

Indigenous Expressions in Cathedrals

D. S. AMALORPAVADASS*

The main lines of my thinking are as follows:

The full mystery of the Church is present and realized concretely in the reality of the Local Church. Its focal point and visible expression is the cathedral. If the local church is characterised by its dynamism towards incarnation in the socio-cultural-religious milieu of a place and time, the cathedral, the visible expression of it, should be the greatest incarnation. Hence the choice is not between indigenization and non-indigenization, but between being a Church or not being a Church at all. Indigenization therefore is not a luxury that we can dispense with while concentrating on being the Church. If we say so, it simply means we do not know what the Church is and what the originality of Christianity is. In short the uniqueness of Christ and the reality of the Church are basically at stake.

Theology of God's Action in the World

The Liturgy which is celebrated in the Cathedral represents the Action of God in our world and history. The structure of liturgy and of the Cathedral is the same as God's economy of Salvation for mankind. The various stages and actions of God in his relation with mankind are renewed in every Cathedral in every liturgical action, which is the summit of the ecclesial action and its various ministries. In this economy we notice four stages or parts:

1. The presence of God in the world and history gathering his people from among the nations and building up a community of salvation.
2. God's offer of a Covenant of love to the people whom He has gathered: Covenant is made by the proclamation of the Word and the acceptance of the Word. Cf. The Covenant on Mount Sinai and the new Covenant in Jesus Christ.
3. The ratification and sealing of the Covenant by sacrifice.
4. The Covenantal Community identifying itself with the Mission of the Lord feels the urge to share with others its experience of reconciliation and salvation and gather the universal community. It feels sent on Mission.

This cycle repeats itself continuously till the universal gathering is completed with the final coming of the Lord.

* Fr. D. S. Amalorpavadass is Director of the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, Bangalore, and Secretary to the Commissions on Bible, Catechetics and Liturgy of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

This is strikingly evident in the process of the whole Christian initiation of adults, called adult catechumenate. We notice the movement and the stages in the definition of the catechumenate too. The Catechumenate is:

- (a) the Church in the totality of her members (priests, religious, lay people) and in the totality of her action (word, sacrament and witness),
- (b) which makes herself present to the catechumens,
- (c) welcomes them,
- (d) makes them ascend the steps of the porch,
- (e) pass through the baptistry,
- (f) introduces them into the Church (the Community),
- (g) leads them up to the sanctuary (the mystery),
- (h) in order to send them back to the world as witnesses and servants.

Two Visions of God's Revelation and the Church's Mission

Our approach to reality and our understanding of God's action in the world and the Church's mission are determined very much by the world vision we have, by the mental structure within which we relate various realities, and by the categories of thought that influence our mode of thinking and acting. We have certainly to pass from an old vision and approach to a new one.

1. The old world vision

Within the old vision: the realities of God and man, the world and the Church appeared not only as distinct and static, but also as separate and opposed: (1) *God* as an abstract being living in the sky, (2) revealing truths to the *Church*, (3) in order to be transmitted by it for the salvation of sinful *men* (4) in the *world*. As men are transferred from the world into the Church, the mission of the Church is supposed to be fulfilled, men saved and the kingdom of God established.

This vision implies: separation of, and opposition between, the world and the Church, society and religion, resulting in a lack of contact and dialogue between them, between the evangeliser and the audience. This generates a pessimistic and pejorative attitude towards the world, the present life, the realities of the temporal order, towards other religions, all form of humanism, contributing to non-recognition of their value, their orientation and their autonomy. It also leads, on the one hand, to identify with the Church, the clergy and the religious, the work of evangelization and catechesis, services of charity and the liturgy; and, on the other to identify with the world, the laity, the youth, other religions, political, social, economic and cultural life, science and technology. In this vision the laity will have no role to play in the Church except as second fiddle to the clergy. The youth are branded and rejected as too outspoken. The Church is seen as dominating the world and the temporal order by nature of her double jurisdiction, temporal and spiritual, inherited from Christ.

