

## BOOK REVIEW

Kochuvilayil, George Thomas *The Juridical Figure of the Catholicos in the Catholic Church*, (Dharmaram Canonical Studies-23), Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bengaluru, 2019, pp. xiv + 214, price ₹ 400.00/ \$ 5.00, ISBN: 978-81-938683-4-8.

This work is an upshot of the doctoral research of Rev. Dr George Thomas Kochuvilayil whereby he establishes categorically the legitimacy of the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Church *sui iuris* in holding the title "Catholicos." Since the title "Catholicos" is not allude to the present Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO), in his research pursuit, the author makes an in-depth historical investigation and a logical juridical analysis of the pertinent topic to debut his arguments. The author, therefrom, hopes "that in the next revision process of the Eastern code the title 'Catholicos' will be considered" which would in turn "open a way for the re-union" of the non-Catholic Malankara Churches to the Catholic fold. Having established a strong argumentation, the author advocates that the "Congregation for the Oriental Churches has the moral obligation to acknowledge and introduce to other dicasteries the juridical figure of 'Catholicos,' the title of the father and head of the Syro-Malankara Church according to the Antiochene-Malankara tradition, which is complementary to the common heritage of the universal Church." He also makes a cautionary statement saying: "Unless the Congregation for the Eastern Churches fulfil the responsibility of safeguarding the tradition and heritage of an Eastern Church *sui iuris*, it may cause the diminution of the heritage of the universal Church. Thus, there can be a hindrance for 'the expression to the authentic catholicity and apostolicity of the Church'."

The author divides the entire work into three chapters with a general introduction and a general conclusion. Moreover, we find a well-drawn conclusion in each chapter towards the attestation of his opinions on the topic. In the first chapter, the author makes an analytical examination of the origin of the figure of Catholicos in the history of the different Churches and moves on with the presentation of the rise of the figure Maphrian in the same tradition of the Church.

The second chapter of his work is divided in two constitutive parts. In the first part, the author deals with the juridical analysis of the terms Catholicos and Maphrian, and explains the difference in power

between the titles of Patriarch, Catholicos, Major Archbishop, and Maphrian. In the second part of the chapter the author makes an erudite description of the reason for the omission of the term 'Catholicos' in the redaction process of CCEO. In this chapter, he also establishes that there is a difference in the juridical figure of Catholicos according to the tradition of each Church in which the title is used.

The third chapter determines the title 'Catholicos' and its usage in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. Here, the author illustrates the relevance of the title as part of the heritage of the Syro-Antiochene and Malankara traditions and the juridical position it occupies today. Subsequently, he makes an analysis of the rights and obligations of Catholicos along with the prerogatives of the Major Archbishop-Catholicos. In the same chapter he also makes a prudent study on the title Catholicos in the Ecumenical perspective and establishes that the title Catholicos in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church will not be a hindrance in continuing the ecumenical relation with the Churches of the Antiochene-Malankara tradition which are not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

This is remarkably a thought-provoking work and, it will certainly be helpful to those who engage in research, teaching or study on the title of oriental hierarchs. The author makes valid argumentations in justifying the title "Major Archbishop Catholicos," nonetheless, to a juridical mind, the title still seems to be canonically ambiguous as well as inconsistent with the canons of the code. This becomes evident since his study also brings to light that Patriarch and Catholicos are of equal ranks. For, he writes that the bishops in the chief cities inside the Roman Empire were eventually known as 'Patriarchs'. The same rank in the Churches outside the Roman Empire was called 'Catholicos'. So, the question is whether a Catholicos as a juridical figure, enjoy more power than that of a Major Archbishop? Further, as the study says according to the Antiochene-Malankara tradition, when someone legitimately assumes the office of the father and head a Church *sui iuris*, he also assumes the title "Catholicos". Considering the different grades of the Churches *sui iuris*, as per the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, a Catholicos could be then a Patriarch (CCEO cc. 55 and 56), a Major Archbishop (CCEO c. 151), a Metropolitan CCEO c. 155), or a Bishop (CCEO c. 174).

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