs. 50.

A revised edition of the book originally published in 1987, with an additional chapter on culture (ch. 1), the book under Review consists of 3 main sections : Section I, "De-fining the Terms" in which in two chapters (1 and 2) the author analyses the terms Culture and Inculturation and pre-sents a fairly good understanding of these two concepts. Section II, "Fundamental Considerations" consists of three chapters (3.4.5) which probe into the Biblical Background (3) Mission History (4) and Theological Bases (5) of In-culturation. While chs. 4 and 5 articulate systematically the contentions of the author, ch. 3 the brief section on Jesus Christ (pp. 27-28) does not do full justice to Jesus Christ whose incarnation is the source and the model for all in-culturation in the Church. Section III, "Some Spheres of In-culturation" contains five chapters (6.7.8.9.10). A lengthy and well-documented chapter on Liturgical Inculturation in India (1963-1996) is the burden of ch. 6 in which one can easily perceive the note of sorrow and of disappointment of the aurhor when he concludes the section saying "To date however, one fails to see concrete fruit resulting from these laudable resolutions" (p. 70). Chapter 7 deals with the

story of the birth and growth of Indian Christian Art and its need to be patronized and promoted. Ch. 8 argues for a need for indigenous theologies. Ch. 9 pleads for educating the students of theology as well as the teachers in the Indian soil or in a third-world setting. The last ch. (10) is a summary of the author's book "Conversion and Indian Civil Law"; TPI, Bangalore, 1981. The lawyer in him comes out best in this last chapter, as the theologian in him reveals itself in ch. 8 and he proves himself a good historian too in almost every chapter. After finishing the book one is left with the impression that in the field of inculturation we "have yet a long way to travel" (p. 85) and "with prudent daring" (p. 80) we should push on our "first feeble steps" (p. 84) in the line of reincarnating in our land the incarnation of Jesus Christ made human among the humans. A select Bibliography on Liturgy and Indian Christian Art added at the end is a help to the reader to familiarize himself with the present situation of Inculturation in India. This is a basic book for those interested and involved in Inculturation.

**R. J. Raja, S. J.**