

## Book Reviews

### **The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay**

(Including a Resume of his Life and Thought)

*Dr. Julius Lipner and Dr. George Gispert-Sauch, S.J., eds.,*

Vol. I

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The United Theological College, 1991, pp. XLVI + 298.

Eighty six years have passed since the death of that pioneer in Indian Christian theology, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay. He was much misunderstood during his life time and largely misinterpreted or neglected after his death. In recent years several attempts have been made to reclaim the life and thought of that lone prophet of India's freedom and Hindu-Christian dialogue. Dr. Lipner of the University of Cambridge and Dr. Gispert-Sauch of Vidyajoti, Delhi, scholars of comparative religion, have done great service to Indian Christian theology by collecting and editing the original writings of Upadhyay with appropriate introductions and comments. This volume contains Upadhyay's writings from 1890 to 1901.

Upadhyay was a many faceted person acclaimed or denounced in history as a religious reformer, theological interpreter, teacher, journalist, political activist, synthesizer of Christianity and Hinduism, father of Indian Christian theology, innovater without accreditation, apostate and so on. Rabindranath Tagore with whom Upadhyaya collaborated in setting up Santiniketan described him as an "ascetic, yet a Vedantin-spirited, fearless, self denying, erudite and uncommonly influential" (Introduction, p. XV) According to Animananda, his friend and disciple, Upadhyay was a fiery nationalist, yet no politician, provocative and unyielding, yet tender-hearted, helping the sick and crippled of Calcutta, by begging food for them from door to door (The *Blade* pp. 96, 107, 196).

The editors of this volume have laboured many years to collect his original writings from various sources, many of them are almost irretraceable now. Chapters are arranged thematically, and materials are presented in each chapter chronologically in order to help the reader to trace the development of Upadhyay's thought on each topic. This arrangement, however, fails to appreciate the significant paradigmatic shift in Upadhyay's thinking which Kaj Baago described as the "decisive turning point", happened around 1898 soon after the return of Swami Vivekananda, his friend, from the West. Hitherto Upadhyay was working within

the theistic framework of the Vedas, rejecting the Upanishads as pantheistic. Now, as Dr. Aleaz has observed, "as he came to understand Advaita Vedanta more he became of the firm belief that by Advaita Vedanta pantheism would be crushed out of existence and true theism could be made to flourish in India." (*Indian Journal of Theology*, April/June 1979, p. 57 note 5) The editors did not give recognition to this change, which actually provides an important clue to reconcile the differences in the earlier and later writings of Upadhyay.

Upadhyay's writings on "Religion and Religions" occupy the first chapter. Evidence of Upadhyay's perceptive and theological mind and insights into his methodology is visible in these articles. He is not for a simplistic, liberalistic superficial comparison of the apparent similarities between Hinduism and Christianity. He is of the opinion that the strengths and differences of both religions must be strongly presented in order to arrive at a clear understanding of each other and only that will help us to move towards truth in a meaningful way (cf. item no. 11). He argues that just as Christianity appropriated the Aristotelian faith which was at one time used as a greatest weapon by rationalists against Christians, Christianity in India must make use of Hindu philosophy which "unquestionably soars higher than her Western sister" (Item no. 12). Upadhyay is not a dreamer but a thoroughly practical person. He writes: "Indian soil is humid, and its humidity will make the ever-new Christian Revelation put forth newer harmonies and newer beauties...." (ibid) Had the Indian Christianity listened to this prophet, Indian Christian theology would not have suffered the lack of direction it experiences today, observes C. Fonseca (*Vidyajyothi* April 1980.)

