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BOOK REVIEWS

Joby Jose Kochumuttom, *Second Vatican Council and St. Thomas Christians in India: A Historico-Hermeneutical Study with Special Reference to Placid J. Podipara*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, Reprint-2023, ISBN: 978-93-92996-15-3

While Christian as well as non-Christian historians continue to debate the arrival of Apostle Thomas in India in the first century AD, the Indian Christians and emerging scholars continue to study, relate, and celebrate the life, the mission, and the significance of the Apostle with special reference to the people called St. Thomas Christians who claim direct descent from the ministry of the Apostle. Kochumuttom's study is the latest endeavour in this line.

The general introduction sets the purpose and methodology of the research that has resulted in this important study. Working with historical and hermeneutical frameworks, the author has utilized sufficient primary and relevant secondary sources, making the study a captivating re-telling of an important subject in Christian history.

Chapter one outlines a comprehensive history of the St. Thomas Christians from their beginning (AD 52) to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Looking at Apostle Thomas as the Common Father of churches in Edessa, Persia, and India, it is argued that the common apostolic identity was foundational to intimate fellowship in liturgy and hierarchical communion among these churches. This chapter also highlights that after the Synod of Diamper (1599) the St. Thomas Christians were put under Portuguese patronage and their forced latinization caused a revolt (the Coonen Cross Revolt, 1653) and division among them for the first time in their history. The chapter closes with the story of the establishment of the Syro-Malabar hierarchy in 1923 and successive themes.

The second chapter narrates the participation and intervention of the oriental Bishops from India in the Second Vatican Council. It is opined that unlike previous councils, the Indian Bishops had taken full part in

the Council for the first time. They were engaged both in the Ante Preparatory Commission as well as post Council interventions. It is interesting to note that the participating Bishops saw the Council as a pastoral event (p. 138).

Placid J. Podipara (1899-1985), a Syriac Catholic priest and theologian, is the focus of the third chapter. His life, mission, contribution, role, and significance have been studied in relation to the theme of the book. Podipara has been celebrated as the “Father of the St. Thomas Christians” (p. 146). After a brief biographical study, the chapter focuses on Podipara’s role with special reference to the Second Vatican Council. A revealing argument in this chapter includes Podipara’s definition of St. Thomas Christians as “Hindu in Culture” (p. 174), “Christian in Religion” (p. 183), and “Oriental in Worship” (p. 187). Kochumuttom calls these appellations as different aspects of their single reality that complement their identity as Christians of Asian origin.

The fourth and final chapter explores the dynamics of the Law of Thomas in relation to the identity of the St. Thomas Christians. The Law of Thomas (Malayalam, *Palliyogam*) is defined as an expression of a faith experience that comprises the entire life – spiritual and socio-cultural – of the St. Thomas people. While the Synod of Diamper had condemned this Law, the Second Vatican Council had acknowledged its significance.

This engaging re-reading of the history of the St. Thomas Christians in the light of the documents of the Second Vatican Council concludes with a challenging call to re-establish the continuity between the church of the past and the church of the present. This is an inevitable source for everyone interested in Christian history.

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