

Towards a New Humanity Kurien Kunnumpuram Revisited

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Abstract: Kurien Kunnumpuram as a theologian is a champion of Vatican II and its reform. The manner and the style in which his writings are structured indicate both his scholarly bent for Vatican II's concerns as well as his personal interest in an inculturated theology. These concerns are evident in *Ways of Salvation*, one of his seminal works based on Vatican II. Kunnumpuram understood that "a conciliar decree cannot give systematic and detailed instructions for a such a vast process in the history of humankind, but only enunciate a few guiding principles which can decisively influence, in the long run, the national position of a missionary Church". This article discusses elaborately two claims about the Church's mission: (1) "The one mission of the Church receives its specification from the actual context in which it is exercised, in the concrete situations in which it is fulfilled" and (2) "Mission of the Church is to collaborate with God in his work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ."

The author concludes the article by asserting that his attempts to devise an indigenous theology of the Church proves that Kunnumpuram's concerns are post-conciliar. Though his works are primarily descriptive, he harmonizes various conciliar and post-conciliar teachings and principles for a contextual ecclesiology. Vatican II has "proved to be a point of departure rather than of arrival for the Indian Church." And Kunnumpuram can be credited with keeping alive the thrust of Vatican II for an inculturated Church in India, and above all the Church as a sacrament of the Kingdom of God in all times. That is an invitation for a new humanity.

Key words: Ecclesiology, Indian Church, Vatican II, Church's mission, hope, sacrament, inculturation.

The well-known Indian theologian Kurien Kunnumpuram,¹ under consideration of this paper,² might be considered a champion of Vatican II in bringing about a spirit of renewal in the Indian Church.³ The manner and the style in which his writings are structured indicate both his scholarly bent for Vatican II's concerns as well as his personal interest in an inculturated theology. These concerns are evident in *Ways of Salvation*, one of his seminal works based on Vatican II.⁴ Kunnumpuram understood that "a conciliar decree cannot give systematic and detailed instructions for a such a vast process in the history of the humankind, only a few guiding principles can be given but these can decisively influence, in the long run, the national position of a missionary Church."⁵

Claim 1: Context of the Mission of the Church

In tune with his theological vision, we can highlight two important claims around which his writings are focused.

1) "The one mission of the Church receives its specification from the actual context in which it is exercised, in the concrete situations in which it is fulfilled" (cf. AG 6).⁶

S. Brechter has observed that "the [Church] has not become entirely native anywhere, but has everywhere remained western,"⁷ but the concern of Vatican II was that the Church truly become a world Church that imbibes the true spirit of the term catholicism. In this context it is worth referring to Congar who affirmed that in the theology of catholicity the element of reciprocity is predominant.

It is quite certain that this catholicity has a source from above, namely Christ's 'pleroma', but it also has a source as it were from below, namely, the indefinite powers of human nature. The Church is the actualization of the mystery of Christ in mankind. It is therefore called- and this is a source of its essential missionary character- [join] what is in Christ for mankind and for the world, and what is in mankind and in the world for Christ.⁸

Following the same line of thought, Kunnumpuram affirmed that the local Church cannot become a province or an administrative unit of a Church that is grown elsewhere. Rather the Church of Christ has an infinite power to become a truly Indian Church. Citing the growth of various local Churches of new Testament era, he affirmed that it is *ius divinum* that the Church, in her own right, can become real and tangible in local communities of the faithful. What is important is the unity of faith and charity. Often in the name of preserving unity, the Church has called for a uniformity, i.e., a reality that is exactly the same everywhere. This has led to juridical uniformity and standardization.⁹ Instead, taking a clue from Rahner, Kunnumpuram proposes more fundamental and sacramental understanding of the Church where the Word is proclaimed, the Eucharist is celebrated and love is practised while preserving the flavor of the local culture and the unity of the faith.¹⁰ In other words fundamental unity of faith is preserved when it is nuanced in a given context.¹¹

