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### BOOK REVIEWS

**Kuncheria Pathil, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2017, Pages: xxxviii+189; ISBN: 978-81-8465-604-6**

A veritably wise human is a visionary having hindsight and foresight. He/she is introspective, retrospective and prospective, and has no today without yesterday and tomorrow. The author of the volume under review, Dr Kuncheria Pathil has been for decades a brilliant star in the firmament of ecumenism. He has a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the ecumenical movements in the whole world. This book, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement*, is the latest in a praiseworthy series of his books. Here he puts forth his experiences of the past, and his hopes for the future without concealing his apprehensions. While expounding the achievements and failures of the past ecumenical movements he gives valuable suggestions and prospects for the success of future endeavours.

The book reviewed here consists of five chapters, preceded by an extensive introduction after an estimable foreword by Prof. Dr. Konrad Raiser who is perhaps the most qualified and well known scholar and expert in the global ecumenical domain.

The first chapter which is a historical outline of the ecumenical movement, examines the nature of the early Church; its understanding of unity and ecclesiastical structure, the origin of discord and dissensions in the Church; the problems in the mission field which prompted the missionaries to work for the harmony of Christian denominations, and the consequent Edinburgh Conference which gave birth to the three global ecumenical movements 'International Missionary Council,' 'Faith and Order Movement' and 'Life and Work Movement.'

The second chapter looks into the Roman Catholic approach to ecumenism, and the Pre-Vatican II negative and defensive attitude caused by forgetfulness of the sublime and ideal administration in the

early Church, and to some extent revolutionary changes effected by Vatican II.

The author summarizes the Church's paradigm shift as eight points, which are worthy to be quoted and remembered by all Christians irrespective of denomination: "the shift from institution to mystery, from hierarchy to people, from papacy to collegiality, from the universal to the local, from the triumphant Church to the pilgrim Church, from the one Church to the many Christian Churches, from one and the only true religion to plurality of religions and from the Church to the world and kingdom of God."

An open and straightforward complaint of the author, which is undoubtedly just and reasonable, is that the Catholic Church still claims to possess the fullness of ecclesial reality and degrades the other churches as having only some elements of the genuine ecclesia.

The third chapter treats of the approach of the World Council of Churches to ecumenism. The World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh and its three wings, International Missionary Council, Faith and Order Movement and Life and Work Movement, which were briefly discussed in the first chapter, are further explicated here with their background and admirable effects. The other points dealt with in this chapter are the beneficial fruits of WCC such as doctrinal convergence on baptism, eucharist and ministry, mutual recognition of Churches, intercommunion and conciliar fellowship of the member churches.

The fourth chapter is a treatise on the challenges, hurdles, obstacles and uncertainties on the ecumenical roads. The author throws light on the irreversible cultural changes that have taken place in the whole world and boldly asserts that spiritual unity does not require rigid institutional unity, and that concord of Christians to be brought about by the spirit of Jesus is far more important than all ostentatious structures of harmony and unity. He argues logically and quite convincingly that any attempt at doctrinal consensus will be in vain and futile and an unrealizable dream, because religious experiences cannot be mixed and distilled to obtain a single spirit. To corroborate his argument he calls attention to the Christian denominational splinter groups that are sprouting up like mushrooms and multiplying all over the world, especially in Asia and Africa.

Chapter five, the last, discusses a few possible and reasonable routes or trajectories of ecumenism such as passage from institutional to

prophetic Church, recognition of plurality of meaning instead of singularity of meaning, movement from the centre to the peripheries, appreciation of indigenous and charismatic communities and harmony and intercommunion at the local level. According to the firm conviction of the author orthopraxis is far more important than orthodoxy.

The paper, printing and page lay out of this book is not only spotless and blameless but also literally perfect and superb. The only mistake to be pointed out is that several continuous lines on several pages have been repeated, which is a drawback in composition as well as an oversight in proof reading. But this imperfection can and will be dismissed as trifling when the excellence and utility of this book is taken into account.

The author should be lavishly lauded for his comprehensive knowledge, depth of logic, lucid style and precise and powerful articulation. In every statement he is genuinely 'ecumenical' which means belonging to 'the whole inhabited earth,' and thoroughly 'catholic' which means universal, limitless, boundless, all-embracing and all-comprising in his love-charged vision; he has regard for all Churches, all cultures and all nations; he speaks not as a narrowminded apologetic Roman Catholic theologian but as a sincere and passionate representative of the global Christian community.

All in all, this work is a highly valuable contribution to ecumenical theology and a must for all who are involved or interested in the field of ecumenism. The absence of this book will certainly be a capacious lacuna in any theological library in the world.

While congratulating the author without any reservation and thanking him cordially for this choicest gift to Christianity, I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all teachers and students of Ecumenism and Ecclesiology and to all Christians who desire to have a 'catholic' mind like the mind of Jesus.

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