'Mission' is seen only in terms of conquering territory, setting up imposing structures and consisting of a large number of institutions. World history and salvation history are seen as parallel lines, revelation and salvation being limited to Judeo-Christian tradition, excluding other peoples and religions. Revelation will be defined as communication of abstract truths, and faith as an intellectual assent to them; evangelisation and catechesis will be seen as the teaching of truths and moral precepts deduced from principles and applicable to all, irrespective of their age or life-situations. Preaching will be equated with verbal announcement made in a stereotyped manner, in absolute and static terms, and all this in the name of not adulterating God's word.

The consequence of this, in the minds of non-Christians, is that missionary activity will be looked on as an act of spiritual aggression, as a confrontation, as an imposition, or at best, as an act of condescension on the part of the 'haves' towards the 'have-nots'. Conversion will be considered a denial of the world, as a total rupture with one's past and an abandonment of all one cherished. Rightly or wrongly, our fellow men are allergic to missionaries and mission work; they look on the missionary Church as foreign, as an alienation force, a pressure-group or a ghetto. We see the results in the Anti-Conversion Bills in various States in India.

2. The renewed world vision

According to *the new world vision* or *renewed vision*, these realities are related not as four separate and opposed realities, but as making a single whole, though distinct, in the same dynamics of history. God's presence through creation and history is recognised in the heart of the world, in the course of history, and in the dense realities of human existence to all peoples and at all times. The whole of human society, under the dynamism of history, is carried forward, taken up in the movement towards its destiny in view of its total becoming. This movement is not a chaotic one, but guided by God through the Spirit of Christ, who is present from the beginning to the end, guiding mankind, revealing and fulfilling His plan of salvation for the world. Christians appear as fellow men in genuine belonging and vital solidarity, identified with the common cause, committed to the same tasks of man's humanization, liberation and development, and realization of a just human society, taken up in the same current of history and life, sharing with them their Christian experience of reconciliation and fellowship in faith, hence sharing in the very process of sharing with them all the other aspects and realities of human existence. Preaching in all forms in that context becomes welcome and relevant as good news, as sharing and contributing from within a group, in the course of the common journey and dialogue of life, and contributing to the discovery of self and discovery of others and God, as achieving the total liberation and integral development of the whole human community within the historical process. Christians are fellow members and appear relevant to others, and together they strive to attain human destiny, the goal of history and fulfilment of God's

plan, thus ushering in a new heaven and a new earth from within history and the world.

Once we have this vision it is easy to understand correctly who Jesus Christ is, what the Church means and what characterises the Local Church, of which the visible sign is the Cathedral.

Theology of the Local Church

1. Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is God being visibly present to men in the world; he is the permanent incarnation of his love or the 'enfleshing' of his self-gift; he is one in whom God's power, capable of saving and liberating men, is enshrined, manifested and actually operative. God has taken the initiative and opened himself to the world in order to give himself to all men in love and thus establish a saving relationship with them; in Jesus this openness and initiative of God has been made permanent and definite, once-and-for-all and irrevocable. In Jesus' death and resurrection, the climax of his life, we see the supreme epiphany of a double love in its maximum expression and sign: the Father's love for the world in His Son (Jn. 3:16), and Jesus' love for the Father and for men in the sign of his total gift to his Father and to his brethren (Jn. 15:13). In this total gift of self thus shown—mainly by his death and the raising of him by his Father—is found our salvation. Jesus on the cross destroyed the hostility in his own person, broke down the barriers that had kept apart individuals and groups, to create one single New Man in himself, uniting them in a single body, reconciling them with God. Thus he is the peace between us, and later has come to give the good news of peace to those both far and near. Through him all of us have in the one Spirit the way to come to the Father (Eph. 2:13-18), calling him in the Spirit, 'Abba, Father' (Rom. 8:14-16). In this achievement of Christ is found the basis of any relationship and reconciliation and the source and pattern of our mission for the world: to gather people from their closure and self-sufficiency, isolation and loneliness, from their division and separation, from rivalry and hatred, from all forms of alienation and enslavement, from sin and all its forces and consequences, to reconcile them with one another and with God: 'It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation' (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

This is expressed best in the sign of the Eucharist; it is the memorial celebration of what Jesus Christ did in his death and resurrection, and what he enables others to do today in like manner. It can only be celebrated by the community of those who have identified themselves with Jesus in his total self-surrender to his Father and to his brethren and bear witness to it in their life, and who thereby become his Body. Thus in the visible and historical reality of Jesus' life and death, the invisible designs of God have been fully unfolded. This is the mystery of Jesus Christ; and this is the mystery of our salvation; the Paschal mystery; mystery of the liberation of man and universal brotherhood.

