

Book Reviews

God's Call: Moral Realism, God's Command and Autonomy.

John E. Hare. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001. pp 122, \$ 14.

Hare offers an engaging discussion on moral themes such as moral realism, God as the moral authority and the autonomy of the moral agent in his book *God's Call*. His moral discourses are from the three lectures he offered on the above said themes. There are so many competing theories of moral realism in the 20th century Anglo-American Philosophy. The author presents them and evolves a new form of realism that would enlighten the reader towards a right moral evaluation of values. Secular moral theories exclude God as the authority of the moral realm. The author tries to show that there are alternatives to such exclusion. Does human autonomy contravene the divine command as it is in the moral reasoning of Kant? The author tends to present a different exegesis of Kant that seems new and convincing. Let us take these discussions one by one and try to present a critical appreciation.

Intrinsic goodness is a real property of things though it is not the object of sense perception. When it is a non-natural property,

then how to know what is good. It can be known by intuition. The access to goodness according to G. E. Moore is based not on inference or argument, but it is self-evident. A positivist claims that the function of ethical words is purely emotive and they do not assert anything. He further affirms that moral judgments as expressions of one's feelings. This leads to a subjectivism. According to R. M. Hare, moral judgment is prescriptive, expressing will. Prescriptivism proposes that moral judgment should be guided by rational screening. This screening resembles the categorical imperative to screen maxims for action. Irish Murdoch deems that the relentless ego in every person corrupts one's nature at its root that hinders our access to the good. This leads our judgments to self-deception. Making the human will as the creator of value according to Murdoch is a surrender to self-importance. On the contrary, the sense of value is like a magnetic source that exists outside our wills, to which our will responds properly when we are well disciplined in virtue. J. L. Mackie argues that values cannot be prescriptive and objective at the same time. He finds it mysterious that the good tells a person authoritatively to do something

and causally make him to do it. But the strangeness found by Mackie can be eliminated if 'objective prescriptivity' is separated as two different things because they are two different features that function at different moments of the value judgment. Value judgment implies endorsement. We autonomously submit ourselves to a value that we find to be really good. According to John McDowell, values are there in the world making demand to our reason and they are bound by our dispositions to get a response. He thinks that ethical requirements are objective and they do not require detachment from cultural influence. Moral values can also in one sense become the second nature of the human person. This second nature, because of the human tendency to go after something that is advantageous can easily endorse what is not good. The theories that discuss the various possibilities of expressing moral values and judgments in one way or another pose problems. As a way out, J. E. Hare proposes prescriptive realism. In it he identifies a safe position that is summed up this way: "God created us with an emotional and defective make-up, such that we feel the pull of God's call. But value judgment is more than just feeling such a response; it requires us to endorse this response. Unfortunately we are now in a condition in which the response, both immediate and

reflective is skewed by self-preference. Having identified the source of the pull towards the good, however, as God's call, we are now in a more promising position to identify when it is in fact operative."

Why do moral duties become obligatory? It is because God commands them. Hare is fond of this divine command theory where moral obligations are understood as expressions of God's will and our judgments of obligations are nothing but to recapitulate this God's willing in ours. By this the author tries to usher in the divine command theory as an alternative to the secular approach to moral philosophy. He brings in the divine command theory in its version of John Duns Scotus. Scotus says, "The divine will is the cause of the good, and so a thing is good precisely in virtue of the fact that God wills it." Calvin plays the same note regarding divine will. Calvin says, "God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact he wills it, must be considered righteous." Why should somebody be moral? It is because God commands him/her to be so. Human reason demands you to be moral. The understanding of Kant is that the nature of reason is to will universal law both in theory and in practice. The author differs from Kant presenting that

morality need not be exclusively universal. The next source of moral obligation can be the community we belong to. It is the community that has instilled in us the entire moral demands. If we have to be true to ourselves we have to acknowledge it. The limitations in a community bound morality have to be accepted, as they tend to be relative. The third source of moral authority could be the human nature, in particular the natural human inclinations. What is morally good can be deduced by looking at what we are naturally inclined towards. The final source and reason why some one should be moral is that morality is self-evident that is it has its own authority.

According to Scotus, there are two affections in every person and they are the affection for advantage and the affection for justice. The first one emerges from the natural appetite that tends to the demands of personal perfection. The second one is the desire to pursue a good just because it is intrinsically good. Since humans have an inordinate affection for advantage above everything else, it has to be reversed. Moral goodness of an act is determined by the agent's affection for justice, that is love of an intrinsic good for its own sake. Supervenience is a term used here to indicate the properties other than goodness or wrongness in acts that make them good or bad.