When thinking about the Church in India, Kunnumpuram states that there is no such thing as an Indian Church but rather that there are three Churches, namely, the Syro-Malabar, the Syro-Malankara and the Latin Church. For him they are the Asian extension of Euro-American local Churches, rather than a community grown out of a faith-response to the needs, concerns and problems of the local people.¹² Nevertheless as far as safeguarding the faith-tradition is considered, it is beyond doubt that the various Catholic rites, namely, the Syro-Malabar, the Syro-Malankara and the Latin, have exhibited their vigor in diverse ways. But he writes that “the various rites of which should be a source of enrichment for the Church have become a cause of division.”¹³

The disunity between the Latin and Oriental Churches is related to the question of apostolicity. The Oriental Churches base themselves very much on the apostolic foundation of their Churches. They have treasured all along the ‘Apostolic Christ experience of St. Thomas which is taken as normative.’¹⁴ This has resulted in multiple jurisdictions within one territory leading to the collapse of the territorial principle and to disunity of the local Church.¹⁵ The territorial principle is not merely a formal unity, but rather expresses

the brotherhood of all the believers of an area, gathered by the Word of God and called to manifest their brotherhood in celebrating their fellowship in the Eucharist (LG 26; CD 11).¹⁶ According to F. Wilfred the Church must staunchly oppose all privatizing and sectarian understandings of the faith. Instead she must insist upon what is common and essential to faith as normative.¹⁷ The value of the tradition that has been handed down does not lie in its antiquity but in its missionary and eschatological calling to gather all into unity.¹⁸ And often history teaches that the prevailing controversy of the times (i.e. great schisms, or the time of reformation) resulted less from the refusal of one side to accept orthodox doctrines held by the other rather than with antagonisms between persons and groups with different ethnic backgrounds.¹⁹ Therefore Kunnumpuram's axiom that the 'one' mission of the Church receives its norm from Jesus and it cannot be guided by the values of the world but of the Kingdom.²⁰

[Therefore] to continue dealings with past rights and wrongs of the ritual Churches in India is to allow oneself to be imprisoned by the 'facts' of history. This is so because those 'facts' will necessarily be colored by our preoccupations of today...[And] we shall probably fail to recognize the opportunity offered by the present as also the freedom to shape a future which we really desire.²¹

Kunnumpuram also points a finger at the scandalous divisions that exist based on caste, language, culture and ethnicity. He finds that the Church in India has to grow to accept the rich diversity that has come into her fold (cf. Gal. 3:28). Unity is the face of the Church as the herald of the Good News, for it shows forth the effectiveness of that part of the Church that has appropriated Christ's saving work (Jn. 17:21).²²

The reality of the ritual Churches in India makes the Indian Church not a homogeneous body and the presence of *dalits* makes one more church: *a church of dalits*.²³ *Dalits* were humanly motivated by the hope of rising to share the same measure of equality and dignity with others and embraced Christianity. In their transition to a new identity this hope has been realised to some extent but not totally. Here Soares Prabhu's words are apt and prophetic: "There is

surely something sick about a Church which is agitated by infractions of the liturgy, but tolerates without qualms the obscenity of untouchability. If *dalits* exist and suffer in the Church in India this is surely a sign it is not yet 'Church'."²⁴

So when Kunnumpuram spoke about a Church that is truly Indian and genuinely Christian, we can also read between the lines that he refers also to *unity* within the Church, i.e., 'the Church as sacrament of unity' endangered by the division that is caused by various rites as well as by scandalous divisions based on caste, language, culture and ethnicity.²⁵ This unhealthy divisiveness creates problems for Kunnumpuram when he tries to explain his dream for an 'Indian Church'. For he himself has acknowledged that unity does not stand for uniformity. "Uniformity is the death of life. Wherever there is life, there is diversity."²⁶ Yet the diversity of rites and castes is proving to be divisive.

Notwithstanding this debate, there is a theological rationale in reflecting on the possibilities for an 'Indian Church'. This is a urgent task in a situation where there is no unanimity as yet and where the priority is given to allegiance to historical patrimonies, liturgical traditions and sociological identities.²⁷

The hermeneutic key (*ecclesia semper reformanda*) for the being of the Church in India should be to ask herself how she *lives out* the story of Jesus *to be* a prophetic witness for all people.²⁸ And the unity of the Church highlights the Church's self understanding as counter-cultural for there is an inherent desire for a communion by a country that holds terrible memories of oppressive division of the caste system.²⁹ Thus her sacramental character (cf. LG 1) does not come from her link with any particular culture, but from her witness to the Gospel in word and deed, and by becoming a sign of salvation in Jesus Christ (*signum elevatum in nationes*, DH 3013).³⁰

Against this background Kunnumpuram's slogan that the 'one mission' of the Church receives its specification from the actual context has theological and ecclesiological repercussions in India.

