

## Book Review

*God of the atoms*, Francis P. Xavier S.J., ISPCK – Delhi and LIFE – Chennai, 2006, pages 152, Rs. 125.00.

This little but important book is a collection of eight articles. Except the one titled 'Entropy and Original Sin: Measure of Disorder', all else were published in different journals at various times. Towards the end of the book we find the acknowledgements.

The commendable work is inter-disciplinary in nature. Gone are the days one locked oneself into one's area of specialization. Any meaningful attempt at finding truth must position itself in the quest for interpretations of the interrelations. Neither science nor theology can claim monopoly over absolute truths any more. The interface of both can throw a lot of light in our journey to fulfillment. 'God of the atoms' is a noble endeavour in this direction. Rev. Fr. Francis P. Xavier S.J., a religious by vocation and a physicist by profession, makes an exciting presentation for which we are proud and grateful at the same time.

It is a thrilling experience to go through the pages of this simple styled, easy to read and thought provoking book. The insightful manner in which the author presents the striking similarities found between the two disciplines is an indication that there remains much to be desired in our updating of theologies.

The author takes it upon himself to show how science and religions are at convergence in many an important issues. Whether or not the scientists and the theologians would rise to the occasion and take home such a complementary view still remains to be seen.

In the foreword the author makes it plain that the intended objective is to establish that "science and religion are not at crossroads but they complement each other" (p. xv). It is no exaggeration to say that the mission is accomplished with rich expertise and in a thorough manner.

In the first chapter we find the clarification of the thesis. In plain and simple terms we are provided not with a common place reflection. The author starts by analyzing the apparent contradictions between science and theology but ends up with drawing similarities between the two. He explains that reality is far more complex today than yesterday.

The author refers to the Varusanadu mission (p. 8) with due appreciation. However, if the reader expects in it, as he would in the flow of the reading, an example of how science and religion could come together to serve the cause of the poor, the reader is unfortunately disappointed.

One is more than fascinated to read through the reflections offered in the second chapter. The evolutionary vision proposed by the one and only Teilhard de Chardin is ably made use to justify the unitary view of matter and spirit. The author further nuances it by going into the atom with the physicist's precision and within its own dynamics he traces the hand of God.

Chapter three is a theological reflection on the abiding presence of God in the various forces operative in nature. The apparent contradictions between faith and reason and their association with science and religion are analyzed. In a mater-of-fact manner he exposes that science and religion are both basically matters of faith and not of reason. A unitary view, therefore, is to be maintained, says the author.

In chapter four the author explains how the 'spirit' accompanies life through various stages from matter to Prime-matter. Reflecting on the Einsteinian matter-energy equivalence thesis ( $E = mc^2$ ) he resolves the matter spirit conflict. He observes that from energy matter comes forth and complexification of matter explains consciousness.

Einstein found out that energy is equal to matter ( $E = mc^2$ ). We should add hurriedly that, this he found by observing matter turning energy and not vice versa. However, the author takes it up and argues

that since they both are equivalent they are interconvertible. Based on that scientific proposition he proceeds with the theological reflection saying matter came from pure energy. But, how much of it is experimented? Of course, there is the phenomenon of neutrino. But that seems to be an isolated and a remote example. We fail to conceive it and that leaves us less convinced.

In chapter 5 the author takes up the much debated creation-evolution issue. Through ingenious examples and arguments he establishes that evolution does not necessarily rule out the possibility of divine intervention. He states that God is present in an ongoing creation.

In chapter six we have an exciting enquiry into the complex reality called time. The author analyses the scientific as well as the religious conceptions of time. The linear and the cyclic understandings are put to thorough scrutiny and we are shown that scientific support is in favour of a linear understanding of time.

Chapter 7 almost makes for a heartwarming spiritual reading. Parallels are drawn between Entropy which is a measure of disorder and sin which is a measure of disharmony. The author's voice is prophetic in his reflection to conserve nature, in which we observe his concern for wholeness, balance, and harmony.

The last chapter explores the possibility of holding to the belief in life beyond death apart from any religious affiliation. It is indicated from a scientific, logical perspective, that life passes to another phase after death since energy cannot be destroyed but only be transformed.

The book has a bibliography at the end of each chapter and also an index given at the end.

The pleasant reading of the book is facilitated by the almost meticulous printing. Except for some minor errors, it is a perfect job done.