2. The Church

All those who meet Jesus in faith through word and sacrament and reconcile themselves to him and to others by total self-surrender and continue to live and die for him according to his word, modelling their life according to his normative human existence—Word become deed or living Word—are bound together into a community of disciples, become his Body and experience Communion. In this community Jesus lives on; through them and in them he is present and active in the world throughout history; in deep communion with him, they become the bearers of his mission for all men everywhere and at all times. His spirit animates and guides them, and he accompanies them. Thus this community becomes the historical and social prolongation of Jesus, his dynamic agent in the world and history, the leaven of human society and the vanguard of a new race; in short, the Body of Christ. The mystery of Jesus is thus embodied and kept alive in the world by the mystery of the Church.

3. The Local Church

This leads us to the next question, the Local Church. The Local Church is precisely that realisation by which the Universal Church, the full mystery of the Church, will be incarnated in each place, will express itself and operate through the social, cultural, religious realities of the place, time and people. The Local Church is not, as many imagine, a division or a part of the Church, nor is it to be considered as a viable unit of administration within the Universal Church. It must and does contain the *whole* mystery of the Church; it is the microcosm of the whole reality of what is meant by the Church. The Church as a mystery, is first of all something that happens to a group of people; it is an event that matters for them; it is the actualization of the whole mystery of the Church in a place, as the dynamic presence of God through the Spirit of His Incarnate Son Jesus Christ in the world and history, gathering his people into a community from the four winds, from among the nations, reconciling them with one another and with Himself and realizing a fellowship of love through a process of sharing and giving. The Local Church is a dynamic process by which a Christian community share their Christian experience with their contemporaries, in the context of the world and history, fully integrated in their socio-cultural-religious milieu.

The process of evangelization is the very process of founding and actualizing a Local Church. In this movement we can notice four stages, one leading to the other and all making a continuous and permanent one till the end of the world:

- (a) The personal and vital encounter of an apostle, or his successor the bishop, or of an apostolic community with the Risen Lord, the transforming experience of reconciliation and salvation shared by them, the consequent inner urge felt and the external mandate received to share with others this transforming and saving experience. This is apostolate or evangelization springing thus from one's personal and community experience with Christ in the Spirit.

- (b) This experience is shared with others by the proclamation of the Word and deed; Those who accept this witness desire to have the same experience with the same Risen Lord in faith and form a community of believers, a group of those who want to belong to Christ by sharing in his Paschal experience.
- (c) These are gathered for the breaking of the Bread (celebration of the Eucharist). The community of faith becomes a community of worship. In the breaking of the Bread they recognize the Lord and one another, and experience a deep communion in the Spirit.
- (d) This deep experience of reconciliation and communion creates in them a total openness to all men and an untold urge to share this experience with others (the neighbourhood, the State, the country, the world and other Churches), in concrete situations, needs, aspirations and struggles. Thus the community of worship becomes a missionary community. They go forth and share this experience with their fellow men in the very midst of their experience in the world (family, society, profession) by a life of genuine and total involvement to the point of risking their life. Thus the missionary community becomes a community of witness and service in love.

This process of dynamic and transforming experience goes on continuously till the universal community is realized and perfected; till the Lord returns and the Kingdom of God emerges as the heavenly Jerusalem, as the new heaven and the new earth.

It is when the Church will be incarnated in all the places, it is when we shall have local Churches all over the world, that the Church will truly appear as missionary in character and her universality will be realized.

The Bishop and the Cathedral as Signs of the Local Church

Although the Church is the people of God called together by the Holy Spirit, through word and sacraments, to be the sign of his presence and action and instrument to bring about universal fellowship, this people is an organized and united people, under the Bishops' ministry and leadership. Hence the Bishop is the head of the Local Church and the one who assures its unity and leadership. Hence the axiom: 'Where the Bishop is, there the Church is'. This will be understood not in the sense of a clericalized, pyramidal structure where we put the Bishop at the pinnacle, but a community of people in the midst of whom he is present as the suffering servant of the Lord washing the feet of his fellow men, and as a prophet of the Lord rendering a service of interpretation in the ambiguities and complexities of human existence, assuring men direction and perspective, and nourishing their dynamism and impulse.