Chapters two to five present Upadhyay's writings on Christian faith, God, Christ and Creation. It has already been argued that the chief contribution of Upadhyay to Indian Christian theology lies in his explanation of the doctrine of Trinity as *Saccidananda* and the doctrine of creation as *Maya* (K.P. Aleaz op. cit.) But surprisingly enough, Lipner and Gispert, the editors, are of the opinion that Upadhyay "is not particularly original" ("Foreword and "Introduction", p. XXXVIII) and his most original theological contribution is the two Sanskrit hymns, "*Vande Saccidanandam*" (1898) and "Praise to God, the Nara-hari" (God-man, Jesus Christ, 1901). Perhaps Upadhyay's originality must be perceived not in his re-interpretations of Advaita, but in the non-reinterpretative use of the Advaita Vedanta, as a basis for Indian theology. For him Indian philosophy has a right in its own, to provide meaning and content to the mystery of God and Christ,

the Revealed God (cf. M.M. Thomas, *Acknowledged Christ*, 1969, p. 108)

The last chapter of the volume contains materials on Upadhyay's "theological anthropology" and ethical foundations. Most of the articles in this section deal with the concept of human sin. Unlike Vivekananda, he had a strong sense of human sin and he is at pains to search the "idea of sin" in Vedas and other Hindu writings. His rejection of the theories of karma and transmigration of souls, contrary to most Hindu reformers of the time, is on account of his strong views on human freedom and moral responsibility. He wanted the Hindu religion to rediscover, "the noble privilege of feeling and suffering for another", "The virtue of self-sacrifice", and "the cohesive power of moral relationship which binds human society into an organic whole." (item no. 139). He wrote, "Brahmins and Chandals, philosophers and peasants, should join hand in hand and heart with heart to worship in spirit and truth...." (item no. 140). The meaning of his insistence on the practice of Hindu customs and dharma needs to be examined in the light of his understanding of *samaj dharma*, which makes a person socially a Hindu, and *sadhana dharma*, one's faith. His rejection of the institutional church and his experiments to live in Christian faith within Hindu *samaj dharma* is critically important to the modern Indian discussions on the nature and form of the church in India.

Upadhyay personified the dreams of many Indian Christians to live as Indians—rooted in the Culture of the soil. This volume is a valuable asset to Indian Christian theology as it reveals the heart and mind of a person who wanted to be Christian as well as Indian. In order to understand the enigmatic personality of Upadhyay, a more thorough and sympathetic biographical research is necessary as compared to the one provided in this volume. Perhaps the forthcoming Hind volume which is supposed to throw light on the political contributions of Upadhyay, can accomplish this need.

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### The Role of Pramānas in Hindu Christian Epistemology, :

Dr. K.P. Aleaz,

Calcutta: Punthi Pustak (136/4B, Bidhan Sarani,

Calcutta-700 004) 1991 pp. XIII+154

This book is a contribution to Indian Christian theological methodology. The author makes an attempt to bridge the gap between Indian philosophy and Indian Christian theology. No serious attempts have been made so far to find an Indian philosophical basis for developing theology in India. The author works with the assumptions that there need not be any separation between theology and metaphysics since in Indian philosophy both are held together; and theology is methodology. To him Indian theology needs to be rational, not dogmatic.

Dr. Aleaz's method is to analyze the conflicting standpoints of the six orthodox philosophical schools of Indian philosophy and harmonize them by giving prominence to the Advaitic school. In this he is following the method of one of the modern Indian scholars, D.M. Datta. Dr. Aleaz does not try to be critical or interpretative of the orthodox Indian philosophical systems. His effort is to liberate Indian theology from Western philosophical categories by allowing it to directly confront Indian philosophy in order to develop in its own way. The attempt is thus fresh and worthy to be examined by Indian Christian scholars.

The author is of the opinion that Indian Christian thinkers were neither exact nor just in interpreting or selecting *pramānas* or sources of authority in Indian philosophy. *Pramāna* is a special source of a particular *Pramā* (true cognition) and its true cause. Hindu systems have developed six *pramānas*: perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), testimony (*Śabda*), comparison (*upamāna*), postulation (*arthāpatti*) and non-cognition (*anupalabdhi*). Only few Christian thinkers have made use of these principles in their theology. The author examines the writings of A.J. Appasamy, Robin Boyd, A.P. Nirmal and Paulose Gregorios and points out that their choice of *pramānas* were selective and arbitrary; they are guilty of interpolation and negation of Indian logics. By a superfluous approach to the *pramānas* Indian theologians are not only exhibiting shallowness but losing much in way of benefiting from them (p.110). He questions the validity of Indian theologians' use of *anubhava* (experience) as a *pramāna*, equating it with perception; addition of *sabha* (church) as principle of authority. This shows failure in comprehending the subtleties and nuances of Indian thinking, which distinguishes knowledge as experienced through sense

organs and experience as ultimate intuition, the ultimate outcome of knowing. Moreover Indian theologians have not considered the importance of other valid *pramāṇas*.

