

BOOK REVIEWS

Kuncheria Pathil, *Ecumenism: Unity in Diversity*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2006, pages: ix + 215, ISBN: 81-86861-93-9.

Ecumenism: Unity in Diversity is a mature fruit of genuine insight into the theological reflection on the priestly prayer of Jesus “that they may all be one.” This volume is a fruit of Kuncheria Pathil’s continued and consistent thought on the ecclesial unity, which goes beyond the ecclesial reality and embraces also the whole humanity. Imbued with the spirit of the Gospel of Christ and rooted in the cultural heritage of India and seasoned with the ecumenical reflections of Vatican Council II and the World Council of Churches, Dr. Pathil makes a remarkable contribution to the Church of Christ and to the world at large. The book makes a passionate effort to demonstrate the sustainability of the principle of ‘unity in diversity’, which, to the author, is the essence of the catholicity of the Church and the solidarity of humanity.

Indeed, the book results from Prof. Pathil’s long and uninterrupted years of academic carrier in the Pontifical Athenaeum of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore. It has nine chapters, which were originally published as articles in international journals and now edited for the present volume. The first chapter is on unity and diversity: the Christian model of unity, which is the key to the understanding of the entire work. In the second chapter, the author discusses the twentieth-century encounter of the Churches, which paved the way for renewed interest in ecumenism. The third chapter is a study on ecumenism in the new pluralistic context, while the fourth proposes the vision of an ecumenical Church. The chapters five and six delve upon ecumenism in the context of Asia. Then, the author undertakes an analysis of different denominations and sects of Christianity against their historical background. In chapter eight, Dr. Kuncheria treats the divisions within the apostolic church of St. Thomas Christians in India and invites all to unity. The last chapter is dedicated to the discussion on the ecumenical formation in the Roman Catholic Church.

The point of departure in this work on ecumenism is the fact that “The early Christian communities were not homogeneous or uniform but diverse with different forms of ministries, different patterns of organisation, different formulations and articulations of faith and different ways of worship arising from their different historical, cultural and religious

contexts” (2). Hence, the conclusion Prof. Pathil arrives at is that diversity of the different local Churches is “an essential part of the original vision of Christianity” (4).

Though different causes to the divisions and separations in the Church are investigated, the author is of the opinion that they “were born in the womb of human sin, sin against the unity of the Body of Christ, sin on both sides, on the part of the those who broke away from the Church and on the part of those who excommunicated them” (18).

In the process of growth and development of the Church, there is the need for continuous dialogue. Prof. Kuncheria traces the reason for division in the “refusal and unwillingness to reform according to the times” (19) in the Church or any other religion. The argument of the author and that of the work is that “religious pluralism, denominational pluralism, doctrinal pluralism, and theological pluralism are the order of the day and they seem to be the irreversible pattern of the future” (20).

In the process of rediscovering the unity of churches, what is crucial is to perceive Christ as the centre around whom all the churches rotate than all churches rotating around one church as planets and consider the diversities and differences are of significance and complementary in nature (24-25). The discovery of the ecumenical movements, according to the author, is in the understanding of the rich diversity of the existing churches as “needed for the Catholicity or wholeness of Christianity. Plurality or diversity of the Churches is not only a historical fact, but a philosophical and theological principle” (26). The principle of unity in diversity, which could be understood as a phenomenon and the Christian religious model, argues the author, as “valuable contribution to a greater vision of the unity in diversity of the whole of humankind” (27).

The prominent thought that runs through and through the pages of this book is that “unity is not conceived today as uniformity, conformity and homogeneity; rather unity is conceived as *unity in diversity*, unity in faith and sacramental communion but diversity in liturgies, organisational structures, customs, practices and theologies” (197). All the same, the author appeals to develop “a new common Liturgy for all St. Thomas Christians” (200), which, to my mind, goes against the very spirit of the principle of unity in diversity, that the author seems to advocate. According to the author, the more acceptable model of unity is one of “Fellowship of Churches or Communion of Churches” (199).

As far as the principles of ecumenical formation is concerned, Prof. Pathil begins with four principles proposed by Cardinal Willebrands, namely, (i) a sound knowledge of his own faith and a firm adherence to it; (ii) a truly ecumenical openness of mind; (iii) education is necessarily gradual; and (iv) to take account of a variety of situations (208). The author concludes his work by proposing some of the problems and challenges that the ecumenical formation in India faces.