This implies the possibility of non-moral properties in an act along with moral properties. The concept of supervenience has a negative and positive side as the author critically views the thinking of Scotus. He offers a way to counter eudemonism by presenting affection for justice central to obligation rather than the affection for advantage. The author concludes the divine command theory of Scotus thus: God calls us and prescribes a particular way to achieve our ends. The route prescribed by God is objective whether we follow it or not. There is a necessity to follow it if we have to achieve the end. Besides this route is the right one because God has chosen it.

The author develops a different understanding of Kant whereby the theistic lenience of the philosopher gains importance. Kant clearly accepts the influence of original sin in our acts and therefore the need to have external assistance to overcome our desire to subordinate duties to our own happiness. He names this outside assistance as 'a divine supplement'. He proposes to others to believe the presence of such an assistance to all those who are ready to be accountable to the moral law. God is the head of the kingdom in which we are all members and we must fulfill our duties as God's command to us. Though Kant acknowledges these duties as God's command,

he does not accept Him as the author of the moral demand. Moral demands do not need an author. Only contingent laws need one. Laws of morality are necessary as the triangle has three angles. Such necessary laws need someone to promulgate them. In this sense, moral laws are under a lawgiver. God as the head of the moral Kingdom is fully independent and we as his subjects try to recapitulate in our wills the duties that are enshrined in God's will. If I am ready to will the law autonomously then I accept it as my law. This meaning of making the moral law one's own is the right understanding of autonomy given by Kant. The purpose of morality is to further one's own perfection and the happiness of others. Both the purposes will coincide only at the kingdom of ends, as Kant understands it. Thus the author establishes clearly that Kant does not intend to argue against the divine command theory.

John E. Hare presents every argument with thorough precision. He lays a strong theistic foundation to the moral world. His creative and innovative

Lay Catechists - Their Formation in India. Ed., C.M. Paul SDB, Nitika/Don Bosco, Kolkata 700 015, 2003. Pp.232. Price: Rs. 150.00. (\$ 10.00. Euro 10.00).

interpretations of both Dun Scotus and Kant have to be applauded highly. Though his discussions seem to revolve around moral philosophy, I do not think that the author intends only to affirm a few moral realities. He aims to achieve certain objectives more than that. He tries to envisage a moral world that is authored by God where the humans are autonomous moral agents who willingly participate in the moral agenda drawn out by God. The persuasive call of God to fulfill the moral obligations in no way robs the moral autonomy of the agents who willingly participate in his Kingdom. Thus the author is successful in presenting a moral world where the autonomy of the author as well as the subject is respected. However, the sources of morality cannot be exclusively assigned to the authority of God as some of the non-theistic moral persons may object strongly. At the same time, his study deserves special attention from the part of moral philosophers, as it tends to provoke new perspectives in the direction of moral authority and human autonomy.

Dr. Xavier Ilango.

From the time Vatican II came out with its ecclesiology of communion and thereby encouraged the participation of all the faithful, each in his or her own way, in the threefold office of

Christ, the role of the laity in the proclamation of the gospel became one of the top priorities of the Church. At the same time we find an emergence of many faith-filled and dedicated lay persons who have felt themselves called by God to hand on the gospel values, which paved the way for a renewed understanding of the role of the lay catechist. *Ad Gentes 17* expresses the conviction that the lay catechists offer an "outstanding and absolutely necessary contribution to the spread of the faith and the church by their great work".

While appreciating and recognizing the yeoman service rendered by such lay catechists, their identity, role, formation and spirituality are yet to be spelled out clearly. This book does this task. It contains reflections by 14 resource persons of national and international repute, who presented their findings on the topic, during the Nitika Silver Jubilee National Seminar held last November in Kolkata.

After defining the identity of the lay catechists from the biblical, ecclesiological and anthropological perspectives, the topic gradually unfolds itself and their role, their spirituality, their categories and evolution are described.

Since the success of the lay catechetical ministry depends mostly on the quality of the lay catechists rather than on their

qualifications, the next eight chapters deal with their overall formation – their person-dimension, knowledge-dimension and the savoir-faire-dimension. Besides providing a sample syllabus for the catechists' ongoing formation, the book gives ample information on lay catechist training schools in India.

