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Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurien is a priest of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. He is also a professor and the Vice Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala. His theological education began at the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam. He then continued his theological education at the United Theological College Bangalore. He was the first rank holder and gold medalist from Banaras Hindu University for M.A in Indian Philosophy and Religions. He was also the winner of the Master's Prize from Serampore University for Master of Theology (M.Th) in Christian Theology. He did his doctoral research under Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios and was conferred Doctorate in Theology (D.Th) for his Dissertation on the common foundations in the Alexandrian Christian Theology of Origen and Advaita Vedanta of Sankara.

Since 1978 he has been teaching at the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam. He has served as a member of the Committee on Academic Administration (CAA) of the Senate of Serampore for two terms and was also a member and the convener of the Board of Studies of the Senate of Serampore. He was a member of the Standing Commission, Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches and a consultant at various inter-national meetings of the W.C.C. He was the Secretary of the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the Malankara Orthodox Church and the first co-secretary of the Joint International Commission between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Church. He was the Chief Editor of "Malankara Sabha" the official monthly publication of the Malankara Orthodox Church for more than a decade. He is the author and or the editor of the following books, and in addition to these, he has written many articles in various journals: (Note: Some of Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurien's earlier works may have the author's name spelled as Jacob Kurian)

1. *The Cloud of Witnesses* (Patristics) eng. and mal. *Divyabodhanam Publications*
2. *Life and Philosophy of Sri Sankara*, Kant Publications, Delhi, 1998
3. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (mal.) Orthodox Seminary Publication
4. *Sakshyapathayil* (mal. On Indigenization of the Church), *Divyabodhanam Publications*
5. *Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios On Ecumenism* (Edited), ISPCK.
6. *Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios On Religion and Dialogue* (Edited), ISPCK
7. *Malankara Orthodox Sabha Vijnanakosam* (mal. Edited), Orthodox Seminary, Publications
8. *Yugatejas* (mal. Edited)

Some of the theological articles are:

1. "Eluetheria and Mukti", *Freedom, Love and Community*, CLS, Madras, 1981
2. "An Idealist's view of theology", *Star of the East*, April, 1981
3. "Indigenization of Church in India", *Orthodox Identity in India*, Bangalore, 1988.
4. "The Manifestation of the Unity of the Church of the Church", Paper at the Joint International Commission, Malankara Orthodox Church-Catholic Church, 1992.
5. "Wider Ecumenism in the context of the religious pluralism in India", *NCCI Review*, 1994.
6. "The Indian Foundations of Greek Philosophy Pythagorean origins in Buddhism", *NCC Review*, Aug, 1995.
7. "Upanishadic influence on Neo-Platonism", *A Vision of Beauty*, 2008
8. "Swami Vivekananda's Spirituality in Action: A way towards Universal Peace", Paper presented at the National Seminar, UC College, Aluva, 2011.
9. "The Pre-Portuguese Konkani Nazranis or the Thomas Christians of the Western Coast of India", Paper presented at the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Faculty Seminar, 2011.
10. "Witness to the Uniqueness of Jesus in a multi-religious world", Paper presented at the Seminar, Senate of Serampore, Manganam, 2011.

Fr. Jacob Kurien was one of the main speakers at the *Faith and Order Assembly* (2004) at Kaula Lampur, Malaysia and at the *W.C.C. Assembly*, (2006) (Plenary on Church Unity) at Porto-Alegre, Brazil. He was also one of the drafters of the W.C.C. document “Christian Self Understanding in the context of Religious Pluralism” (2006) and the “D.O.V”. Peace Declaration at Jamaica, 2011.

Some of the citations from Fr. Jacob Kurien’s writings:

### **1. Methodological innovation of Sri Sankara**

“Sankara’s unique contribution to Vedanta is the beautiful integration of the two orders at Knowing and Being in to a dialectical concept of *avidya* (māyā). On the one hand *avidya* stressed the absolute unity of the ultimate reality and one the other hand it described the illusory character of the phenomenal world” (*Life and Philosophy of Sri Sankara*, p.82).

### **2. Practical application of the principle of unity in multiplicity**

“...The principle of unity in multiplicity needs to get practical application in Church structure, theology and spirituality. A spirituality centered on Christ can have many manifestations. To experience Jesus Christ and to interpret the divine manifestation through Him, there need not be only one way. Hence, theological and spiritual ‘orthodoxy’ needs to get broader meaning. And this should direct the ecumenical relation between Churches in India”. (*Indigenization of Church...*”, *Orthodox Identity in India*, p.66

### **3. Buddhist origins of Pythagoreanism**

“..... certain historical, linguistic, philosophical and religious possibilities” tend to “assume that Pythagoreanism was the western adaptation of Buddhism during a period of ten centuries” (*The Indian Foundations of Greek Philosophy..... National Council of Churches Review*, Vol CXV, No.7, Aug. 1995).

### **4. Upanishadic sources for Neo-Platonism**

“.....there is a deliberate attempt on the part of Neo-Platonism to reconcile Platonism and Aristotelianism within the frame-work of a wider system. This wider system was in all probability the upanishadic wisdom” (“Upanishadic influence on Neo-Platonism”, *A Vision of Beauty Festschrift* in honour of Fr. Dr. K. M. George, p.321).

### **5. ‘Wider Ecumenism’ or a theological methodology for a pluralistic context.**

“Christianity in India has been experiencing a growing tension between its confessional-Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant-identities and its search for an Indian Christian Identity”.

“...Indian Christianity has to continue to undertake certain tasks and rethinking for a meaningful experience of wider ecumenism “through” a. Hermeneutical task. b. Dialogical task, c. Theological task, d. Rethinking ‘salvation’, e. Rethinking ‘Mission’. “.....we still await a hermeneutical revolution in the multi-religious context involving an inclusive commentary on the Bible incorporating the vast treasures in world-religious literature”. The dialogical task implies to “... organize permanent and on-going inter-religious people’s forums to fight injustice, corruption, drug abuse, illiteracy, communal conflict etc...” by giving “wide publicity to the actual stories of men and women who stand against their own fanatic people, to protect the legitimate rights of persons belonging to another religion....” And by initiating to “evolve new guidelines regarding inter-religious marriages and families with a wider perception of the people of God...”

‘The Theological task in a pluralistic context is not a task of evolving a uniform system. It is rather the task of highlighting the beauty of unity in diversity. The Mystery of God’s dealing in history cannot be fully comprehended by humans. Therefore, there could be a relativity in understanding the Mystery of God. We have no right to absolutize the relative understanding”.

“...Salvation as a ‘fortune’ depending on certain confessions or decisions regarding Jesus Christ is to be rethought with a qualitative emphasis on the ‘abundant life’ and obedience to the commandments of God”.

“Mission is witnessing and witnessing will have its bearing on an openness to serve and struggle in a common pilgrimage with other religions in India”, *NCCI, Review*, 1994).

**6. 'Inclusive Pluralism' as a key-phrase for Indian Christian theological task.**

"I prefer the phrase "Inclusive Pluralism' in Indian Christian theological task. Being founded on the faith-experience in Jesus Christ, every Indian Christian needs to relate the pluralistic religious expressions to the inclusive presence of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, all forms of legitimate pluralism need to be understood by Christians within a Christological inclusiveness" (From unpublished but circulated notes on Indian Christian Theology).