

Yiu Sing Lúccás Chan, James F. Keenan, Shaji George Kochuthara, eds. *Doing Asian Theological Ethics in a Cross-cultural and an Interreligious Context*. Asian Theological Ethics, Vol. 2. Bengaluru, India: Dharmaram Publications, 2016. 372 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 9789384964368.

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This remarkable volume holds the work of twenty-six Asian scholars from ten different countries, presented at the first-ever pan-Asian conference, “Doing Catholic Theological Ethics in a Cross-cultural and Interreligious Asian Context,” held in Bangalore, India, July 17-20, 2015.

This conference engaged the visionary mission of the Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church, first articulated at Padua (2006) and renewed at Trento (2010)—“to appreciate the challenge of pluralism; to dialogue from and beyond local cultures; and to interconnect within a world church not dominated by a northern paradigm.”

The concentration of multiple diversities in the vast reaches of Asia where Catholic theological ethicists live and work is unique in the ways it challenges the Catholic moral tradition and dominates how ethics needs to be done. Asian Christians often live as a minority amid overriding linguistic, cultural, religious, political, and economic systems -- which often militate against them. Thus, a central question is how can bridges be built among and beyond theological ethicists in a way that is adequately Catholic and adequately Asian (16)? An Asian response requires a unique kind of knowledge, sophistication, and creativity that is not so blatantly called for elsewhere. This volume is replete with exemplary demonstrations of scholarship carried forward in fidelity to Catholicism and authentic engagement with the wisdom and spiritualities of many cultures and traditions, while also empowering societies that are most marginalized.

This volume is organized according to three sections of the conference agenda: Doing Cross-Cultural Ethics; Doing Interfaith Ethics; and Catholic Theological Ethics in a Cross-Cultural and Inter-Religious Context: Future Perspectives. Three examples illustrate.

In the Opening Keynote, Vimal Tirimanna, CSsR, of Sri Lanka, challenged Asian ethicists to take seriously the “vast corpus of teachings since the 1970’s,” of Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, concerning how to lead a true and meaningful Christian life in the region (21-33). A truly Asian and Catholic moral theology is about an Asian moral agent within an Asian context; takes the Asian circumstances seriously; gives high priority to issues of those already born and living, along with beginning and end of life concerns; needs to address structural injustices that create abject poverty; recognizes moral behavior is addressed in Asian stories, symbols, and metaphors; knows that a rich plurality of options can coexist within the framework of fundamental Christian beliefs and enrich the life of Asians and beyond; and sees that engagement with healthy pluralism can open the way for doing theological ethics in the Asian public square.

Sharon Bong, in the Second Plenary Session, addressed a topic that rarely confronts Westerners: “A God by Any Other Name” (181-193). In Malaysia, where Christians number 9.2 percent and Muslims 60.3 percent of the population, the Church filed a series of lawsuits challenging the government’s ruling that allows only Muslims to use “Allah” to name God. In 2008 courts forced the Catholic press and Churches to use other terms. This was despite the fact that the translation of the Bahasa Malaysia Bible or *Al-Kitab* is based on the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. “The word ‘God’ in Hebrew has the same root as the Arabic language. So when ‘God’ was first translated into Bahasa Malaysia or Malay, the translators merely followed the Arabic Christian usage and retained the word ‘Allah.’ As ‘Allah’ predates Islam, it is *not* a creation of the Muslims and its existence does not begin in the *Al-Quran*” (183). Bong asked whether forgiveness or resistance marks the proper ethical response.

In her Third Plenary presentation, “Through Her Eyes: The Role of Women Theological Ethicists in Terms of the Future Development of Moral Theology,” Sr. Vimala Chenginimattam, CMC, calls for greater opportunities for women ethicists in moral theology in India (305-311). She laments the absence of lay women theological ethicists, and the few of India’s 60,000 women religious in leadership positions. Yet she finds hope in numerous women who as physicians, theologians, and lawyers work for justice motivated by faith. Issues including health care, marriage and family, gender justice, surrogate decision makers, social security, poverty, education, and the commercialization of women require women’s scholarship and reflection, she concludes.

This is a “must read” for experts and graduate students, and a fitting text for courses in Asian theological ethics. The substantive biographies of the contributors provide a helpful introduction. The extensive index is a welcome study aid.