

PREFACE

During my theological studies at St. Thomas' Apostolic Seminary, I regret to say, that hardly had I any awareness of the role of imagination in the process of evangelization, in the administration of sacraments and other liturgical celebrations. When I did my M.A. at St. Thomas' College, Thrissur, neither was I told nor did I learn much by way of relating imagination to religious faith except a few partial references in connection with the analysis of the poems of Milton, Blake and Hopkins. My experience in the seminary was that the theological formation did not leave enough provision for imagination, whereas the literature classes, in compliance with the university syllabus, had nothing to do with religious aspects.

But when I participated in a course on the Sociology of Religion in partial fulfilment of my preparation for my M.A. in Sociology, the idea of a combination of religious faith and imagination struck me for the first time. I was overwhelmed by the considerations of the prospects of and the problems involved in the merging of faith and imagination. The timely guidance I received from Dr. C.J. Davees, who is my esteemed colleague in the same department, ushered me to the literary corpus of Andrew M. Greeley, the American priest – novelist in whom I came across the culmination of the combination of faith and imagination. But for the scholarly suggestions, recommendations and proper direction, given to me by Dr. Davees, this venture would never have reached the shore of satisfaction. I am immensely

grateful to him, for all that he has done to me in the process of completing this thesis.

As a best-selling novelist in the States, as a Catholic priest working in the Archdiocese of Chicago, and as a Professor of Sociology, Greeley has made significant contribution to both the society and the Church. In spite of his busy schedule, he strained himself to provide me with some of his books and valuable advice without which I could not have commenced on and completed this research. He has been quite willing to clarify my doubts and answer my questions on many an occasion. To my knowledge, neither an individual nor a library does possess as many books of Greeley as I do, at present. My recognition of Greeley as one who not only did not find it a problem to combine faith and imagination, but also did justice to the demands of the various constituents of Catholic imagination in his writings, has made me an admirer of his. May I express my whole-hearted thanks to him.

Being a priest committed to work in and for the Archdiocese of Thrissur, I could never have completed this work, without the support of my superiors. I have no adequate words to express my gratitude to Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy, the former Patron of this college, and Mar Andrews Thazhath, the present Patron, both of whom have been the driving-force of my perseverance during all these years of research. My sincere thanks are also due to the two Vicar Generals, Very Rev. Fr. Raphael Vadakkan and Very Rev. Fr. Raphael Thattil, who is at present the Manager of this college, for their encouragement extended to me. I whole-heartedly thank all of them.

I cannot but mention the names of a few persons who have played a vital role in my life as a student, a teacher, a priest and, now, a researcher. All of them would have been extremely happy on account of my having submitted this thesis, if they were alive today. First and foremost, I mention my father, Mr. P. D. Rappai who slept in the Lord on 24 September, 1988. Late Archbishop Mar Joseph Kundukulam and the then Vicar General, very Rev. Fr. Ignatius Chalissery are the persons of happy memory who employed me here as a Lecturer. I also remember gratefully the services I have received from two of our former Principals i. e. late Rev. Fr. Paul Alappat and late Rev. Dr. Antony Porathur. I extend my indelible indebtedness to them by mentally prostrating at their feet, and earnestly praying, "May their souls rest in peace".

Last but not least let me thank Rev. Fr. Martin Kolamparath who assisted me in preparing the final draft, on a war-footing basis, but with utmost care. I thank him very sincerely. Let me also thank the librarians of this college, and the manager and the staff of M. M. B. Offset Printers at Mariapuram and M/s. Educare Infotech, Thrissur.

To be frank, I have been very much moved by the study of Greeley's novels. They have taught me the fact that there exists an inseparable relationship between literature and religion. Having been acquainted with Greeley's priestly characters, I am resolved to approach other priests with greater respect and more concern. This research has also renovated my own spiritual life and intensified my priestly commitment to the Church and the

society. I am sure that the perusal of Greeley's novels will be very beneficial to both the teachers and the students, as well as the clergy and the laity. His novels enable the students of literature to know more about the recent trends in American fiction.

For fear of exceeding space and time, let me confess that I have confined myself to Greeley's combined employment of faith and imagination in his novels. Many other aspects like the narrative techniques of Greeley, Greeley as a critic of the Church and the Government, the theme of women-

Words fail me to express my intense gratefulness to Pro. A. M. Francis, the Principal and Rev. Fr. Baiju Chakkery, the Bursar. They never ceased from urging me to go on with the work in full swing and full speed. They kept me always goal-oriented. I thank them immensely for their encouragement and support.

I can never forget the co-operation shown by my colleagues, especially, Pro. Bose Joseph, the Head of the Department of English. Pro. Bose Joseph has taken special interest in submitting my thesis to the University, at the earliest. May I extend to all my colleagues, my loving regards and ineffable gratitude. On this occasion, I also remember with immense sense of thankfulness all the teachers working in this college who have seen to it that I complete this work in due course of time.

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For fear of exceeding space and time, let me confess that I have confined myself to Greeley's combined employment of faith and imagination in his novels. Many other aspects like the narrative techniques of Greeley, Greeley as a critic of the Church and the Government, the theme of women-empowerment in Greeley's novels, the necessity of lay participation in Church administration, the future of the Catholic Church as portrayed in Greeley's novels, and the like deserve serious and detailed analysis. I have not entered these areas, for they are beyond the range and scope of this thesis. I hope more candidates will come forward to concentrate on these aspects, in years to come.

Summing up, to all those who would ask me, as to how I managed this, my answer will be one and the same. 'I praised the Lord, and the Lord raised my load'. I wind up these words making a final acknowledgement that in spite of all the scholarly corrections and directions, I have received from my guide, my friends and a lot of well-wishers, if any flaw figures in the ensuing pages, no one else is to blame, other than myself.


Devassy P. R.