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BOOK REVIEW

Kuncheria Pathil, ed., *Ministry in the Church: Cultic or Prophetic*, Jeevadhara Book Series II, Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2023, Pages: vi+298. ISBN: 978-93-92996-42-9.

The book under review, *Ministry in the Church: Cultic or Prophetic*, is a collection of 17 theological articles on various topics in ecclesiology, focusing on the question of whether the ministry of the Church is cultic or prophetic. Professor Kuncheria Pathil, who made significant contributions to the field of Ecclesiology, Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, Indian Theology, etc., and the editor of the present volume, selected those relevant articles on the ministry in the Church, originally published in the theological Journal *Jeevadhara*, with a view to explain and interpret the prophetic character of the ministry of the Church in the world. It is undoubtedly a praiseworthy attempt, as the editor himself hopes that it “may provide the readers a better and deeper understanding of the prophetic ministry of the Church both in the Church and in society at large” (p. 10).

Let me now whet the reader’s appetite by selecting a few notable features of the volume. The editor furnishes the volume with a running introduction to the development of the work. The Church has to be open to the Spirit, give up its triumphalist attitude, rethink its ways of doing mission, and evolve new ways of being the Church.

The first essay by Kuncheria Pathil is on the priestly ministry in the Church and stresses that the ordained ministers are called to continue the ministry of Jesus of proclaiming the Kingdom of God by their life, mission, and witness (p. 22). Openness to the Spirit, proper discernment, courage, and confidence to break the boundaries to reach out to the whole humankind with the Good News is the task. The second essay is also a reflection on Christian Priesthood in the light of Heb 2:17-18. Joseph Pathrapankal holds that, following the footsteps of the Lord, priests must represent God before the people and represent the people before God (p. 36), and as disciples of the Lord, they must derive power for their ministry from the Eucharist.

The third essay is a prospective reflection on priests in India. Situating the Catholic understanding of the priesthood, Dominic Veliath deals with the challenges posed by the contemporary scenario in India, the challenges posed to ministerial priesthood, and reiterates that the priest must have the spirituality of a disciple and become a symbol of Jesus.

The following essay by Thomas Kollamparampil presents the Syriac-Semitic Judeo-Christian views on priesthood as a much-needed complementary factor to the Hellenistic and Latin-Christian views on priesthood. The author establishes that the Syriac vision of the nature and economy of priesthood is thoroughly biblical, concretely anthropological, and participative in nature. The next essay titled “*Darsan* (Vision) and *Tapas* (Mission) of a Priest” by Jose Nadhikkara highlights priestly holiness as a gift and a task; and a presbyter is called to personal holiness by the very fact of priestly consecration (p. 94). As a man of holiness, Kuriakose Elias Chavara, with his rootedness in God extended the ministry of the Church to the whole humanity, and thus he is a model for all the priests. Patrick Gnanapragasam in his article, explores the nature of the role of the Church in civil society and examines whether it is inspirational and prophetic. In the context of civil society, the Church must play an inspirational and prophetic role. The following article by Poullose Mangai looks at the propriety and possibility of the Church’s involvement in social movements, which have collective mobilization, ideology, and orientation to change the existing situation (p. 111). The collaboration and involvement of the Church in the people’s movements would create a more humane, benevolent, and equitable society that safeguards the dignity and rights of all.

Maria Arul Raja expounds that the Church could be an active partner with civil society in enabling the subalterns to claim their legitimate share in the participatory democracy. Sebastian Painadath discusses interreligious relations in civil society and stresses the need of a culture for dialogue and harmony among religions. Therefore, the Churches should enter into dialogue with all religions, and the religious shall function as a catalyst and prophetic force in transforming society (p. 149). The next essay by Oliver Inchody is a serious reflection on the role of the Church in motivating and guiding the faithful and the entire humanity to minimize the effects of the present ecological crisis, which originated out of a lack of human respect for the integrity of nature (p. 159). The human rights

challenges and opportunities for the Church in India today are discussed in the next paper by Varghese Theckanath. He points out some of the contradictions that exist in the Church in relation to human rights and explores models for society to realize the values of human rights. Shaji George Kochuthara emphasizes the moral responsibility of the Church to fight corruption without compromise, by ensuring good governance, transparency, and accountability in its own structures (p. 200). Discussing the religious fundamentalism and the role of religion in civil society, Saju Chackalackal proposes the promotion of religious and secular education to root out fundamentalism. What is needed is inclusion and integration by facilitating differences within the matrix of an integral unity (p. 222).

The following three articles are on consecrated life in the Church. Kuncheria Pathil discusses the problems and challenges the religious face today and suggests ways and means to respond to them. Mathew Paikada delineates the historical circumstances of the evolution of consecrated life in the Church as well as the magisterial documents regarding the nature and purpose of the institutes of consecrated life. The following article by Jacob Parappally is a discussion on the role of hierarchy and the religious in the mission of the Church. He stresses the need of fostering communion, mutual collaboration and respect for the specific roles in order to fulfill the mission entrusted to hierarchy and religious (p. 270). The last article in the volume by Kuncheria Pathil deals with the Church in the postmodern cultural process today. As the postmodern cultural movement is an ongoing process in society in all areas of human life, the Christian faith community has to participate in it and contribute to it in a creative way (p. 289).

This edited work is a very relevant one and is worth engaging. I confidently recommend this second number in the *Jeevadhara Book Series* to both the teachers and the students of Ecclesiology. The volume would help them to understand the challenges of the Church and build up the Church of the future which is participative and capable of walking with the people with due responsibility and pastoral commitment. It gives due emphasis to the spirit and vision of Vatican II while expounding on the role and ministry of the Church in the world. The insights are relevant and extremely beneficial in the present context. However, a general conclusion and an index at the end would have helped to make better sense of the appendix. May be as the book is a compilation of the articles written

at different periods, some of the information (p. 123) remains yet to be updated. There are also a few pages with spelling errors (p. 7, 40, 69, 242). Though there are some such limitations, the book deserves the special attention of the readers. May many people benefit from this edifying work.

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