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Prof Kurien Kunnumpuram **SJ: Committed to the Country** **and Church**

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A special volume has been brought out in honour, **Prof Dr Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ**, Professor (Emeritus), Systematic Theology, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. He was the pioneer of Vatican II reforms in India and the editor of *Asian Journal for Religious Studies*.

After having specialised in Vatican II, he has been teaching various subjects like Theological Anthropology, Ecclesiology and Priesthood for more than thirty years. After his retirement, he has been editing two journals, *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* and *Asian Journal of Religious Studies*.

Dr Kunnumpuram is a versatile personality: a committed professor of theology, creative thinker, prolific writer, gentle mentor and compassionate guide to many people. As a professor of theology, he has been the pioneer to introduce and enable the vision of Vatican II to the Indian Church. As a thinker, he has contributed significantly to an Indian theology that is both contextual and relevant. As a writer, he

has founded *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* and edited *Asian Journal for Religious Studies*, besides his own numerous books. As a mentor, he has been inspiring a countless number of students in their academic and affective progress. As a guide, he has been accompanying numerous persons in their intellectual and spiritual journey. In short, he has been a critical, creative and gentle personality who has touched the lives of many people respectfully and reverentially! He cherished freedom, affirmed the dignity and accepted others as they are and rejoiced in the happiness of others!

Coming to the academic part: as a theologian and teacher, he has been pleading for a Church that is more human and promoting human persons who are more liberated and liberating. He has been consistently pleading for a spirituality that is rooted in a personal encounter with God and in the deepest human values! One of his last contributions to theology has been single-handedly editing the collected works of Samuel Rayan, a six-volume work. A remarkable contribution to the Indian Church!

Considering his invaluable contribution to Indian Christian Theology, we are planning to bring out a compilation of articles in book form in his honour. The articles are related to the themes that have been dear to Kurien: Church, human beings and spirituality. Some articles are based on his chosen writings and are meant to continue the path of theological reflection on the Indian soil.

After elaborate planning and exchange of views, the seminar was organised at Kozhikode (Calicut), Kerala, on October 17-18, 2018, with the wholehearted support of the Jesuit Province of Kerala. Eighteen theological papers were presented during these two days. Kurien had a stroke on 17

Nov 2017, and he was bedridden, and so he could not take part in this Seminar which he was eagerly preparing for. Unfortunately, just five days after the seminar, on Sunday, October 23, 2018, Kurien passed away peacefully and joyfully!

After the seminar, some more papers were added to explore Kurien's contribution to Indian Christian theology from various angles. Thus, this volume has thirty-four articles – all being expressions of love and gratitude to Kurien for what he has been personally and professionally. The introductory article by MK George SJ, Provincial, Kerala Province of the Society of Jesus, is adapted from his inaugural address at the seminar. It gives an overview of Kurien as a person and a theologian who has contributed significantly to the Indian Church. The other articles are organized into five broad sections. The first section is on Commitment to the Indian Church. Francis X D'Sa SJ, a colleague and friend of Kurien, explores the need to return to the original charism of the Church based on the cosmotheandric vision of Raimon Panikkar. The next article by Isaac Padinjarekuttu dwells on the spirit of Vatican II as the impetus for Church renewal, a theme close to the heart of Kurien. This is followed by a critical study of Onesimus in Philemon by Arul Samy ALCP/OSS, a renowned scripture scholar. Sr Shalini Mulackal PBVM challenges the Church to reclaim its prophetic mission for the poor. Paul Thelakat, reflects on the repeatable tragedy that Church at all times is confronted with. Thomas Karimundackal studies a new way of being a prophetic priest in India based on the Prophet Amos. This is followed by an article by Evelyn Montero, who pleads for a renewed participation of the poor and underprivileged in the life and spirituality of the Indian Church. This is followed by a fervent plea for radical change in the Church, by Kochurani Abraham, a

feminist theologian. Denis Rodrigues, a lay thinker and close associate of Kurien, concludes this section by pleading for a mystical Church, inspired by Karl Rahner.