Kunnumpuram's contention is that the true catholicity of the Church is found when the Church has the ability to be local i.e., Indian in India or Chinese in China (cf. LG 13). For Kunnumpuram,

the autonomy of the local congregations receives its support in “the legitimate autonomy of the human culture” (GS 59). Following the teaching of Vatican II, he argues that the foundation of cultural autonomy depends on God who, as the Creator, endowed humans with the freedom to unfold and refine their manifold gifts and qualities (cf. GS 55). It is, therefore, God’s plan that humans develop cultures (cf. GS 57). He adds that this God, as the Creator, also reveals that cultural autonomy is not absolute but subject to divine law (GS 36).³¹

Knowing that the cultural riches of a people are the ‘treasures a bountiful God has distributed among the nations of earth’ (AG 11), Vatican II taught the “faithful to express their newness of the Christian life ‘in the social and cultural framework of their homeland, according to their own traditions’ (AG 21).”³² The Church is the place where there is a twofold totality of grace and world. But if the Church needs to be rooted in the cultural life of a people, she cannot be totally identical with other local Churches.³³ A local Church with its own perception and history and its unique experience of day-to-day life can make the necessary apostolic spiritual discernment for a fuller and more communicative life.³⁴ The paradigm of communion in diversity has further consequences for mission in India and Asia with their varying histories, traditions and cultures. Unfortunately the communion of fellowship between local churches is not often understood as charity,³⁵ but has come to imply uniformity and standardization, pointing to the existence of a Church that is exactly the same everywhere. Such attempts to standardize the Church bring only frustration. Fellowship should not be understood in mere juridical terms, but rather as a fellowship of faith and baptism by which all believers are incorporated into Christ (cf. LG 15; UR 3).³⁶

Kunnumpuram contends that the Church is not a static unit but rather a mystical reality that calls for an interaction between the faith and contemporary culture, out of which emerges the local Church.³⁷ According to him, Catholicity signifies the ability of the Church to integrate the Christian faith and the gospel way of life with the culture of the peoples among whom it exists. At the same time the Church is aware that these cultures have a contribution to make to her life. In this reciprocity, the local Church shapes an

identity relevant to the life, needs, and problems of its *locus*.³⁸ Vatican II taught that “it is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists” (LG 23).³⁹ It is in this context that Kunnumpuram upholds that the unique mission of the Church receives its specification from the actual context in which it is exercised and fulfilled.⁴⁰ This sets the stage for understanding Kunnumpuram’s second claim.

Claim 2: Church as Sacrament of Christian Hope

2) “The mission of the Church is to collaborate with God in his work for the wholeness of the human person, the human community and the cosmos according to the pattern revealed in Jesus Christ.”⁴¹

What is emphasized in this affirmation is the construction of an ecclesiology that embodies Vatican II’s holistic vision of salvation. Vatican II’s holistic vision of salvation imbibes its spirit from the vitality the Kingdom of God.⁴² The term the Kingdom of God expresses precisely this saving will of God in history.⁴³ As a result, the specific Indian context demands that any thinking about the fundamental mission of the Church should be in conjunction with the Kingdom of God and *not* with particular traditions.⁴⁴ The heart of the Kingdom is God’s revelation of unconditional love and a project for a new human community. An appropriate response to Jesus’ proclamation can effect healing and wholeness in individuals as well as in communities.⁴⁵ The mission of the Church embodies this vision and this is in contrast to the traditional understanding of the Church’s mission as “saving souls”.⁴⁶ Accordingly, Kunnumpuram highlights that a vision for a new humanity lies hidden within the Kingdom paradigm. This is the challenge that post-conciliar teaching poses for the Indian Church. The Indian Church must delve into the Kingdom to realize her mission to build a up communities rooted in God and living in harmony.⁴⁷ For such an approach Kunnumpuram delves into the concept of People of God, the principal paradigm of the Church in the Vatican II’s teachings (LG 9-17).⁴⁸