Of all the six *pramāṇa* only *pratyakṣa* (perception) is recognized by all the schools of Indian philosophy. Cārvākas accept only perception as a valid source of knowledge. Only Bhatta Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta accept all the six principles as valid ; others accept selectively one or more, with their own varying interpretations.

Two kinds of perception are distinguished by Indian philosophy, namely, *nirvikalpaka* (indeterminate perception) and *savikalpaka* (relational or determinate perception). From indeterminate perception one is led to determinate perception. From the stage of unrelated knowledge of God one is led to a differentiated knowledge through sense organs and intuition ; but this intuition is to be distinguished from ultimate intuition or *sāksātkāra* which is the goal or aim of all knowledge. The scope of perception as a *Pramāṇa* is limited to the first meaning. Ultimate experience is not a valid authority of knowledge but its outcome. This distinction is of particular importance to students of theology who are familiar with the use of experience as a formative factor in theology in which such distinctions are not maintained. A sweeping explanation of experience without understanding its nuances may lead to confusion in communicating theology in India where such distinctions are important.

*Anumāna* (inference) is a favourite principle of the Nyāya school. Inference is a characteristic act of the *buddhi*, that part of *antahkarana* (inner organ) which makes decisions. Inference as a method helps us to identify the divine and human nature of God and to locate the presence of divinity wherever we see true humanity.

Word or *Śabda* denotes not a particular (*Vyakti*) but the universal class character (*jāti* or *ākṛiti*) which is eternal. *Śabda* is an ultimate source of knowledge because it is self-valid, as it is contained in the *Vedas*. In the sense of *jāti* or *ākṛiti* the *Vedas* are eternal (39). Not only *Vedas* but other scriptures which are self-valid and non-contradictory, are also eternal (p.101). Thus Bible containing universal truth in one sense is identical with Brahman. (p.99).

Accepting the *lakṣṇā* method of Śaṅkara in interpreting the *Vedas* by which he arrives at a new kind of meaning (*śabda-bodha*) in a new context, the author points to the importance of this method in Biblical hermeneutics for deriving new meanings from the words of the Bible.

While *anumāna* (inference) is finding the relation of two different objects present to us, *upamāna* (comparison) is finding similarity between two objects which are not present to us at the same time. *Upamāna* is derived partly through perception and partly through memory. With the help of the logic of *upamāna* the author argues that it is possible to establish that both the *Upaniṣads* and the Old Testament point to Jesus. (126)

The difference between inference and postulation (*arthāpatti*) is that inference tries to find out what follows from given premises and postulation tries to find out what is presupposed by the given. By relating our knowledge of a fact to a fact that is to be explained we arrive at a new knowledge. The author uses this method to solve the contradictions in a "suffering and dying God" by postulating the economy of salvation. Similarly to solve the contradiction of a "good Creator God and an evil world" we may postulate "human growth to goodness through freedom". Like "inference," the author hopes, "postulation" also can help us in correcting wrong theologies through the dialectical process of exhaustion *pariśeṣa* (p.127). Together with *lakṣṇā* method *śruthārthāpatti* (assumption of a fact regarding either a verbal expression or a thing meant by a sentence in order to explain a fact) can unveil the meaning of Biblical passages in the Indian context.

The last of the six sources of knowledge is *anupalabdhi* or non-cognition. It is the source of our immediate knowledge of the non-existence of an object. For example, the caste system in India is the expression of non-existence of goodness. This knowledge is the means through which the gospel for such a context is arrived at.

