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BOOK REVIEW

Davis Varayilan, CMI, Spirit and the Pilgrim Church: A Study of Yves Congar and the FABC Documents, Delhi: ISPCK, 2008, pages xii+267, ISBN: 978-818458-048-8.

The mystery of the Church is being contemplated and studied again and again in the long history of two thousand years. It demonstrates the fact that the mystery of the Church is always greater and richer than anyone of the models proposed and interpreted in the Church. Dr. Davis Varayilan, a promising theologian from India, presents a new book, *Spirit and the Pilgrim Church: A Study of Yves Congar and the FABC Documents*. This is a work rich in content and distinct with its clarity of thoughts and it inspires the readers, both in East and West, to comprehend the mystery of the Church with all its significance and implications related to our postmodern times. This book is presented originally as the doctoral dissertation at the Loyola School of Theology in Manila, Philippines.

This timely book presents a new theological window to interpret the Church's identity and mission. The author has meticulously researched the concept of a Pilgrim Church basing himself on the writings of the most important Roman Catholic Ecclesialogist of the 20th century, Cardinal Yves Congar, and the Documents of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences — the findings of a transnational body of the Asian Church which binds together various local Churches of Asia. We know that the Second Vatican Council conscientiously studied about the mystery of the Church in the context of our world and it brought out a plurality of complementary theological models. The models emerge depending on the responses to the signs of the times of our world. Dr. Varayilan believes that the contexts of our world today compel us to have a new model of the Church. For this reason, in his book he combined both the insights of Congar and the FABC documents.

At the time of Congar, the Church was defined as a hierarchical and juridical society. The Holy Spirit and the faithful were kept out of the ecclesiological consideration. Congar's Christic-pneumatic approach to the Church has rendered a way to overcome the excessive concentration of the Church on Christomonism — a focus on Christ to the exclusion of the Spirit to an understanding of the Church with the notion of inseparability of Christ and the Spirit — pneumatological Christology. Secondly we find a shift from the papacy and the hierarchy to the people of God, cultures and religions. An attempt is made here to bring out the intimate relationship between Pneumatology and Ecclesiology leading to answer the Asian pluralistic situation.

The author explains the significance of his study in three important areas: 1. The religiously pluralistic context of Asia which calls for an urgent response from the universal Church; 2. Balancing of the Christological approach of the Church with a Pneumatological one; 3. The complementarity of the Western and Asian approaches represented by Yves Congar. The work under consideration contains eight scholarly chapters and is divided into three parts. The first part analyzes the Pneumatological Ecclesiology developed by Yves Congar showing how it responds to the challenges of pluralism within the unity of the Church. The second part of the study focuses on the documents of FABC to clarify the Pneumatological Ecclesiology. The third part is centred on the Pneumatological Ecclesiology of Congar and the FABC to propose a Pilgrimage Ecclesiology: the Church as a Pilgrim Community of Disciples. Dr. Varayilan clarifies the Church's identity in relation to the other religions and proposes the Unity through participation, Catholicity through inculturation, Apostolicity through mission and Holiness through bearing witness to the faith. The local Churches in Asia have a vocation for realization of the Catholicity of the Church and it is done by "Asianizing Christianity" and not by "Christianizing Asia." The FABC has laid a strong foundation for Asianization of Christianity with its emphasis on the triple dialogue with culture, religions, and the people, especially

the poor of Asia. Dr. Varayilan affirms that the future profile of the Asian Church and its relevance in the pluralistic society will depend greatly upon its readiness to listen to the Spirit speaking through its own peoples, through other religions and secular movements, and to discern and follow the promptings of this Spirit. In this ultra-modern, democratic and pluralistic society, the success and the strength of the Asian Church lies in not imposing hierarchical structure, numerical size, or status and influence through its institutions in social and political spheres, but in the power and mobility of "grassroots ecclesial communities" which, empowered by the Spirit, follow an Asian way of thinking, praying and communicating the Good News.

The author most powerfully establishes the fact that the Holy Spirit is the inner Guide and Master of the Church's development and spirituality. The Church is co-instituted by Christ and the Holy Spirit. After the Old Testament and the New Testament we have now the Spirit Testament. The Church being a pilgrim community, she must be open to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit. Against the hierarchical and juridical ecclesiology the Holy Spirit is seen as Cinderella — the disregarded beauty of the whole development of the Church. The author reminds us to frame a new outlook by combining Congar and FABC and view the Church as a Pilgrim Community of Disciples. According to him this model of the Church motivates the members of the Church to imitate Jesus in their personal lives and follow Jesus-in-mission in the midst of a rapidly changing world. The author believes that the future of the Asian Church lies heavily upon the laity who live amongst adherents of other religions. Asia is the most religious continent in the world, not only because of the number of living religions but also because of the larger number of people whose lives are shaped by their religious beliefs. Christ reborn in this religiously pluralistic society of Asia will give the Church a new face.

Spirit and the Pilgrim Church is an admirable work and it contains plenty of rich insights and creative ideas to inspire the church leaders and ministers. This invaluable work will bring forth a new Pentecost in Asian and universal Church. I hope that this masterful work will

have greater readership and influence among the scholars as well as the students of theology and religion.

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