The concept people of God (LG 9-17) points to a participatory Church.⁴⁹ The emergence of a truly participatory Church in India will have great witnessing power for a country that has a history of a

priestly caste that for centuries has oppressed and dominated over dalits and of a rich and powerful elite that has exploited the poor.⁵⁰ Evils of discrimination are all pervasive. Thus while the Church raises her prophetic voice against such evils, the Church is equally called to build an egalitarian society where there is no place for power and domination but only a participative community.⁵¹ For “the example of a genuine Christian fellowship can inspire our non-Christian brothers and sisters to live together in harmony.”⁵² In the this context Kunnumpuram affirms that:

All this calls for an attitudinal change in the Church. An inward looking Church gives undue importance to rite and rubrics, orthodoxy and discipline. But God-ward looking Church is concerned with the great human problem of living together in freedom and equality, love, justice and peace as well as in tune with the rhythm of nature. For the world, not the Church, is the primary object of God’s love.⁵³

Thus Kunnumpuram describes the Church’s need to become a sacrament of Christian hope and joy in a world where people do not find these blessings.

[Jesus] wanted it [the Church] to be a community of love where the human person is respected, true brotherhood is fostered and forgiveness and reconciliation are effected. He hoped and prayed [for] true unity in the Church, one that embraces and enhances all diversity... He did not, of course, desire an inward-looking community, concerned only about the its welfare. He expected the Church to be deeply committed to the service of the mankind.⁵⁴

“Christ’s gospel is not, in the first place, an intellectually satisfying doctrinal system, but a challenging way of life.”⁵⁵ Jesus never made it easy for anyone to follow him for his demands were radical and uncompromising. Thus it is not a set of rules but a way of living.⁵⁶ The Church as a Kingdom community is called to be doers of the Word (cf. Mt.7:24). Therefore, in an Indian context, oppressive poverty and religious fundamentalism are concrete trends that prevent achieving genuine human communities. Thus the option for the poor in India is based on the conviction that “poverty in

India is not primarily caused by wickedness of a few rich people but by the operation of a socio-economic and political system which permits the unjust system.”⁵⁷ Similarly, religious dialogue also aims at the creation of a new India, where all citizens can live in freedom, justice and peace.⁵⁸ The success of the Christian call is found in creating genuine communities. Accordingly, Kunnumpuram contends that the Church be imbued with the presence of God.⁵⁹ What is basic to this community “is not humans’ love for God, but God’s love for humans (cf. 1 Jn. 4:9-19; Jn. 3:16)... [therefore] the Church is meant to be above all a community of love.”⁶⁰ Given the pluralistic scenario, Kunnumpuram holds that grass roots communities or small Christian communities hold the answer; as a community that lives in *solidarity* with others.⁶¹

Such a theological concern with an eschatological flavor can be the catalyst for an Indian Church. Such a vision transcends the boundaries that have come about historically. In this context Kunnumpuram alludes to Hebrew 13:14 and writes that “Christian hope asks us to regard every stage in the growth of a person and every phase in the development of the Church as merely provisional. It has to be transcended. We are still on our way to the final Kingdom.”⁶² Therefore what is binding on the Church is not only to her historical patrimony, but even more her missionary and eschatological nature.

The theological vision of Kunnumpuram becomes eloquent when he describe the Church’s significance as a ‘sacrament of Salvation’, especially amidst religious pluralism. A remarkable teaching of Vatican II is the rediscovery of the richness of the biblical view of salvation effected by Jesus Christ, i.e., “salvation is something personal (spiritual-corporal), communitarian, societal and both this-worldly as well as other-worldly.”⁶³ Vatican II rejected the idea that salvation is something merely individual and purely spiritual; rather it is communitarian, societal, this worldly incarnational and other worldly (cf. LG 9, 16; AG 2, 3; GS 39).⁶⁴ In that sense the Church’s mission is truly religious, but the concept of religious mission expands to embrace all that is human (cf. GS 11).⁶⁵

It [Vatican II] does not look upon the ‘religious’ as one dimension among other dimensions of human

existence. The religious dimension intersects with other dimensions. That is why the Council could speak of 'the supremely human character' of the Church's religious mission (cf. GS 11).⁶⁶