The author emphasizes the interpenetration of reason and revelation, solidarity between nature and humans. He observes:

A theology of the Universe and a theology of the human person and community and their interrelation are the need of the hour of Indian Christian theology and perception as a source of valid knowledge and an important factor of our theological method not only points to it but also accomplishes the need (p.88).

Perception as a method of doing theology in India has something important to contribute to the concepts of divine transcendence and immanence which has ravaged Western theological scene in this century. The author writes:

There is no gulf between God and humans, between God and Nature... Also it is God as our Inner most Self who illumines integral human relationship with Nature....." (p.89)

Every discipline to stand on its own needs an epistemological statute and in order to make it a legitimate discipline, an epistemological instrument adequate for the study of its object. The Western theology has developed its own valid epistemological statute in terms of its own particular phenomenological, hermeneutical, dialogical, transcendental methods. Indian theology to be a valid system of understanding truth and to be communicating it in India needs an epistemological structure of its own. The author is making an attempt to provide basic theoretical foundation for Indian Christian Theology. The author is not arguing that no other method is possible but he simply points to the need of one and the availability of such one as provided by Indian philosophy. As Prof. A.P. Nirmal points out it is high time for Indian theologians to think in terms of such a basic necessity, in order to avoid "philosophical sloppiness" (p.1).

The author has taken pains to delve deep into Indian philosophy and clarify the nuances of various philosophical categories which will considerably help theologians who want to use them in their theological exploration. The author's efforts prove that a serious dialogue with philosophical Hinduism is beneficial for Indian Christian theology. He also hints at the use of *pramāṇas* for an inductive and apophatic theology in India. The author intends to provide a modern liberative standing for Indian theology, along the established lines of Indian logic. It is a wellargued book which reveals scholarship and sense. Detailed footnotes are given which are helpful to further researchers.

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### **Dialogue in India: Multi-Religious Perspective and Practice**

*K.P. Aleaz, ed.,*

Calcutta: Bishop's College, (224 A.J.C. Bose Rd., Calcutta-700017)

1991 pp. xxxvii + 117.

This book contains the papers of a seminar on "Communalism and pluralism in India" sponsored by the programme for Religious Studies and Dialogue of Bishop's College in 1991. The programme aims at bringing Hindu-Muslim-Christian seekers of truth together through promoting study and research in the areas of neo socio-religious movements in India. The result of the first such study was produced in a book edited by Dr. Somen Das, *Women in India: Problems and Prospects* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1989). The

present volume, the second in this project, includes papers presented by religious leaders like Swami Lokeswarananda, Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, Prof. Hossainur Rahman of Haji Mohsin College, Hooghly, Drs. Russel Chandran and Surjit Singh, Prof. Y.D. Tiwari and Revd. Sujoy Banerji. In its second part the book includes articles devoted to the identification of Indian dialogical theologies by scholars like Drs. J.G. Arapura, Somen Das and K.P. Aleaz.

In his introductory essay the editor traces the milestones in the history of the interreligious dialogue in contemporary Christian theology both in the W.C.C. and the Roman Catholic circles. He notes the development in the Christian attitude to other religions from a confrontation approach to a common search for truth, avoiding exclusivism that would reduce evangelization to proselytization and dichotomies that would reduce dialogue to monologue. He also traces the dialogue atmosphere existed in the long history of Bishop's College through the efforts of its eminent teachers like Krishna Mohan Banerjea, Nehemiah Goreh, A.J. Appasamy, J.G. Arapura, Y.D. Tiwari, Charles Winkelmanns S.J. and P. Fallon S.J.

Exploring the Biblical roots of Dialogue Dr. Russel Chandran makes the point that absolutisation is not scriptural. Christology itself is not the ultimate but the intermediate stage for theology; God, the Supreme Being is the ultimate source of theology. In dialogue we have to move from God beyond God, that is, from our absolutized notion of truth to further revelation of truth. He also notes that ethical spirituality, commitment to changing the socio-political structures can be a starting point for genuine inter-faith dialogue. For him religion is an offensive as well as defensive weapon in the war against all forms of evil.