Now the place of the gathering of the Local Church is precisely what is called the Cathedral. The Cathedral is the visible, concrete

and identifiable expression of the reality of the local Church. It is the place where the Church gathers and manifests itself as a social and historic reality. It is there it fulfils its ministries; it is there it gives a supreme epiphany of its mystery and finds the source and summit of its mission.

Now, if the Cathedral is the place of the gathering of the Church and if the Bishop is the leader of this community, obviously it is also called the Bishop's church, the church in which the Bishop fulfils his function as leader by preaching the word, presiding over the Eucharist and initiating a whole gamut of service to the community for its maturity in charity, commitment of service and witnessing to society. In this sense both the Church and the Bishop can be identified with the Cathedral. Often we think of the Cathedral only in terms of the Bishop. It is right, provided we situate the Bishop in the midst of an assembly; it would be wrong if the role and importance of the people are thereby minimised or ignored.

Relation Between Cathedral and Parish, Bishop and Presbyter

What we say about the Cathedral holds good to a certain extent for every parish Church. Since the whole local church in its present situation cannot gather frequently and easily in one and the same place, and since the ministry of the Church has to be locally and concretely manifested, there have to be lesser gatherings of the Local Church which is the Parish. Again, since there are several gatherings and since the Bishop cannot be present in all those gatherings, there arises the need for collaborators of Bishops who can fulfil at the parish level for smaller gatherings of the Church the same functions which the Bishop does for the whole Church symbolized through the Cathedral. That is what the *Constitution on the Liturgy* of Vatican II beautifully says of the Bishop and the Cathedral, the Diocese and the Parish. (cfr. art. 41 and 42).

The Cathedral as the Initiator and Model of the Process of the Church and Indigenisation

If the Church is not a Church unless it is incarnated in a particular place and time and expresses itself through the socio-cultural-religious realities, so also the Cathedral which is the focal point and the sign of the local church cannot fulfil its function unless it is indigenous in all its aspects, expressions and activities. Hence an imported Cathedral, a foreign Cathedral, a closed-in ghetto Cathedral is a denial of the mystery of the Church, and a counter-sign of its mission; hence it becomes a meaningless reality.

We often seem to glory in having a Cathedral patterned on famous Cathedrals in New York, London, Canterbury, Paris, Rome, etc. or having a church in gothic, neo-gothic, semi-gothic, baroque, etc. We are also proud of belonging to the Cathedral parish, for it gives us the feeling of a social status. By putting up such Cathedrals we are only proclaiming that we do not have a Local Church, that our

interests do not lie with those of our country and our fellow men, that our eyes and attention are directed towards foreign countries, that our ambition seems to be to perpetuate foreign models and hold them up for imitation. Instead of telling the world that we are a Church, we only deny it. The walls of the Cathedral, far from being a visible sign of openness, outreach, service to others, tend to separate the local community from the rest of society. They really become dividing walls, because the people who go there week after week are gradually alienated from the mainstream of life and from the cultural setting of the nation, in which the rest of their countrymen live; they also develop a ghetto mentality of self-centred concern having no out-reach. A Church which is closed on itself and which does not go forth will slowly become decadent, and that is exactly what we are today.

Therefore, if at all there is any place where indigenization should be present, it is the Cathedral. Indigenization can start in any aspect, but the Cathedral should be the initiator and the promoter, model and leader of indigenization of the Church. Just as inspiration and guidance, the word, worship and service emanate from the Cathedral, so also efforts, experiments, initiatives for making the Church local and incarnated in the soil, must emanate from and culminate in the Cathedral. If the Cathedral cannot do so, it is better that we close its doors or make it a museum, or break down its walls. If, on the contrary, the Cathedral is indigenous and becomes more indigenous every day, it will not only be a sign of the Church, but will be a sign of the kingdom. Gradually the walls of the Cathedral like the tent of Ezekiel will move and extend to the whole human society and to the whole world; and by that very fact the walls will cease to exist, and thereby little by little the sign will begin to tally with the reality, and this is what we call the Kingdom of God.

