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## BOOK REVIEW

**John Kudiyiruppil**, *Oriental Theology*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010. Pages: xvi + 242. ISBN: 81-7086-579-4

This book is a general introduction to the Oriental theology. It has two parts with seven chapters. The first part deals with the non catholic Oriental Churches and the second part the Catholic Oriental Churches. It also includes a select bibliography, a list of Orthodox Churches and a useful index.

The first chapter deals with the non-catholic Churches of the Syriac Orient, and according to the author includes Church of the East and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, which is anyway a very broad division. We know Alexandrian and Armenian Orthodox Churches do not come under Syriac Orient, though they were influenced by it. This chapter enumerates the reasons of estrangement of the East Syriac tradition from the western world, with a small history of the Church of the East and its relation to Nestorianism. It also presents a short introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches of Antioch and Alexandria, including the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church.

The second chapter explains the non-catholic Churches of the Greek East (Byzantine) in the historical background of the Great Schism between East and West. The next chapter deals with the composition of the Eastern Orthodox Churches by giving a short description of each Church and listing them in the order of precedence. This also is more of a historical and statistical introduction than a theological description.

In the second part, the fourth chapter is a historical introduction to the various Catholic Eastern Churches and their relation with the See of Rome. The chapter five introduces the St. Thomas Christians of India (now known as Syro Malabar Church) with a short history, specialties in liturgy, discipline and the present state of this Church. It specially deals with the anomalous situation of the Syro Malabar migrants in and outside of India. True, the "priests and religious in large numbers are invited for the service

of Latin eparchies, inside and outside India while children of this ancient Church in diaspora starve and wither away for want of pastors of their Church, and proper hierarchical structure" (p. 115).

The sixth chapter is a description of the ecclesiastical dialectic between the Eastern Churches and the Roman/Latin Church. Though in principle all Churches are equal (in status), in practice "contrary to the spirit and written papal and canonical decrees, they [Eastern Catholic Churches] are made victims of a type of caesaropapism" (p. 125). Often, "they are critically judged, indoctrinated, mutilated, adulterated and altered to suit the western Latin mentality" (p. 125).

The last chapter is the longest one (80 pages) and true to the title of the book, *Oriental Theology*. The introductory part of this chapter points out some differences between Oriental, especially of the Syro Malabar tradition, and Latin traditions, the rest of the chapter deals with some of the typical claims of the Oriental theology which are scriptural, spiritual, monastic, ecclesial, liturgical, symbolic, mystical, pneumatocentric, doxological, eschatological, and the themes like Pneumatology, Trinity, Ecclesiology, Mariology, liturgy, Anthropology, soteriology and the mystery of theosis, Petrine ministry, etc. They give rather a very short introduction to go further and read and study more deeply.

Though this book is a general study, some of the things might be better organized and improved. Lack of thematic numbering and the flat way of using fonts confuse the reader at times. Footnotes also could be better organized to avoid confusion (for eg. see p. 71, footnote 83). In the select bibliography the work of Attila Mikloshazy's *East Syrian Eucharistic Pneumatology* is falsely printed as *East Syrian Eucharistic Theology*. Though these mistakes do not lessen the quality of the work they decrease the reader satisfaction and shall be avoided in the future editions.

This book fills the lacuna of a general introduction to Eastern Christian theology, as R. Roberson did to the Eastern Churches in general through his book *The Eastern Christian Churches* (Bangalore: TPI, 2004), though some of the materials here are repetitions from it. In recent times we can see an enthusiasm to understand and appreciate Eastern Churches and their theology, liturgy, spirituality and discipline deeply. Formerly Catholic Church would mean Latin Church, and Eastern Churches were considered only appendices to it. But the communion ecclesiology of Vatican Council II and numerous later studies in the theology and liturgy of the Eastern

Churches are changing this general perspective. Hope this book will help to accelerate further this change of understanding for good.

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