Swami Lokeswarananda in his presentation explains how religious pluralism is a blessing. Out of his long experience as a Hindu reform leader he says that the best way to escape religious bigotry is not by doing away with religion but finding an answer within religion itself, from its essence. For him religious freedom is a must for all civilized society and denial of it is an "act of violence" to a person's humanity.

Prof. Hossainur Rahman emphasizes the importance of the human person in dialogue. To a Muslim, he confesses, dialogue has not become a serious issue. But in many Muslim countries, he notes that there exists a sizeable number of other communities and therefore a need for dialogue. He also narrates how in Muslim countries the literary intelligentsia and the women human right

activists are engaged in serious confrontation with the fundamentalists for human freedom. He cites the example of the former Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mohammed Munir who openly argues for religious pluralism. In this respect it is instructive to note the observation of some Indian Muslim theologians like Allam Masriqui and Kwaja Hassan Nizami who accept Rama and Krishna as prophets and others who find unity between advaita and *tawheed* (unity of God) (S.J. Samartha, *One Christ Many Religions*, p.125).

Dr. Surjit Singh differentiates two types of communalism : one which provides for the integrity and indentity and progress of a community and another which destructs community by imposing itself over other communities. He also warns against excessive pluralism which destroys community by creating anarchy and chaos. He relates the problem of communalism and pluralism to the philosophical problem of one and many and appeals to the concept of unity in Trinity and to the advaitic principle of the undifferentiated whole of Brahman-Atman. He believes that a proper recognition of the Indian Constitution can reconcile the claims of the majority and minority by imbibing the values of secularism.

In his autobiographical presentation Prof. Tiwari recollects how he was inspired by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Mahatma Gandhi and C.F. Andrews to exercise a realistic and friendly attitude towards all religions even after his conversion to Christianity. He underlines his belief that "love" must be the centre for inter-faith dialogue. Revd. Sujoy Banerji narrates how the Bishop's college community was led to a humbling experience with its constant contacts with people of other communities to recognize the scriptures of other faiths and to acknowledge the experience of God's love that other's have.

The second part of the book begins with Dr. J.G. Arapura's outline for an advaitic Christology. He argues that Martin Heidegger's interpretation of *Dasein* (unity at depth) and the Upanishadic principles of "Aham brahmasmi" and "Tat twam asi" can bring together the dialectics of sameness and difference, where in each the other lives in absolute integrity, in relation to Brahman and Christ. The meaning of Jesus Christ implies an ontologically powerful way to justify the existence of the world, preserving the world from losing itself in the Abyss of Reality, the Divine Abyss of the Brahman. Also, the universal trans-historical meaning of Jesus Christ becomes actualisable in the actual universality and transhistoricity of the meaning of Brahman.

In his article Dr. K.P. Aleaz examines the dialogical theologies

of S.J. Samartha and Swami Abhishiktananda. He distinguishes two stages in the thought of Samartha: In his earlier thought Samartha has maintained that Christ must help Advaita to recover the sense of the personal, social and the historical; an attitude that almost rejects the Hindu thought. In his later mature period, in the eighties, Samartha develops a relative view of Christ's uniqueness as "relationally distinctive," acknowledging the "distinctiveness" of other religious responses to the mystery of God. This position was later further developed in his book, *One Christ Many Religions* (1992). Aleaz notices certain "contradictions" even at this stage of his thought, in his adherence to the usage of "distinctiveness" which in fact denies the unity of truth. Aleaz, instead, prefers the term "relational convergence." Abhishiktananda was of the opinion that the Hindu experience of Saccidananda should be remoulded to attain the Christian experience Saccidananda and once this is actualised then the renewed experience of Saccidananda would be the Trinitarian culmination of advaitic experiences. In spite of the sincere efforts of Abhishiktananda to interpret Christian theology in advaitic terms, Aleaz finds that Abhishiktananda's separation of heart and intellect as well as his understanding of experience as non-sensual are not doing justice to advaitic understanding of total personality and therefore he only makes a negative contribution.