Culture and Indigenization

1. The 'Christian' Culture

Some of us shirk indigenization under the pretext that there is no connection between culture and religion, or by identifying Christianity and universality and thereby imposing it upon others. On the one hand we easily identify Christianity with Western culture, and on the other we would not like that our Christianity has anything to do with Indian culture or religions.

Christianity spread in the first stage in the Graeco-Roman world, in western Europe and in the Middle East. There the spirit of the gospel permeated the cultures of the place, transformed and enriched them by giving them a new impetus, new meaning, new orientation, and new possibilities of expression. Since missionary expansion chiefly started from those countries and since the major missionary enterprises coincided with the period of western expansion through navigation, trade, colonization and conquest, it happened that the cultures of these countries were imposed upon the colonial people. The Church, being a part of society, knowingly or unknowingly

transmitted along with the gospel the cultures of the countries from which missionaries came forth. We accepted the faith along with the western cultural expressions. We have so identified them, and that for such a long time, that today we have come to style them as 'Christian culture'. In short, what we call '*the Christian culture*' is nothing else but the Christian culture of western Europe or of America, not in their modern or latest forms, but in their most anachronistic, decadent and degraded forms. We are clinging on to them as sacrosanct, as part of our faith, while the rest of the world, even the countries of origin, have rejected them.

Instead we should speak of many 'Christian cultures'. That is to say, the indigenous culture of every country and region must be permeated by the spirit of the gospel, purified, enriched and fulfilled by the gospel values and should be incarnated in the people belonging to these cultural groups. Thus there could be as many Christian cultures as there are cultures in the world. For example, Indian Christian culture, Chinese Christian culture, African Christian culture, and within these vast regions there could also be many more subdivisions. Hence our faith is a faith in Jesus Christ and not in the secondary traditions of one of the civilizations in which it was first expressed. Our fidelity is to the word of God and not to the culture of the missionary who announced this word. Both the missionaries and others should identify themselves with the social, cultural and religious realities and try to understand and interpret afresh the word of God in that context and give expression to it through that culture in their life, in their worship, in their forms of organization and means of formation. It is in this way that the Church can be genuinely local, faithful to Jesus Christ and relevant to society.

Many of us are concerned about the identity of Christianity. Out of fear of losing our identity, we want to cling on to western cultural patterns and forms. By doing so we have neither preserved our identity nor have we given a meaningful witness in our surroundings. We only show that we belong to a tribal religion, imported from outside, that we are a particularist people, living side by side with other religious groups, contrary to our profession of faith that Christ is the Lord of the universe, saviour of mankind, and that therefore his spirit has filled the universe and his gospel must permeate all socio-economic-political, cultural, and religious realities.

2. Is there an Indian Culture? To which do we adapt?

The whole thing boils down to the relation between indigenisation and culture, both of which are means of communication and communion and bond of unity. At the moment there is a big gap and dichotomy between them. If so, to which culture are we going to adapt: ancient Indian culture or modern Indian culture? What is the actual culture of India today?

Indian culture is not one but multifarious; the cultural differences from region to region are great. If so to which of these cultures will an Indian Liturgy be adapted? Will it be relevant to all the regions?

Again, is culture influenced by religion? If so, by which religion has Indian culture been mostly influenced? by Hinduism? What about other religions? Muslim, Parsee, tribal and other cultures? When the nations contribute to and share in a modern technological world culture, can we limit ourselves narrowly to Indian cultures?

These are a few of the many questions raised in this connection.

We do grant the existence of a variety of cultures in India; but we find underlying and connecting all of them a basic and dynamic unity. Indian culture has been shaped over the centuries among others by the various religions that were founded in India or came to India. All the religions have influenced and contributed to it, though the main religion of the land, Hinduism, has exerted the greatest influence and continues to do so.

This Indian culture is not static and closed, preserving and perpetuating the ancient heritage; instead it is a living and dynamic reality; as such it is open to all influences and contributions assimilating certain values and rejecting others, and grouping them according to a scale. Our indigenisation is with reference to this multiple Indian culture, ancient and modern, regionally divergent. While being modern, India remains wedded to the ancient religious values.