**Fr. S. Antony Claret**

*Ministers and Ministries in the Local Church*, Sebastian S. Karambai, St. Paul's – Bombay, xxix + 451 pages. Rs. 220.00,

It is a wonderful work of Fr. Sebastian S. Karambai. Though it is canonical in its approach, but in practice it sheds pastoral character. It could be even called as a "Pastoral Guide" as he had converted canonical norms into pastoral applications. It is very much vivid in his approach dealing with current pastoral and canonical issues. Even those who have slight inkling towards canonical principles can easily understand his approach. Hence, it goes without saying, that the subtitle "a comprehensive Guide to Ecclesiastical Norms" is very apt and fitting to the character of this book.. His pastoral experience and grass root contact is very much evident in the several practical questions that he answers at the end of each section. This book helps not only clerics of Latin rite but also the clerics of Eastern rite as well, as he makes inroads into the Eastern Code of Canon Law. In addition, quite a number of Eastern rite Catholics settle in various parts of Tamilnadu after the creation of Syro- Malabar and Syro- Malankara dioceses within Tamilnadu and elsewhere in India.

His work basically has two parts. In the first part he deals with 6 chapters taken from the second section of Part II of the Book on the "People of God" in the Latin code of Canon law. The various functions of the particular church, ie. the diocese and the parochial administration are his main focus of interest in the first part. The 'Communio' aspect of Vatican II is very much vivid in this section.

In the second part, he deals with three aspects such as: Word of God, Sacraments and Sacramentals. Some practical questions are brought to assist the pastor in the parish. I personally believe that all priests in the parochial field should have this as a pastoral manual to settle some practical implications.

**Rev. Norbert Thomas DCL**

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Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC, I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner, Wm. B. (eds.) Eerdmans Publishing Company, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA/ Cambridge, UK: 2003) Hardcover, Pp cxxviii + 989

Murray J. Harris, the author of the critical and exegetical commentary on **The Second Epistle to the Corinthians**, studied under F. F. Bruce. He is a professor emeritus of New Testament exegesis and theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. His commentary on 2 Corinthians comes in the series of exegetical commentaries for the New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC, Eerdmans). He also authored many books, including *Pauline Studies* (Eerdmans 1980), *Raised Immortal* (Eerdmans 1983), *From Grave to Glory* (Zondervan 1990), *Jesus as God* (Baker 1992) and *Three Crucial Questions about Jesus* (Baker 1994). Before writing this particular commentary on 2 Corinthians, the author had already shown to the Christian world that he was an authority on Pauline Corpus through his commentaries on 1 and 2 Corinthians for the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* series and the exegetical commentary on *Colossians and Philemon* for the *Exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament commentary* series. He also has the distinction of writing two commentaries on one and the same New Testament book. He shines not only as a writer, but also as an educator, a research scholar, and a translator.

Among the New Testament books, to write a critical commentary on 2 Corinthians is not an easy job. First, there are many scholarly works that have come up now to question the integrity of the letter as one composition. Secondly, the subjects that are to be dealt in this letter are not merely theological, but also literary issues and historical events and incidents. But the author of this commentary has commendably succeeded in his job as an interpreter of the biblical text by elaborately touching the question of the integrity of the book (pp 8-51) and finally has come to accept the traditional view that the work was regarded by its author, Paul, as a single composition. He also argues well to affirm that the chapters 1-9 and chapters 10-13 have

come into 2 Corinthians not as separate sections, but they are part and parcel of this letter and well integrated in it. The remarkable contribution of the commentator to this work is his claim that the letter was composed in stages, not at a single sitting (p.51). Going along with the aim and tradition of the NIGTC series, the author of this work also gives importance to grammar, syntax and the textual criticism of the texts of 2 Corinthians. Such grammatical analysis of the texts helps for the understanding of the book theologically better. Besides, it also helps those readers who are interested in exploring and analysing the various exegetical and critical options of the text. The long introduction section that runs through 124 pages has wide range of discussion on almost all literary and historical issues of 2 Corinthians.

The notable feature of this commentary is that the author is able to give explanations even for the variants found in the recent 27<sup>th</sup> edition of Nestle - Aland Greek Text. The commentator by listing more than 1600 items in the bibliography also confirms that his commentary is a scholarly one. Another feature of this commentary is that the author is exhaustive in his discussion on any subject matter. He analyses elaborately each topic or issue found in the second letter to Corinthians so that the readers are able to have a thorough understanding of any matter in 2 Corinthians. For example, when he discusses about the literary style of the author of 2 Corinthians he goes into every detail of Greco-Roman rhetoric style and finally comments that (1) written by a highly educated person, (2) apologetic in character, (3) logical in presentation, and (4) aimed at winning over an audience and influencing their way of thinking and acting is likely to display the basic ingredients of forensic, deliberative or epideictic rhetoric-but not necessarily in a recognizable or schematic sequence” (p. 109).

The exegetic section also does not lack the comprehensive character of the introductory part of the letter. The detailed grammatical analysis of the verses (pp. 366-367, 465, 554-555), the historical notes (pp. 556-557, 563-564, 762), the opinions of the different authors and

the versions of the Bible on particular thought (p.769) etc. give the commentary an added flavour. Murray J. Harris, author of this commentary, has to be respected and congratulated on producing a commentary that is admirable in every way.