According to J. Ratzinger, *Gaudium et Spes* 11 demonstrates what is *the true humanism*, i.e., that humanity's full development as human is achieved only by faith in God, and vice versa, that Christian faith in God aims at the full development of the human person.⁶⁷ For Kunnumpuram, "Christian spirituality is a spirituality that humanizes,"⁶⁸ and this holistic approach has been the concern of most post-conciliar teachings on mission.⁶⁹ In such a perspective, Kunnumpuram's vision embodies the elements of fundamental ecclesiology as outlined by Vatican II, especially its teaching that the Church is the sacrament of salvation.⁷⁰ His outlook calls for a decentralization of the Church, centering her vision not on herself but altogether on Christ.⁷¹

Conclusion

In short, the style in which Kunnumpuram's writings are structured and the method by which he attempts to devise an indigenous theology of the Church proves that his concerns are post-conciliar. Though his works are primarily descriptive, he harmonizes various conciliar and post-conciliar teachings and principles for a contextual ecclesiology. Vatican II has "proved to be a point of departure rather than of arrival for the Indian Church."⁷² And Kunnumpuram can be credited with keeping alive the spirit of Vatican II for an inculturated Church in India, and above all the Church as a sacrament of the Kingdom of God in all times.

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Notes

1. See K. KUNNUNMPURAM, *Ways of Salvation. The Salvific Meaning of Non-Christian Religions According to the Teaching of Vatican II*, Poona 1971.
2. This is a modified version of a chapter of my Doctoral Dissertation titled: *Church as a Witness to the Kingdom: Towards an Ecclesiology in India According to G. M. Soares Prabhu, S.J.; M. Amaladoss, S.J.; K. Kunnumpuram, S.J.* Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome. Defended on 3.02.2011.
3. Cf. R. ROCHA and K. PANDIKATTU, "Editor's Introduction to Visions and Dreams", 10; P. T. MATHEW, "The Notion of Boundary. A Challenge to an Indian Ecclesiology", 142; S. PAINADATH, "Church as Table-Fellowship", 72.
4. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Ways of Salvation*, This is a doctoral study about the breakthrough that happened with Vatican II. It positively acknowledges that the salvific activity of the Holy Spirit is beyond the visible boundaries of the Church and, therefore, other religious traditions are to some extent 'ways of salvation' for their followers. In *Ways of Salvation* Kunnumpuram exhibits his stature as an authority in understanding Vatican II in regard to a contextual theology.
5. S. BRECHTER, "Commentary on the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity", 150.
6. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 26; Cf. Id., *Towards a New Humanity*, 7; Id., "The Church and Peace", 212.
7. S. BRECHTER, "Commentary on the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity", 150.
8. Y. CONGAR, "Commentary on Chapter IV of *Gaudium et Spes*", 220-221.
9. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 71. The Pope's 'power of Jurisdiction' appeared in Canon Law only towards the end of the twelfth century. The primacy of the bishop of Rome, as it was intended by the early ecumenical councils was not primacy of dominance over other bishops, but rather charity standing in their midst and responding to their requests, the Bishop Rome used his responsibility to promote unity. This view is strengthened by Vatican II's affirmation of the sacramental origin of the episcopacy. Nevertheless unity is the framework within which Vatican II understands the sacramental nature of the episcopacy, as well as the relation between the episcopacy and the primacy of Pope (cf. W. HENN, *The Honor of My Brothers*, 73, 83, 148ff.).