3. Historical dimension of Indigenisation: past, present and future

Indigenisation does not refer exclusively or unilaterally to traditional cultures and religions. It is not a mere going back to the source, it is not a mere recognition of one's heritage. It means, above all, being present today and looking to the future, being taken up in the very dynamism of personality development, group life and history. Indigenisation takes account of all the realities that constitute human existence today, that shape the life of societies and nations, that mark the history of the world. Problems of hunger and disease, ignorance and illiteracy, unemployment and frustration, struggles of men for liberation from all the forces of slavery and alienation, wars and world peace, social justice and integral development of man, contemporary culture and its all pervading effects. Indigenisation means solidarity with men and involvement in all issues and problems, and entry into the dynamism and adventure of human history with all that they imply, and in all that they demand. It means the Church being present everywhere with her humble *diakonia* in testimony of the Gospel and of the kingdom. Thus indigenisation is a concern for the contemporary reality and integrated in the culture and life of today's man. The present may have its roots and moorings in the past, its dynamic orientation may be towards the future, but the Church is indigenious in so far as she is relevantly present to the living, moving and actual reality.

Aspects and Forms of Indigenisation

Indigenisation is concerned with every aspect and element of the Church's life. Hence when the topic speaks of indigenious expressions

it refers to forms like: (1) the formation of the local community and clergy, (2) their life-style or sociological adaptation, (3) the incarnation of the gospel in concrete life situations and in every sphere of personal and family life, in social and civic activities, in economic and political life, in the cultures and religions of each country, region and locality. (4) It refers to the domains of art like architecture, sculpture, painting, decoration, music, dance and drama. (5) It refers to theology and (6) spirituality, (7) to the triple ministries of word, worship and service. There is a connection between all of them. We shall just limit ourselves to a few remarks on some aspects.

Theology

Theology cannot be thought of as a laboratory product or armchair speculation. Theology, to be called so, should be a faith-reflection of the Christian community on their concrete experience in the world, in the light of God's Word. Only then will it be an interpretation of faith. Theology itself must start from the reality of human existence and of the social reality. It is such a theology that will be able to interpret prophetically God's designs for our times. The function of theology is to discover, interpret and express reality; it has also to make a permanent critique of society and the Church and thus powerfully change the reality. If so, theology needs reality, must know reality, start, dwell in and rest on reality. As an interpretative and normative science it can only be so on the basis of our analysis and knowledge of the reality. Such a knowledge is not present without involvement and reflection on reality.

Spirituality

Spirituality is not an ethereal experience which consists in running away from the world, or in cutting one's connection with one's fellow men, or in shirking one's responsibilities for society. In short, it is not an evasion of the world. Spirituality today consists in taking the world and our times seriously, in discerning God's active presence in the events and situations of our life, in meeting his challenges in the self-surrender and obedience of faith, and in committing ourselves to the problems of justice, humanization, liberation and development, and thereby realising a deep communion with God and with men. Both God and our fellow men with whom we want to realise universal fellowship are to be found in the thick of our lives, and it is by being involved in this that we can really discover God and respond to him in obedience. It is this that is really spiritual.

Ministries

This indigenisation must especially be shown in the various ministries of the Church by which Christ's mission is fulfilled: ministry of the word, ministry of worship, ministry of organization and formation for service and witnessing in love.

Indigenisation has finally much to do with the architecture and sculpture of the Cathedral, to the decorations and painting, to the atmosphere and setting, to the music, nay to its very location.

Mission and Indigenisation are not two successive actions, but simultaneous ones, and a single process

It is not enough to announce the Word, calling men to faith and conversion, to gather the believers for worship in the celebration of the Eucharist, to form them for a life of witnessing and service in charity, but in all this, i.e., at every stage and in every form of ministry, the Church must adapt herself to the country and region, to the milieus and traditions, to the forms of cultural and religious expressions, to the present concern of contemporary society.

In the past many were, and even today many still are, under the impression that at a first stage the word is simply announced, celebrated and lived, and it is at a later stage that all these activities are to be adapted to the country and integrated in its culture: first evangelization and then acculturation; first liturgy as celebrated in the culture of the missionary, and then adaptation to the mission country, etc. Historically there has been, by and large, a divorce between the two; but in reality both are so intimately connected that they should constitute a single whole. Acculturation should be part and parcel of the very process of evangelisation.