The sharing of experiences and success stories in the catechetical ministry by a Lay Association, a Salesian Brother, Catechist Sisters of St. Ursula, Catechist Sisters of Mary Immaculate and Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians proves the significance of lay catechists in the mission field and also of the vital role that can be played by women in faith formation. All the same, the book does not refrain from touching upon the very sensitive issue of the lay catechists' status and remuneration, basing on a survey. It raises the question whether they are paid a just wage. It is to be kept in mind that the lay people who are pledged to the special service of the church have a right to a worthy remuneration befitting their condition (can. 231§2 of CIC 1983) and to meet this end can. 1274§3 demands that a common reserve is to be established in every diocese. The next chapter analyses the role of catechists in the organizational structures of the local churches.

The book ends with a *Statement on Lay Catechist Formation* which insists on the indispensable service of the lay catechists and the need to recognize their renewed identity and role in the Post-Vatican Church. It also comes out with concrete proposals to improve the status and ministry of the lay catechists corresponding to the changing situations.

In the context of anti-conversion bill and other opposing factors, this book provides an impetus to cater to the ongoing faith formation through the lay catechists especially in the mission territories. The delicate question whether India - which

has abundance of priests, religious and lay preachers of charismatic communities - still requires the catechists is adequately answered. But the problems encountered by them with regard to their status and remuneration are yet to be solved. The questions raised at the end of each chapter would certainly lead to further discussion and enlightenment regarding the role of the lay catechist in the contemporary situation. This book is sure to lend a hand to the church authorities who are interested in getting the help of the laity for faith formation.

Dr. Andrew De Rose

Dynamics of Theology.
Roger Haight. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001 (2nd ed.). Pp xii + 297. \$ 24(pbk)

This book is the revised second edition of the earlier work that was published in 1990 under the same title. Though "the substance of the work remains unchanged in the new edition" (vii), the various topics discussed have been further developed in the light of the author's more recent work, *Jesus the Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999).

This book is one of the unique contributions to the theological discipline that deals

with the foundations for theological assertions. Deriving a adequate new methodology amidst the various current trends and concerns in the theological thinking is not an easy task, but the author has done it with clarity and ingenuity.

Roger Haight begins his theological pursuit from human experience of a particular historical situation. He distinguishes between categorical and transcendent dimensions of human experience and develops his theology on common experience. For him, the goal of theologizing is to establish meaning and universal relevance in terms of common experience.

The book gives four foundations for theological assertions: their apologetic nature, social historicity, transcendental dimension and praxis oriented commitment. On the basis of these foundations a method of theology is developed in five different parts.

In the first part, the basic characteristics of faith experience are analyzed. The author describes faith as the most personal, unique and deepest dimension of one's life that gives meaning and purpose to human existence and leads a person to commitment in freedom. The relation between faith and belief is remarkably developed in this book. Faith is an inner urge towards transcendence, but belief is the expression that is relative and historically conditioned. Beliefs must always come under the scrutiny of critical reason. Theological assertions interpret beliefs in the light of faith experience.

The second part deals with the structure of revelation in faith experience. Revelation, according to the author is the process of the unveiling and manifestation of the object of faith, namely the loving care of God, to human consciousness. For Christianity, Jesus is the highest medium of God's personal boundless love. The author distinguishes between original and dependent revelations. Original revelation is the revelatory experience of the

personal encounter of God that takes place in the experience of the individual or in the community. Dependent revelation is the faith tradition that is handed over from one generation to the other.

The third part deals with the Scripture and its role in the religious experience of the individual and the community. All revelation from God must be historically mediated and it needs to be universally relevant. The Scripture expresses the God experience of a particular historically conditioned faith community, but it serves as the paradigmatic expression of the inner faith life that constitutes the Christian Church.

In the fourth part, the author enters into the symbolic nature of theological assertions and calls for a theology that interprets the symbols of faith in a particular context. All the religious expressions are symbolic in nature and they communicate God experience and empower the participants with the spirit of transformation. The function of theology is to explain, conceptualize and criticize religious symbols and to make the community to participate in the symbolic interactions.

The last part proposes the method of correlation as a proper method of theology. The method has three constitutive steps, namely apologetics, dialogue and

praxis. As apologetics, it seeks the intelligibility and universal dimensions; as dialogue, it seeks unity in diversity and as praxis, it empowers the human freedom to take responsibility for the liberation of the world.

In the conclusion, the author demonstrates his findings in the field of Christology and Ecclesiology. He characterizes theological assertions as symbolic, hermeneutical, correlational and as a critical conversation that appeals to human freedom to make a creative and spontaneous response to God.