Dr. Kuncheria Pathil, a theologian of international standing, through the publication of *Ecumenism: Unity in Diversity*, has made an ecumenical contribution to the Church and to the world. It is a proof of his knowledge about his own Church tradition and his sincere openness to other traditions in the Church, and above all his commitment to Christ. The volume provides its readers the historical, philosophical, theological, and religious foundations for ecumenism, enshrined in the principle of unity in diversity. The issues discussed and the suggestions made in the work are of great importance and they call for urgent attention and concerted action. It is a resource book for scholars and students of ecumenism and all who are interested in updating the trend in theological investigation.

Paulachan Kochappilly

Joy Philip Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea: A Synchronic and Diachronic Analysis of Hosea 11:1-11* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 2 Reihe 14), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006, pages xv + 222, ISBN 3-16-14888-5.

Bible is the recital of God-man encounter. It gives articulation to God's attempts to make the history of humans his own. Especially the Old Testament part of the Bible depicts the human face of the Deity, who, so to say, cannot continue to subsist without the humans. To use anthropomorphic language, he assumes the figure of husband, lover, father, mother, friend, and even that of an adversary. He speaks in emotional language, and acts with zeal and fury, passion and compassion. The Book of Hosea is perhaps the most fascinating account of a passionate and compassionate lover-husband and a tender mother.

The book *God's Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea* is a modified version of the dissertation that was defended at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, in 2005. The theme is well studied and presented in a scholarly and scientific way as proper to a doctoral dissertation. The author

approaches the text from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. This provides a comprehensive perfection to the study.

God's Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea begins with an Introduction and ends with Summary and Concluding Reflection. In his Introduction, Kakkanattu makes an overview of research in the book of Hosea, states clearly his methodology and provides a brief survey of the study. Then, we come to Part I of the study which deals with the synchronic reading of Hosea 11:1-11. Chapter one offers a literal translation of the text with textual critical notes. This becomes necessary, since the Hebrew text is very corrupt and difficult to understand. The author provides a concise but precise translation. He has approached the text with an open mind. Thus, the translation is not vitiated by pre-conceived positions as we can find in the works of even the authorities in this field.

Chapter two is devoted to an exegetical analysis of Hosea 11:1-11. First, the author turns his attention to the delimitation of the text and its internal subdivisions. Then, he proceeds to a detailed analysis of each verse from the exegetical point of view. Semantic and syntactical aspects are brought out. Key terminologies are studied. Kakkanattu has taken great pains to dissect the opinions and arguments of scholars. His presentation is balanced, and he tries to tackle the issues from an objective level.

Major theological themes of Hosea 11:1-11 in relation to the entire book of the prophet is the topic of study of chapter 3. It deals with three areas. The first is a *historical retrospect* by which the prophet explains the Yahweh-Israel relationship. The Exodus event served as the foundational reality of the election of Israel. Out of gracious love Yahweh made Israel his children. This election demanded reciprocity from the part of the people. Unfortunately, Israel failed to respond positively. Indeed, they rejected him. Now the prophet reminds his contemporaries of their life of disloyalty and of the impending political and religious disaster. Although they merited punishment, Yahweh would not ultimately reject them since he is not a God of destruction, but a God of salvation. The second area deals with the sin of Israel, which consisted mainly in false worship and lack of knowledge. Thirdly, Kakkanattu focuses his attention on the Hosean portrayal of God. According to the author, the prophet presents Yahweh as the loving parent and the Holy One among humans. In my opinion, this chapter on the triple theological themes is the most enriching contribution of this scholarly work. Especially, the presentation of the God of Hosea is, indeed, fascinating. Some may find fault with the author's expression "Yahweh the loving

parent” since the word parent cannot convey the idea of mother, and vv. 3-4 clearly refer to maternal actions.

Part II of this book is set aside to diachronic analysis of Hosea 11:1-11. The author makes us familiar with the process through which the text has reached its final form. Chapter 4 studies the history of redaction of Hosea 11 in the context of the whole book. He critically evaluates various theories of redaction of the book of Hosea and finds the position of J. Jeremias more plausible one. Jeremias holds that the disciples of the prophet organized the sayings of their master and made his overall message available to successive generations. For the sake of making Hosea’s message relevant to newer situations, they seem to have added their interpretative comments and transitional phrases. However, they did not tamper with the basic perspective of the prophet that Yahweh is a God of enduring love who does not let Israel perish for ever and is ever ready to heal their faithlessness. I find Kakkanattu’s position more plausible than many other scholars.

In chapter 5 the author tries to situate the book of Hosea in relation to the book of the Twelve Prophets of the OT. One can find in all the prophetic books a unifying thread in depiction of the character of Yahweh. Basically, he is a God of love who cannot tolerate the unfaithfulness of his chosen ones. However, Hosea 11:1-11 poignantly depicts the picture of Yahweh as a loving, caring, disciplining, pardoning, and mercifully and unconditionally reinstating father/mother.

