

selves wholeheartedly? Except for the Ōtani-ha, no Japanese Buddhist group seriously attempted to engage Korean Buddhists for more than a few years at a stretch. The lack of interest in a Buddhist alliance from Takeda's superiors—one of whom complained in 1910 that it would be of “no benefit or convenience . . . whatsoever” (p. 273)—may be less anomalous than the argument in this book imagines them to be. In this regard, there is room for future positive reassessment of Japanese Buddhist groups' decision *not* to propagate to outsiders—a decision whose scope is not limited to members of other ethnic groups, but extends even to fellow Japanese of different persuasions.

*The Philosophical and Theological Aspects of Interreligious Dialogue: A Catholic Perspective.* By Jose Kuruvachira. Christian Heritage Rediscovered Series. New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2015. 177 pages. Hardcover: ISBN 9789351480822.

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Catholic writers on interreligious dialogue, or participants in live dialogues, usually write or speak against the background of a specific series of authoritative documents that were launched from the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) onwards and that spell out various Catholic overtures to non-Christian religions. It is apparent that there are certain patterns from which it is not easy to depart, for example a close connection with mission and propagation. At the same time the documents do reflect a gradual opening of paths to dialogue that have become available for Catholic theologians to follow without straining their personal relations with Vatican-led orthodoxy.

It is the great merit of the book under review that the key documents in this series, issued between 1964 and 1991, are carefully, helpfully, and critically introduced one after another. The author, Jose Kuruvachira, being Professor of Philosophy of Religion, History of Religions, and Interreligious Dialogue at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, is well placed to do this. While presenting the materials in a fully detailed yet accessible manner, Kuruvachira also packages his presentation with a certain amount of methodological reflection on the nature and practical options of dialogue. These “philosophical and theological aspects,” as they are referred to in the title, provide an informative and stimulating context for the documents themselves.

As the story unfolds Kuruvachira also brings in useful references to leading protagonists of recent years, such as Michael L. Fitzgerald, who have creatively assisted in bringing newer perspectives to life. Bishop (and later Archbishop) Fitzgerald led the (Catholic) Secretariat for Non-Christians from 1987 to 2002, was President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue from 2002 to 2006 and is well known for his work in the field of Christian-Muslim relations. However, the detailed story of Catholic forays into interreligious dialogue, in all the various parts of the world, would not have fitted into this usefully compact volume. Moreover, as Kuruvachira points out in his conclusions, while the road to dialogue was formally opened with the papal encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* in 1964, the fourth document presented here, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, dates from 1991. As this is now some twenty-five years ago, there is a need for a next stage to be ventured. In the meantime the world has moved on considerably, and many of the questions asked today are new ones or at least are newly framed.

So the value of this book lies above all in the step-by-step presentation of the four leading documents of what in retrospect may come to be regarded as the initial phase of the Catholic Church's dialogue with non-Christian religions. The first of these is the encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1964. Its significance lies in the fact that, although the Second Vatican Council was already in progress, this initiative gave basic papal encouragement to the opening towards other religions, which was one of the concerns of the council during its sessions in 1964 and 1965. In fact *Ecclesiam suam* does not go into very much detail with regard to other religions, and preserves intact the overall claims of Christianity to be "the one and only true religion" to which others should be drawn in a process of conversion. On the other hand, Paul VI spelled out four virtues as pre-requisites for dialogue: clarity, meekness, confidence, and prudence. This in itself implied that Catholics should step forward in these matters, while maintaining the right spiritual attitude. At best, the acknowledgement of the existence of other faiths opened the door to the recognition that more theological work was needed in this direction. It was with this in view that the "Secretariat for Non-Christians" was set up in May 1964.

