

**ASIAN
HORIZONS**

Vol. 7, No. 2, June 2013

Pages: 422-424

BOOK REVIEW

Subhash Anand, *May They All Be One: Towards an Ecumenical Theology of the Church*, Indore: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, 2012, Pages: xxxi + 393.

This book under review is a collection of the research articles of Professor Emeritus, Dr Subhash Anand of Jnanadeepa Vidya Peeth, Pune, published in various journals and recently in book form. The central theme of the book is, in fact, Vatican I, Papal Primacy and Papal Infallibility which he tries to present from an ecumenical perspective. The book has a prologue, four long chapters and an epilogue. In the 'prologue' of the book (1 – 28) the author reviews the contemporary ecumenical journey of the Churches and points out the present ecumenical 'deadlock' not due to substantial doctrinal differences, but because of our 'heavy baggage of institutional concerns'. According to the author, what we need is a 'hermeneutics of suspicion'. What is often presented as sound theology is actually 'a discourse generated by a group in power, precisely to legitimize and perpetuate their being in power' (18). The author calls for honest, open and scientific study on all the issues. 'There cannot be any inter-ecclesial dialogue worth the name without a concurrent intra-ecclesial dialogue' (11). Our concern shall not be to prove our own claims but to move towards the truth.

Chapter one deals with 'The Ecumenicity of a Council' (29 – 90) with two sections, first, a historical part and second, a theological reflection on ecumenicity of a council. The Church is a communion, a participation in the Trinitarian communion. An ecumenical council is the visible expression of this communion in the Church. The author outlines the history of these seven councils, Nicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople II, Constantinople III, and Nicaea II. According to the present teaching of the Catholic Church, no council is ecumenical unless it is convoked, presided over and confirmed by the Pope (LG, no. 22). All these first seven councils were not convoked, presided over and confirmed by the Roman Pontiff. A real ecumenical council shall be for the promotion of unity in the Church and not to create divisions. Today as the Christian Churches remain tragically divided, is an ecumenical council possible at all, asks the author (73).

Chapter two is on 'the credibility of Vatican I'. As Papacy is the greatest obstacle to ecumenism, the author thinks that an evaluation of Vatican I's teachings on Papal primacy and infallibility is urgently needed. First, he

deals with the person of Pope Pius IX who was mainly instrumental in defining Papal primacy and Papal infallibility. Then he proceeds to the preparation of the work of the council and finally on the actual work of the council itself. In 1869 the famous Italian journal *La Civiltà Cattolica* carried an article proposing that Papal Infallibility would be defined by 'public acclamation' in the council. But the great historians of the time, such as, Ignaz Doellinger and Carl Joseph Von Hefele, were against defining Papal Infallibility, not to mention the strong objection of the minority within the council. According to the author, "Vatican I was not the struggle of the whole Church, prayerfully trying to discern the will of God. It was not the sacramentalization of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" (118).

The question of Primacy of Peter and that of the Pope is discussed in Chapter three (136 – 307). Papal primacy as such, a juridical one, is rejected by most of the other Churches. Vatican I's teaching on Papal primacy is said to be based on Mt 16: 17–18 and Jn 21:15-17. The author examines these texts, the Patristic testimony and the teachings and practice of the early Churches and the first seven ecumenical councils. The author concludes as follows: "Hence to claim that Jesus gave to a particular person direct jurisdiction over the whole Church is to read back into the New Testament the ecclesiological concerns of a highly centralized Roman Church" (272). Primacy is after all not primacy of jurisdiction and authority, but 'primacy of love' and primacy of service after the model of Jesus who emptied and humbled himself and became a servant. Then the leader will get real 'authority' which is a 'fraternal animation'. Chapter four, which is the final one, deals with the question of 'Infallibility of the Pope'. It is true that Bishops of Rome began to make exclusive claim of authentic teaching and interpretation of matters of faith from the 3rd century onwards, though this claim was consistently rejected by other Churches and Patriarchs. Today all the other Churches - Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican - reject the teaching of Vatican I on Papal Infallibility. The author examines the earliest references to Papal infallibility in history and the Biblical reference (Lk 22:32) and concludes that they do not mean what Vatican I teaches. The author concludes with a concrete proposal of setting up an expert team consisting of theologians, Bible scholars, patrologists and historians from different Churches to study this question of ecumenicity of a council and the doctrine of Papal primacy and infallibility to find out the truth and arrive at a consensus, which is absolutely necessary for Christian unity (341 - 42). In the 'Epilogue' of the book (369 - 393) the author makes an appeal for Christian unity and the unity of all humans by becoming a 'communion of love and service'. Christian unity becomes a reality only by the gift of the Holy Spirit as in the early Church. In concrete it is realized in praying together and celebrating the Eucharist together. The Churches have to become 'broken for the world' in love and humble service that alone can unite them and the whole humanity in the Kingdom of God.

I appreciate the work of the author who ventured into the field of theology, ecclesiology, history and biblical exegesis. The author makes the readers familiar with contemporary researches of scholars in theology, church history and Bible with a large quantum of references, footnotes and citations. I agree with the author that Ecumenical Council and the Episcopal College is the highest authority in the Catholic Church, which does not need the approval of the Roman Pontiff to make its decisions valid. However, there is no problem that the Pope endorses it as a juridical practice. Papal primacy was indeed a new development in the Church in order to respond to the needs of the time. But the way the Papal primacy is understood and exercised varies according to time, culture and needs. In my opinion, what we require is new interpretations of Vatican I's doctrines rather than its total rejection. This is true with regard to all dogmas in the Church. The element of truth in them has to be searched out, protected and reinterpreted according to our times. The author has not made any attempt to interpret the First Vatican Council's doctrines. In fact, Vatican I did not endorse the Ultramontane view on Papal Infallibility held by many at that time, but defined it with several very important conditions. No Pope can teach a new doctrine, but he along with the bishops only points out the invaluable truth elements in the deposit of faith handed over to the Church. I wish the readers of the book an enjoyable time in studying the book and having an honest conversation with the author.

Prof. Dr. Kuncheria Pathil CMI (kuncheriap@gmail.com)
Jeevadhara, Kottayam