The content of the book is systematic and logically interconnected. One can not however miss the constant repetitions though they are done in view of clarity. The theological language is simple and at the same time rich. The enormous knowledge of the author in the anthropological and symbolic dimension of human life is amazing and commendable. The

Mary and Martha: Women in the World of Jesus. Satoko Yamaguchi. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002. Pp. xi+204. \$24.00.

Since the last quarter of the previous century new perspectives, which have really injected new blood into the science

author successfully handles his knowledge in different areas connected with theology and makes it a discipline compatible with different realities of life.

The dialogical method proposed by the author is very much appropriate to the present context of pluralism and post modernism. The search for unity in diversity, sameness in difference proposed by the author gives a right direction to theology that seeks to understand the hand of God in the changing world context. His way of theologizing avoids fundamentalism or relativism and makes theology a faith seeking understanding in the light of the revealed Christian truths. The title of the book *Dynamics of Theology* very well fits with the content of the book. This book gives ample chances to develop a local theology and it is a must to any one who ventures into the field of theology.

Dr. G. Valentine Joseph

of God in relation to the humans have been added to the so far traditional theologies. These dimensions have broken new grounds in re-reading the Bible and re-interpreting its ever enduring message thus making it relevant to the humans of the technocratic culture. One such dimension is the feminist

approach to scripture and theology. Satoko Yamaguchi's (SY) recent book *Mary and Martha: Women in the World of Jesus* goes a long way in the direction.

The book has two major parts. The second part presents a re-reading of the Johannine Gospel and a feminist re-visioning of two women, Mary and Martha - who were attached to the Lord Jesus in love and faith - from the Japanese women's perspective. The first part is a very good preparation for a clear and broad understanding of the Christological tone in John's gospel. It focuses on the search for a new historical imagination as a new paradigm through which the author introduces to the ordinary women and men the current feminist scholarship in theology.

In the Greco-Roman World the patriarchal social system and mind-set permeated all dimensions of society and social groups. The Christian movements and the early churches were born and developed in such a world context. We should not expect that any of them, including those of Jesus of Nazareth, was immune to the surrounding culture. SY is consistent in employing a methodology - (Greco - Roman traditions - Jewish traditions - early Christian prevalent female traditions - and suppression and obliteration of the women traditions in the Church in course

of time) suitable to the objective i.e., to highlight feminist scholarship in theology and to bring home to the readers the active roles played by women in the early Church. With a geniality of a women theologian, she first depicts the living conditions of women and their varied roles in the Greco-Roman world and proceeds to underline how this had influence on the Jews. Subsequently she enumerates with rich documental support the impact of these Jewish patriarchal communities, Johannine communities included, and finally points out clearly how the leadership and dignity of women could have waned in the later church communities.

Women played leadership roles in the house churches (p.47) (Acts 12:12-17; 16:4; 18:2,26; Rom 16:3-5; Col 4:15; Phlm 2) and participated in prophetic activities but were only later marginalized. The change from the first century private space i.e., the house churches (*domus ecclesiae*) to the fourth century public space i.e., the hall churches (*aula ecclesiae*) made it easy for the increasingly patriarchalized church to relegate women's participation in leadership to an irretrievable background. For example, Anna the only woman specifically labelled as 'a prophet' is a typical case of how women were sidelined. While the figure of the male prophet Simeon is highlighted and his words quoted

at length, Anna's role is shrunk to a single verse (Lk. 2:38). The four daughters-prophetesses of Philip are no exception to this discrimination (Acts 21:9).

The reasoning by which SY brings to light the deliberately obscured but very significant parts played by women is unassailable. Women had active role in storytelling especially mothers and nurses who were often slave women who looked after their children. They were originators and transmitters of speeches and stories (82-83). These influential and powerful storytelling activities of ordinary women were suppressed by the later male editors. To cite an example, even ordinary people, both women and men, enjoyed easy access to oral story "authorship" with various versions and stories as their

storytelling repertoire. The Christian movement emerged and took shape in this oral setting. But in the course of history certain versions of these Christian stories were written down and ascribed to some emerging leading male figures and in due course read aloud as authentic voices of such figures. They were also hand-copied and circulated. In this changed context only the written versions became fixed carrying with them some authority. Consequently access to authorship was now limited to a small, elite and mostly male group. Male versions and voices became the communal authority, and other versions and voices, mostly female oral versions, were gradually passed over in silence (94).

Dr. T. Victor