*Nostra aetate* ("In Our Times") is a short but influential document emanating from the Second Vatican Council. It refers to other religions in general, to Hinduism and Buddhism in particular, to Islam at slightly greater length, and above all to the question of Catholic-Jewish relations which for obvious reasons are regarded as being of particular importance. In view

of the brevity of this text, it can hardly be expected that representatives of these religions would really discover the fullness of their own worlds of experience here, and yet the notes struck are quite straightforwardly and intentionally positive. The spiritual richness of Hinduism and Buddhism are praised, the monotheism and the submission to God found in Islam is highly valued, and the common heritage shared by Christians and Jews is held aloft. The whole of this short text is given in English as an appendix to the book. To third party readers, it may seem to contain little or nothing that had not been obvious to liberal Protestant theologians or students of comparative religion for many years, if not decades. However, as Kuruvachira points out, the great value of *Nostra aetate* lay in the wide pastoral impact it had throughout the Catholic Church, leading to an attitude of openness and tolerance towards those of other faiths, even while difference was clearly maintained. So under the general flag of *aggiornamento*, characteristic of the council, the Catholic Church was catching up with the times in this regard too.

Things became more interesting for the wider world with the two further documents under consideration here, namely *Dialogue and Mission* (1984) and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991). These are marked by much greater reflectivity on the possible nature of relations between different religions and the ways in which it might be possible for Catholic theology to interact with selected partners in dialogue. These documents also evince a greater awareness of the options explored by non-Catholic Christian theologians, this being an awareness Kuruvachira himself evidently shares. At the same time, not unexpectedly, the backdrop of systematic Catholic doctrine is maintained as the ultimate reference point, and this has a determining influence on the way in which interreligious relations are conceived. The abbreviated titles give an important clue, for they suggest a continuing unease about "dialogue" insofar as it might be feared to compromise the "mission" of the Church presumed to lie in the "proclamation" of the Gospel. However the longer titles should also be noted, for they illustrate the much more reflective and open attitude implied by "dialogue" which had by then also come to be part of the official vocabulary of the Vatican. In official English translation (the originals having been in Italian), the first title runs in full: "The Attitude of the Church toward Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission," while the second runs: "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." The contents of these documents cannot be introduced in detail here, but it is significant

that they consider dialogue in a very broad sense, both with other religions and with “culture” in general. Additionally, the documents point to possible fruits and spiritual benefits of mutual dialogue, and also to hesitations and obstacles that may need to be overcome through a deeper understanding of and confidence in one’s own faith. Kuruvachira guides us through all these ins and outs with great didactic skill.

So where does this phase of the Catholic exploration of relations with other religions leave us? It should not be overlooked that, quite apart from the working out of key positions in these documents, there have in the meantime been numerous meetings between Catholic theologians and representatives of other faiths, both major ones such as Islam and Buddhism (either of which could be regarded as a cluster of varied faith traditions) or ones with less impact on the world scene such as the Japanese religion Tenrikyō. In other words, recent decades have seen a considerable putting into practice of some of the reflections and attitudes set out in the texts. The work continues to be constrained, as indeed one would expect, by the dominant patterns of Catholic theology, and so whether this approach seems bold or cautious will depend on the point of view.

It is perhaps characteristic that, in his own reflections, Kuruvachira cautiously adduces a fourfold analysis of dialogue models by Paul Knitter (a controversial figure in Catholic circles), and makes it very clear that in his view it is only the “fulfilment model” that can really be countenanced in the Catholic Church or, as he avers, other mainstream churches. In brief this model presupposes that “the value of non-Christian religions consists in that they are a preparation for the Gospel” (p. 144). By contrast, the “replacement model” which rejects any idea of truth or salvific value in non-Christian religions is simply too negative and not dialogical at all; but in the other direction neither the “mutuality model” nor the “acceptance model” can be accepted by the Catholic Church, states Kuruvachira (pp. 144–45). But does this particular fourfold analysis, and Kuruvachira’s selection, really show a way forward? Perhaps there will be yet new ways, new models, in which faithful commitment (which some but not all understand as detailed doctrinal loyalty) can be found to go hand in hand with the sensitive exploration of religious worlds in their plurality. In the meantime, the book under review will be an instructive guide to the mainstream Catholic orientation in these matters.