Dr. Somen Das approaches the issue of inter-faith dialogue in the context of the contemporary unipolar world. Such a situation aggravates the evils of communalism and fundamentalism. Dialogue is possible only when Churches move from Christocentrism and Christofascism to theocentrism. Following Tom Driver's suggestion he argues that Christ must be reconceived in ethical and relativistic terms.

The book raises many questions to the Christians and people of other faiths. It challenges all to shed exclusivistic pretensions for the sake of a genuine human community. It raises some fundamental issues to Indian Christian theology such as the uniqueness or distinctiveness of Christ. If the aim of dialogue is to build a common cultural and philosophical basis for a harmonious and integral human living and action, modern secular scientific and ideological movements also need to become part of dialogue and one hopes that Bishop's College dialogue programme will in future give due attention to secular forces that shape modern society.

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**Christian Ethics and Indian Ethos,***Dr. Somen Das,*

Delhi : I.S.P.C.K. 1989.

**Weakness of Power and Power of Weakness :****Seeking Clarity, Credibility and Solidarity,***Dr. Somen Das*

Delhi : I.S.P.C.K., 1990

These two works present the biblical-theological-ethical perspectives of Dr. Somen Das, a leading Indian Christian ethicist and theologian on various moral issues confronting Indian society and the church. The former is a collection of various articles he published in learned journals both in India and abroad. This deals with many burning issues such as communalism, human rights, struggle of the Dalits, liberation of women, development of the poor in the general framework of the discipline of ethics. The second book contains six Bible studies which provide biblical basis for dealing with ethical issues. Taken together, they give a fair picture of how Christians in India can handle the issues confronted by them day today in church and society and make appropriate decisions.

At the outset the author makes it clear that there are no easy answers to the complex problems of our day. All moral issues remain in the "twilight zone" or the "borderline situations" of right and wrong and no readymade or predetermined answers will ever be appropriate or sufficient. Each situation must be analyzed in the best way possible and decisions be taken based on our Christian insight and the values of the Kingdom of God. He is trying to help the readers to ask the right questions by clarifying the contexts so that they may be able to make a decision for themselves. He distinguishes ethics from the legality of "dos" and "n'ts" and from common-sense or intuition. Imagination and intuition are necessary but they must be "examined and corrected" in the light of norms and principles established by the great tradition of Christian ethics. Decision may not necessarily always be the right decision; it carries "the calculated risk of being wrong". Ethical decisions are responsible decisions and it is in these decisions that we become Christians. Ethics has to be derived by action as well as reflection, involvement as well as detachment.

Before dealing with the particular issues he briefly examines the various ethical models developed by Western ethicists. This chapter is particularly helpful for students of ethics. He says that

the role of laws and rules must be limited to defining the criteria, the boundaries within which one can move within society. All Christian decisions and actions must be oriented towards the values, meaning and goals enunciated by Jesus in the idea of the kingdom of God.

The Second and third chapters deal with the related topics of sex, marriage, family and the liberation of women. The author makes bold criticisms of the distortions of human sexuality and asserts the importance of human body and, sexuality which is a divine gift that contributes to the distinctiveness of humanity. He deplores the cruelties meted out on women in terms of dowry system, child marriage and *sati*. He argues for a liberated society where men and women will share equal responsibility.

In chapters four to six he analyses the reasons for the alienation of Dalits, the issues of communalism, human rights and euthanasia. Employing the categories of Peter Berger such as externalisation, objectivisation and internalisation he finds that *svadharma-varnadharma* matrix has functioned as the "fundamental mode of alienation in India (p.43). He passionately hopes that the dalits will gain full freedom even though the journey towards that will be long. In discussing the issues of human rights he approves enthanasia, "merciful death", in certain circumstances provided the decision is not left to the individual alone, but taken in consultation with the family and doctors.

To analyze the question of violence and nonviolence in chapter seven, the author largely makes use of Gandhiji's interpretation of the "sermon on the mount". He concludes that Gandhiji has been a "practical idealist"; he did not take non-violence as absolute law; he was open and flexible to situations; he was not particular to be consistent with his previous positions, rather he was "consistent with the truth" as it was present to him at a given moment (p.91).