10. Cf. K. RAHNER, *The Church after the Council*, 48. cited in K. KUNNUMPURAM, "Towards a New Ecclesiology in the Light of Vatican II", 17.
11. For instance W. HENN, on the theme of the 'unity in faith' argues that there is significant diversity in the way of 'understanding faith' in biblical and patristic literature that recognizes and concurrently preserves 'unity in faith'. The unity of faith was preserved when the faith was nuanced and contextualized through different literary genres, languages, historical circumstances and theological challenges (cf. W. HENN, *One Faith. Biblical and Patristic Contributions Toward Understanding Unity in Faith*, 7-191).
12. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Indian Church of the Future*, 59-60.
13. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Towards a New Humanity*, 235.
14. Cf. F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, 237ff.
15. 'One Bishop per city' is the axiom derives from council of Nicaea (325) canon, 8 (See N. P. TANNER, ed., "First Council of Nicaea", 10). Following this axiom critics questions the theological significance of multiple juridical principle within one territory. For instance H. Legrand argues that the principle of territoriality of a local Church is the guarantee of its catholicity (See H. LEGRAND, "La Realizzazione della Chiesa in un Luogo", 178ff. Id., "One Bishop Per City", 369-400). Wilfred, argues that theological rationale of "the territorial principle is not just a juridical matter, it is above all meant to underline the unity of all in Christ" (F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in New India*, 42).
16. Cf. F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in New India*, 42. See also above, footnote 8.
17. "The Church is Apostolic because, totally dependent on Christ like the Apostles, and empowered by his Spirit, she is sent into the world with a mission-to be an instrument of God's Kingdom. In the sending of the Apostles by the risen Lord as heralds of the Kingdom, it is the Church in its nucleus, the new Israel represented by the Twelve which is sent into the world" (F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, 234).
18. Cf. H. LEGRAND "One Bishop Per City", 375.
19. Cf. Y. CONGAR, *After Nine Hundred Years. Background of the Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches*, 25; E. D'LIMA, "Challenges to the Ritual Churches in India", 707-718.
20. "Any other principle of organization of Christian gatherings, if it were become systematic (language, age group, social class as such, ethnic belonging, etc.) would reproduce in the Church the divisions of the world. But the eschatological vocation of the Church is the reverse. It is not to reproduce Babel, that symbol of violence and confusion, but become its antitype" (H. LEGRAND, "One Bishop per City", 399).

21. E. D'LIMA, "Challenges to the Ritual Churches in India", 715.
22. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Towards a New Humanity*, 235.
23. Cf. SOARES PRABHU, "Indian Church Challenged by Pluralism and Dialogue", 157-159.
24. SOARES-PRABHU, "Indian Church Challenged by Poverty and Caste", 153. While being critical of Oriental Churches in their claim of apostolicity and tradition, F. Wilfred highlights that their claim is a veiled attempt to maintain their caste status. Cf. F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, 244-245. There also others who makes this similar claims, J. PODIPARA, *The St. Thomas Christians, Bombay*, 1970, 83; J. MUNDAN, *Traditions of St. Thomas Christians, Bangalore* 1970; J. AERTHYIL, *The Spiritual heritage of St. Thomas Christians, Cochin*, 1982, 129; G. KOILPARAMBIL, *Caste in the Catholic Community in Kerala, Cochin* 1982.
25. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Towards a New Humanity*, 235. Repercussions of caste system in the Church see M. AMALADOSS, *A Call to Community*; xii-xiii;
26. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "Editorial of Asian Journal for Priests", 2; cf. Id., "The Church as the Sacrament of Unity", 162.
27. K. Kunnumpuram has only made some passing remarks about the liturgical traditions of these Churches; thus to delve into them here would be beyond the scope of this essay.
28. Cf. E. D'LIMA, "Challenges to the Ritual Churches in India", 716.
29. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "Beyond the Clergy – Laity Divide", 824; Id., "Towards a Theology of Ministries", 9.
30. Cf. M. AMALADOSS, *Beyond Inculturation*, 72; see also R. LATOURELLE, "Church III. Motive of Credibility", 156.
31. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 36- 37.
32. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 40.
33. "When the message of Christ has been received by a people and the missionary task is properly carried out, the supernatural gifts of the Spirit combine with the natural endowments of the people to form a local Church with its own way of living the Christian life." (A. GRILLMEIR, "Chapter II. People of God of Lumen Gentium", 167).
34. "The work of planting the Church in a given human community reaches a certain goal when the congregation of the faithful, already rooted in social life and somewhat conformed to the local culture, enjoys a certain firmness and stability" (AG 11).
35. Citing Lumen Gentium 9, Kunnumpuram writes that "The Catholic Church is a communion of Churches. According to Vatican II the Church is fel-

lowship of life, charity and truth" (K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 71).

36. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "Towards a New Ecclesiology in the Light of Vatican II", 20. For a contrast between "foremost in love" in early Christianity and "primacy of jurisdiction" of the present time see W. HENN, *The Honor of My Brothers*, 32-34,
37. J. Ratzinger rightly expresses the Church's significance in a locus. "Certainly the Church is tied to what was once and for all the origin in Jesus of Nazareth, and in this sense it is obliged 'chronologically' to continuity with him and the testimony of the beginning. But because 'the Lord is the Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:17) and remains present through the Spirit, the Church has not only the chronological line with its obligation of continuity and identity, it has also the moment, the Kairos, in which it must interpret and accomplish the work of the Lord as present. The Church is not the petrification of what once was, but its living presence in every age." (J. RATZINGER, "Commentary on Chapter 1 of *Gadium et Spes*", 116).
38. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 40-41.
39. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 72.
40. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 26; Id., *Towards a New Humanity*, 7; Id., "The Church and Peace", 212.
41. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 407, Id., "Freedom and Liberation. Reflections on the Church's Vocation and Mission", 131; Id., *Towards a new Community*, 17, 237.
42. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 413; Id., "The Church at the Service of the People of India", 154; Id., "Towards a New Ecclesiology in the Light of Vatican II", 4.
43. Kunnumpuram also delves into Soares Prabhu's biblical exegesis of the Kingdom of God, i.e., that Jesus' proclamation consists of a pair of indicatives and a pair of imperatives; i.e., declaring that the time is fulfilled because the Kingdom of God is at hand, and commanding that all to repent as a means to believe in the Good news. If the indicatives point to the revelation of God's unconditional love, the imperatives demand hearts that are open to this love, responding to it by loving God in the neighbor. And applies this exegesis to the conciliar and post conciliar teachings, subsequently creating a contextual ecclesiology. For instance Soares Prabhu, "Expanding Horizons of Missions", 281, cited in K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Towards a New Humanity*, 63. Soares Pabhu, "The Kingdom of God" 62, cited in K. KUNNUMPURAM, "The Church of My Dreams", 413.
44. "Speaking of traditions, we should, in the first place, underline that they are all subject and subservient to the act of transmitting (tradere) Christ and his Gospel. Transmitting is the essential and central aspect. Rightly then, Vatican II in its Dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation did not con-

- cern itself with traditions understood as the embodiment of various practices, customs, institutions, etc. instead it treated the transmission of divine revelation.” (F. WILFRED, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, 244; cf. J. RATZINGER, “Commentary on Chapter II of *Dei Verbum*” , 181ff.).
45. Cf. Soares-Prabu, “The Kingdom of God” 62, cited in K. KUNNUMPURAM, “The Church of My Dreams”, 413.
 46. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Towards a New Humanity*, 63.
 47. According to Kunnumpuram, in their post-conciliar teachings, Paul VI and John Paul II emphasized this mission in their encyclicals: “For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: “Now I am making the whole of creation new” (EN 18). “Working for the kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God’s activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms” (RM 15). (Cited in K. KUNNUMPURAM, *Towards a New Humanity*, 64).
 48. “God’s saving intervention in human history needs a people who responds to it and in whom it becomes visible.” (K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 9).
 49. “[People of God] leads to the affirmation of the basic equality of all believers: ‘all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ’ (LG 32). And this in turn paved the way for the realization that the lay people have a mission of their own. ‘Now, the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them she can become the salt of the Earth’ (LG 33; see also LG 31). This is a far cry from the old idea of Catholic action which meant the cooperation of the laity in the apostolic tasks proper to the hierarchy” (K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Towards a Theology of Ministries”, 22).
 50. “Rigidly caste-ridden and patently hierarchical as the Indian society is, it nevertheless calls into question the credibility of the Church’s claim to a prophetic role when the church itself is so manifestly hierarchical and undeniably clergy –dominated” (K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Towards a Theology of Ministries”, 9).
 51. Cf. K. KUNNUMPURAM, *The Indian Church of the Future*, 20-26.
 52. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Laity and Creative Ministries”, 174.
 53. K. KUNNUMPURAM. “The Church as the Sacrament of Unity”, 161-162.
 54. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Jesus and Man”, 188.
 55. K. KUNNUMPURAM, “Crisis of Values in the Catholic Church”, 74.

Contd on p. 55.