At the conclusion of the study the author summarizes the major aspects of the work and adds some final reflections. Let me cite from the last paragraph of the book: “The Yahweh Hosea 11:1-11 presents is a God, who is constant and faithful in his decision to love humanity. Ultimately, God is love and has the final word in all human vicissitudes. The God of Israel is a God who is a holy presence in the midst of humanity.”

The bibliography is almost exclusive. The triple index – source index, author index and subject index – makes the reading and referring the book a pleasant task.

Let me conclude with an observation on the title of this study. Kakkanattu has entitled it *God’s Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea*. I think that the author was inspired by the Hebrew concept of *hesed* which pervades the whole thought of Hosea, although he had explicitly used the word only six times in his book (2:19; 4:1; 6:4; 6:6; 10:12; 12:6). The term cannot be translated by a single word. It is compassion as well as love,

which is steadfast, enduring, faithful, forgiving, and forbearing. I would prefer to translate *hesed* as compassionate love, or better passionate and compassionate love of Yahweh, the father/mother has towards the child.

God's Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea is, indeed, a scholarly work. It will serve as a source book for those who want to do serious research on the book of Hosea.

Paul Kalluveetil

Jerome Vallabaraj, *Empowering the Young towards Fullness of Life*, Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2003, Pages 267, ISBN: 81-87370-19-X.

Empowering the Young towards Fullness of Life by Jerome Vallabaraj comes as an invaluable source for all those who are giving care for the youth, which comprise almost 30% of the total catholic population of India. The purpose of this scholarly work is well defined in the introduction itself: "to present some pastoral pedagogical non-negotiable principle or components that ought to guide one's ministry to the young" (2). The purpose intended is very much met in this work through a discussion spread over ten chapters.

The first chapter proposes youth ministry to be perceived from the perspective of pastoral theology and the human science having the domain of reflection and action which disencumber us to view youth ministry from three distinct perspectives: (i) critical, that is, derived from Christian faith and human sciences, which provides the rationale and criteria for youth ministry; (ii) contextual, that enables judicious analysis of present situation and context; and (iii) the strategic design perspective, that elaborates a concrete plan of action in term of inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches.

Chapter two, titled "Beholding the Young," invites all to the way in which the youth is to be perceived and recognized with an empathetic and dynamically optimistic outlook. "Towards Fullness in a Regnocentric Vision," the third chapter, puts forward an invitation to go beyond the existing paradigms in youth ministry in Indian and Asian contexts. A paradigm shift from ecclesiocentric, where the church defines its mission, to the regnocentric perspective, where the mission proclamation and establishment of Kingdom of God defines the church, is very much emphasized.

Fourth chapter shows how to change the traditional concept of considering young as object of youth ministry to treating them as ‘agent-subject in relationship’ in which it is not the power over them that works but concientize them with their infinite potencies, dynamic capacities, and abilities so that they can realize and express themselves as subjects in being and becoming in the world. The regnocentric youth ministry is to hold together the diverse polarities and should avoid forms of dichotomy between poles like education and evangelization, for that a fourfold journey is highlighted in the fifth chapter: a journey towards human maturity, a journey to an authentic faith in God, a journey towards a personal life choice, and a journey towards an intensified participation in the life of the group, community, or society.

“Animating a Process-Oriented Youth Ministry,” the next chapter, speaks of a new style of moving away from a mentality of dominance to an animating mentality and makes an inquiry into the intrinsic tasks and style contained in the term animation and drives out its consequences for a process-oriented youth ministry. The seventh chapter invites youth ministry to move from individual-centred approach to a community-centred one, becoming an Educative-Pastoral Community. The fundamental core values that enable the Educative-Pastoral Community to become a true community are well explained and the core process included in it.

Youth ministry being a visionary mission, it needs proper planning through which the ministry would be able to envisage the young in their concrete situation, so that its fruitfulness and effectiveness could be achieved. The identification of the character of proper situation and the characteristics and principal moments in the planning process are discussed in the next chapters. The last chapter is about the salient features of the National Youth Ministry Plan published by the CBCI in 1996 and it ends with an appraisal of this plan.

The task of youth ministry is to equip the youth for their mission in this world and it is surely a praiseworthy contribution to the Church since her centre of attraction is the youth, especially as they are the hope of future. For a youth minister, “an apostle of the youth,” who works not only for or among the youth, the bearers of the seed of the kingdom values, this book serves as a guideline that helps to become “a doer by becoming a thinker” of youth ministry.

Pradeep Aerthayil