The second section deals with the Church's basic openness to the world. Two American biologists discuss the future of evolution and evolutionary biology, leading us to encounter the possible collective destiny of the human family. Christian Bauer from the University of Innsbruck and a close admirer of Kurien, focuses on Church's interaction with the social media through "*Inter mirifica* heute: Eine Relecture im digitalen Zeitalter." The issue of dialoguing with other religions is further reflected on by Andreas Vonach, Old Testament scholar, University of Innsbruck, when reflects on the relevance of *Nostra Aetate* with special reference to Hinduism and Buddhism. The next two articles pay attention to the theme of ecology. The first one by Isaac Parackal relates ecology to the Eucharist, and the other by A.L. Christopher Roach, a systematic theologian, dwells on the anthropology and ecology in *Laudato Si'*, topics close to the heart of Kurien. The final article in this section is by Job Kozhamthadam who deals with the Church's openness to the world in general and science in particular.

Dialoguing with other religions is the theme of the next section. The article by Joseph Mattam explores the general principles in dialoguing with other religions. Anoop Anto MSMI, inspired by Kurien, studies the salvific significance of other faiths in the teachings of post-conciliar documents. Mathew Chandrankunnel CMI tries to draw the wisdom from Christian, Buddhist and Hindu religious practices. James Ponniah dwells on shared religious spaces in different religions that can promote mutually beneficial encounter among religions. Sebastian Painadath SJ, a close colleague of

Kurien, compares the spiritual experiences of the Upanishads (*advaita*) and the early Christian fathers (*theosis*). The final article by VM Jose investigates the liberative and societal dimension of authentic religious experiences.

The fundamental human search for truth and quest for dignity is the theme of the next section. As a basic condition for this search, Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, OFM Cap raises some fundamental questions on theological truths. The article by Nishant A. Irudayadason explores the relationship between theory and praxis with special reference to theology. M.D. Joseph reflects on our collective search for truth, based on the philosopher-saint, Edith Stein. The last two articles of this section deal with human dignity, a major theme in Kurien's thought. Bishop (Emeritus) Thomas Menampampil, reflects on the meaning of human rights in a globalised world, while J. Charles Davis, discusses the two faces of dignity in terms of "Secured Worth" and "Required Recognition."

The last section of the book deals with spirituality that humanises, a theme to which Kurien devoted his entire life. Stephen Chundanthadam SJ tries to understand Kurien's own spirituality in terms of "fullness of life." Dr Victor Ferrao dwells on carnal hermeneutics and the dynamics of divine-human love. This is followed by an article by P.T. Mathew, SJ, co-organiser of the Seminar and co-editor of the book, on "formation of the heart" that is badly missing in the training of priestly candidates today. The article of Surekha Lobo focuses specifically on spirituality that humanises, drawing inspiration from Kurien himself. Paulraj Mariapusham dwells on the love commandments in St. Paul's letters, a theme personally encouraged by Kurien.

The concluding article is by Kuruvilla Pandikattu, co-editor of the book. It draws on hope, joy and freedom, which

remain the core values Kurien nourished, both as a Christian and as an author, as elaborated in his last book. It visualises a Christian living that is rooted in Christ joyfully and lovingly and at the same time affirms the freedom, dignity and worth of fellow human beings!

As for the title of this edited work: *Committed to the Church and the Country: Exploring the Theological Contributions of Prof. Dr Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ*. As we know, Kunnumpuram has been a person passionately devoted to the Church and the Nation. He was rooted in the rich heritage of India and that of the Church. He embraced the values, vision and ethos of India and the Church. He felt entirely at home in the Indian culture and Christian fellowship. His was truly a life of devotion to the country and commitment to the Church. We hope that the readers of this book will be good citizens and committed Christians!

May this volume be a modest contribution, inspired by the life of Prof Kurien Kunnupuram, SJ, to foster a shared and collective life of love, joy, peace and freedom for every individual in our vast human family! May this book further the vision of Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ who accepts, affirms and respects every individual! The book is edited by Kuruvilla Pandikattu, SJ and PT Mathew, SJ and published commonly by Christian World Imprints, New Delhi and Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune.



Litany for Priests

Let us pray for the Holy Father: fill him with courage and grace, O Lord.

Cardinals, archbishops, and bishops: give them a shepherd's heart, O Lord.

Diocesan priests: fill them with your Spirit, Lord.

Priests in religious orders: perfect them in their calling, Lord.

Priests who are ill: heal them, Lord.

Priests who are in danger: deliver them, Lord.

Priests who are weak: strengthen them, Lord.

Priests who are poor: relieve them, Lord.

Priests who have lost their zeal: renew them, Lord.

Priests who are sad: console them, Lord.

Priests who are worried: give them peace, Lord.

Priest who are old: sustain them, Lord.