

BOOK REVIEW

Jose Eroorickal CMI, *Mystical and Missionary Spirituality of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2014. Pages 312; Rs. 240.00; ISBN 978-81-89958-88-6.

Recent times have witnessed a growing interest in the life and activities of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara. His elevation to sainthood has added impetus to the already growing fascination for his personality, contributions to the Church and the society, his vast writings and his pioneering leadership. The recently published doctoral dissertation *Mystical and Missionary Spirituality of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara* by Dr. Jose Eroorickal has enriched the growing body of the literature on Chavara. It sheds light on two important aspects of his life - mystical and missionary.

Although there are many writings on Chavara, and studies have been conducted on various aspects of his life, activities and literature, this research is quite different as it combines in one volume the twin aspects of his spirituality, namely the mystical and the missionary dimensions, which are the two sides of the same coin.

The book is very reader-friendly and is divided into four chapters. The reader is slowly introduced in the first chapter to the life and personality of Chavara. The second chapter takes the reader from the concept of mysticism to the mystical experience of Chavara, by making a journey through his spiritual canticle, meditations, poems and prose, which capture his profound God experience.

The third chapter is devoted to the analysis of the concept of missionary spirituality and his contributions to the missionary spirituality. This chapter not only delineates his missionary contributions, but also shows how he inspired and awakened a missionary spirit within the Syro-Malabar Church as a whole. The author traces the source for the enormous missionary spirit found in the Syro-Malabar church today to the missionary spark kindled by Chavara. Bringing out the missionary spirituality of Chavara is probably the most important contribution of this book.

The fourth chapter culminates in the theological appraisal of Chavara's mystical and missionary spirituality. This chapter on the one hand gives in detail the mystical path, mystical experience and the mystical expressions of Chavara. Besides, it studies the five stages of

his spiritual union. On the other hand it also presents once again his missionary spirituality. The missionary spirituality presents Chavara as an obedient son of the Church who emerged as a prophet of the time. This chapter dwells upon the implications of Chavara's mystical and missionary spirituality for the present day reader.

The present volume is based on the writings of Chavara himself which makes it more meaningful, deep and authentic. It is a ready-guide for anyone who takes spiritual life seriously as it presents not only the spirituality of Chavara but in a step by step manner the mystical path trodden by him. The five stages of Chavara's spiritual union is a pathfinder in spiritual guidance as well as an inspiration for every generation. The author has rightly researched into Chavara's passion for God and compassion for humanity. This book is a must for every formation house and ready handbook for anyone interested in deep spiritual life or passionate active life.

However, care could have been taken to avoid sloppy mistakes in the punctuation and use of language like inconsistency in the use of capitals. In page 206 *jnana* begins with small letter while in the next page it is with the capital letter. Similar mistakes can be seen throughout the book. The use of punctuation is not consistent throughout the footnote references in the book. For example, in the footnote numbers 2, 8 and 20 the spacing of the author's initial is not similar. In the same manner, some footnotes miss the full stop at the end (90, 91, 95, 109, etc.) while others have it.

The conclusion has less focus on the missionary aspect of Chavara's spirituality, although the author has tried to summarize the spirituality of Chavara as a combination of contemplation and action. He states: "In fact, the uniqueness of Chavara's spirituality is that both mysticism and spirituality prevailed in the greatest degree" (p. 279). The author's homiletics also emerges especially towards the end of the book. He *instructs* the readers that the three dimensions of Chavara's missionary spirituality "will add power to our dedicated life" (p. 284).

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