

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann.** Ed. Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kücharz. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996. pp. XVIII + 298.

The book contains essays written by different authors in honour of Jürgen Moltmann on the occasion of his 70th birthday. The core content of the book is the relevance of theology as an intellectual discipline in the postmodern era. The writers characterize the postmodern era as one of 'pluralistic multiple social structures and cultures'. Gender, race, poverty and ecological survival are presented as the problems that challenge the very epistemology of theology as a scientific discipline. The editors have categorized the essays into three divisions: challenges, perspectives and themes.

Under the section 'challenges', they have compiled essays that explain the external and internal problems of theological thinking. The new forms of human peaceful living today and the interaction with natural environment challenge the theologies of religions. The life oriented reflections and the preferential option for life prevalent in the secular world question the Church oriented theologies which are exclusive in nature. In the internal realm, the need of a change in the theological languages as the result of the interplay of present experience and that of the new in God is explained well. The search for a new language naturally leads the theologians to the problem of universality and particularity in theological thinking. Different forms of solutions offered by different theologians are well presented in the book.

In section two, on 'perspectives', Micheal Welker indicates some major theological *loci* as ways of overcoming the present crisis in theology. According to him, trinitarian-theological concentration on God's vitality, orientation towards the witness of the biblical tradition, freedom under the Word of God in the Churches and the ever new reflection of the world beneath the cross are proper *loci* in which theologies should flourish. In the article 'Theology, Meaning and Power' Miroslav Volf seeks a 'public theology for the public gospel'. For him, religion is a

cultural or linguistic medium, a system of meanings embodied in symbols. Religion replete with symbols has an inherent power which addresses and underlines the whole person. The core of Christianity is the proclamation of this power of the crucified Christ. The contributions of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Jon Sobrino bring to light the privileges of the 'crucified people' and add to the richness of the book.

In the last part on 'themes', different concrete problems are analyzed. Elsa Tamez and M. Douglas Meek reflect on the shape of Christian thought in the context of the market society. From a feminist perspective, writers like Moltmann Wendel, Rosemary Radford Ruether express their views on the complementarity of both sexes in the formation of the human community. Wolfhart Pannenberg and Hans Küng are concerned with global unity that is the need of the day. Finally, Paul Ricoeur speaks about the connection between theonomy and autonomy, a loving obedience to God that makes the autonomy of man perfect.

So, in this precious edition, we see a bird's-eye view of the direction different theologies take to answer the question of the relevance of theology from the multiple socio-cultural contexts of the world. Global perspective and deep thoughts make the volume remarkable and indeed a classic. The ability, passion, imagination and diligence of the contributors in the discipline of theology itself give a guarantee for its credibility. It touches all the areas of life and fills the very existence with meaning and life. This volume explains the concerns of Moltmann: "God is the dignity, agony, hope of the theologians". These concerns express the need for man of a theology which would help him to understand God who is man's dignity, agony and hope. God calls the entire humanity to an imperishable future that he has prepared for it. 'The Future of Theology' is a step in directing the people towards that destiny.

**Dr. G. Valentine Joseph**

**Paths of Mission in India Today.** Ed. Augustine Kanjamala. 23<sup>rd</sup> Road, T.P.S III, P.B. 9814, Bandra, Mumbai – 400 050: St. Paul's, 1997. pp. 310. Rs. 100.00.

The Church is missionary in nature. Its mission is identical with that of Jesus its founder. It has been continuing the mission of Jesus which is 'to make God's Love present in the World'. The

mission is the same from start to finish. Nonetheless challenges from the rapidly changing international political situations, economic neocolonialism, poverty and different forms of oppression in the developing countries and the new culture of mass media can always force and do *de facto* force a shift in the emphasis on the different dimensions of the mission and the method of doing and achieving it. **Paths of Mission in India Today** brings to the forefront the Indian hierarchy's grave responsibility for the pastoral and missionary activities in India against the background of varied pluralisms – of religion, culture, caste, language, oppressions etc.

The book may be divided into three major parts. The first is the theological part. The second part consists of reports of some local churches. "Where and whither mission in India" makes the third part.

The first part treats the theology of the Christian mission. It opens with the keynote address by Bishop Valerian D' Souza which sets the tone for the maturing of the mission theology which is the core of the book. The Pastor of the diocese of Pune, bishop D' Souza, in his address highlights the pastoral plan of Jesus and underlines the role of the Holy Spirit as the power and light which should invigorate the missionaries and dispel the gloom and darkness that pervades the target areas/mission activities. It is a short but thought provoking address. The next two articles written by the two Jesuit theologians, one from the perspective of the Bible by G. Soares Prabhu and the other from the perspective of the Magisterium by J. Neuner, are very inspirational. A remarkable feature of the first part is the contribution of two reputed lay persons. The fact that they are Hindus and men of integrity is a feather in the cap of **Paths of Mission in India Today**. Adding his two points (p. 75) to Gandhiji's five as to what should missionaries do (73 – 75), the well-known journalist Arun Shouri answers the questions of the bishops with clarity but *sans* bitterness (83 – 88). Himself an *adivasi*, Prof. Ram Dayal Munda was the former Vice Chancellor of Ranchi University and is presently the President of the Indian Conference of Tribal People. Concerning mission activities in India he holds a view diametrically opposed to that of Arun Shouri. Prof. R.D. Munda is all praise for the Christian missionary activities in the midst of the *adivasis*. He comes heavily on the hypocrisy of the politicians (101) who are mere parasites.

Our eyebrows are raised when we hear Prof. Munda propose a dynamic method of evangelization – inculturation of the rites of worship (102).

The second part presents a brief history of mission in some local churches (dioceses) and the progress made therein. The article on "Catholic Church in Northeast India" deserves special mention because of its vivid picture of the mission history among the "Hillemen" of the seven states – Assam, Aurnachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. It offers its own mission theology and the missionary methods. The evaluative reports of the southern local churches of Cuddapah, Mangalore and Calicut provide an encouraging view of the mission and inspire one with hope and confidence. Articles on building up basic communities in different parts of Bombay and on the evaluation of missionary activities in Patna depict the nature of the Christian mission respectively in the western and eastern parts of India. All these reports are very informative and prognostic.

In the final part we read about the importance of the Catholic Enquiry Centres all over India which identify and serve the non-Christian seekers of Christ and his Gospel through several means such as postal correspondence courses, Bible Study Club, communication and media. The article on "Trends and Issues in Evangelization in India" while providing the reader with a graphic picture of the mission, the tensions and conflicts that are lurking in the mission fields strikes a note of optimism. The paper prepared by a team of theologians as an introduction to the All India Consultation on "Paths of Mission in India Today" forms the concluding item of the book.

The book in hand points out the proper setting for missionary activities in the third millennium in India in the context of diverse religions, complex cultures and the long dream of the people for liberation from the varied oppressive structures.

**Dr. T. Victor**