Dr. Das presents convincing statistics to show the insanity behind spending enormous amounts to war technology while two-thirds of the world are in abject poverty (chapter 7). He shows how unethical it is to advocate the traditional just war theory of the West in the context of heading towards a nuclear holocaust. In chapters nine and ten he contends for a responsible secular democratic form of government which will ensure the fundamental aspect of freedom of religion, very significant in the Indian context where religious minorities often live in fear.

In chapter eleven the author critically examines various concepts of modern Western technological development models like that of *pyramid, ladder or life-boat*, and points out their

impersonal and dehumanized nature. Dr. Das, instead, proposes the *swadeshi* (indigenous technology) and *sarvodaya* (welfare of all) as two principles of authentic development which are appropriate to Indian situation and at the same time people-oriented, as well as eco-safe.

The author's own ethical method is discussed in the concluding chapter. He presents the eschatological, future-oriented, method as a viable one distinct from the methods introduced in the first chapter viz., teleological, deontological and contextual. He acknowledges his indebtedness for this new "paradigm of transcendence" to the theologies of W.Pannenberg and J. Moltrmann. He finds their concept of future as having an integral relation to the present. Future is a gift as well as a task. "This future gives us freedom and courage to act, risk and struggle knowing fully well that there are disabling death-forces at work. This future is the enabling power moving us to confront, challenge and charge unjust structures and oppressive systems" (p.166). This eschatological method of decision-making sheds light on the author's effort of interpreting Christian ethics in India.

The second book of Bible studies under review elaborates Dr. Somen Das's attempts to derive ethics from the Bible. Here the author's focus is the church. He is very much concerned with "the rapid erosion of the church's credibility in terms of church's use of money and power". He also exhorts the church on "the need for authentic solidarity with the poor and oppressed". Only when the church is clear about the nature of this calling it can be credible. He finds there exists a certain *ecclesial schizophrenia* and because of this church's faith and practice do not coincide.

Dr. Das through these Bible studies shows why the church's worship must be transformed from a monotonous, mechanical traditional style to one that will evoke a divine sense of love and justice provoking people to engage in the liberational attitude and action in the world (p. 12). He draws our attention to Jesus' way of distinguishing "pseudo worship" of "empty phrases" and "many words" often used as an escape mechanism, from a worship that is in "spirit and truth", "service" and "sacrifice". An educative process, one of formation, deformation and transformation is needed— not a cerebral activity alone but one developing a keen sensitivity to the needs of the people; an integration at the cognitive, affective and behavioral levels. He relies on the Cappadocian Father's interpretation of *perchoresis* (coinherence) of the Trinity as a theological basis for the community living (pp. 28, 31). Jesus stands for the weakness of power which ultimately becomes victorious over the arbitrary and

reckless power of the world. Jesus' power of weakness liberates us from our stereo-typed perception of power and prevents us from becoming slaves to reckless power.

The author finds that there is an ambiguity concerning the will of God. Hence there is a lack of *political will* to confront the inroads of dehumanizing forces. Only by listening, learning and living accordingly we come to know the will of God. We have to have a kingdom perspective to discern God's will. By expressing our solidarity with the poor we fulfill God's will. Dr Das deals with theology not directly, for him theology is not given *apriori*, but it should emerge out of the confrontation of faith and ethics. For him God is one who stands behind and guides our actions, not one who projects himself/herself and dictates terms.

The book provides six orders of worship at the end; they invite us to a creative and meaningful worship experience related to the Indian context. One should appreciate the efforts of Dr. Somen Das who has taught in theological seminaries for more than two decades, to engage actively in the reformation of the church and society towards an integral community where all people can enjoy equal rights and opportunities, sharing freedom, responsibility and resources on the basis of the values of the kingdom of God. We may further hope from the author of such an acumen more substantial contributions in the fields of Indian Christian ethics and theology.

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