We do not announce the gospel purely and simply in an abstract manner. The word of God passes through a human word: and this word to be a meaningful human word should be expressed in the language, in the categories of thought, in the images and forms of speech, through the current means and techniques of communication, and according to the pedagogy prevalent in a region and suitable to a human group hermeneutics.

Likewise we do not first celebrate an ethereal or otherworldly, or disincarnated liturgy and then adapt it; but in its very first act of worship the community gives expression to its aspirations and sentiments, to its relationship with God and man, to its response and attitudes to God's on-going self-revelation in Christ, to its beliefs and practices, through the signs proper to its culture and religions, traditional and actual.

Finally the forms of structures and institutions of witnessing and service in charity should be relevant, functional, ever-changing to the human group in the midst of which they live; should meet the current needs of the people for whom they are meant, and should enlighten them in their problems and in the fulfilment of their deepest yearnings.

Thus the mission of the Church at every stage and in every form of ministry should be adapted to the country, to its culture and religious tradition. Acculturation or adaptation is a simultaneous act of every form of ministry, whether missionary or pastoral activity, and an integral part of the whole mission of the Church.

Indigenisation implies Creativity and Originality, Dynamism and Relevance

If the Local Church is considered as only a part of the universal Church and as a lower administrative unit, the attitude of the Local

Church will be one of importing and copying, of implementing orders and conforming to what comes from the top, in a passive mentality of receiving. There will be uniformity and sameness everywhere; but it will be irrelevant and cease to be a Church. On the other hand, if every Local Church contains the full mystery of Christ and expresses it in its social milieu, then there will be creativity and originality.

Likewise the Cathedral to fulfil such a function, can no more be either a duplicate copy of foreign models, or aping whatever is found in the west, or a perpetuation of them in terms of organization, preaching, church structures, etc., nor can it be a monotonous repetition in art, architecture, language and music of the model of the countries of origin from which these Churches emanated.

It is high time that we started being ourselves, started being conscious of what we are, started joining with our fellow men in full solidarity and commitment in the historical process, sharing their concerns, struggling for the same cause. It is high time that we started reflecting on our faith from this commitment and looked for means to express our Christian experience and sharing them with our fellow men, in the reality of our life.

The variety and the changing character of reality calls for and necessitates pastoral pluralism, starting from cultural, ecclesial and theological pluralism. It will have to take the initiative, become competent and responsible, have the imagination and daring to invent relevant forms and patterns, structures and institutions for her various activities and services, and project an image of solidarity and incarnation.

This calls for a correct understanding of the theology of the relationship between the Universal Church and the Particular Churches; accordingly all-round change will be called for in the relation between the Mission Societies, Church unions and the dioceses. In this sense we must all go back to the pattern of autonomy preserved still in the oriental churches. The administrative set-up of the Churches has to be very much decentralised and the principle of subsidiarity must be followed to its last exigencies and implications. This calls also for the recognition of the value of the Local Church and respect for their freedom, autonomy, initiative and original ways. It is then that the Church as a whole and each Local Church in particular will be relevant to people's life situations and historic moments and contribute to the progress and concerns of the local society. By that very fact the Church will become a meaningful sign of Jesus Christ. A further remark is pertinent here: the point at issue is not so much that the higher authority is unwilling to grant this autonomy as that the Local Churches whether dioceses or parishes are reluctant or afraid to exercise their freedom and responsibility under the pretext of loyalty and obedience, tradition and unity.

It is in this way that we can be creative and original in the strict sense of the term. In our identity with our fellowmen, in our integration with our surroundings, in the communion of many things with our fellowmen, in our incarnation into culture, social way of life and traditions, the uniqueness of Christ's openness, Christ's

spirit of service, and Christ's existence for others up to the point of dying for others will be luminous and attractive. Thereby we will be both faithful to the Lord and will be living witnesses proclaiming Him and His message, in this momentous period of our history.

Policy and the Phased Programme of Indigenization in the Catholic Church in India

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India through the National Liturgical Centre of Bangalore has made a policy of indigenization and drawn up a long term programme in view of implementing it in several stages. We can underline four aspects and stages. They are:

1. The first phase of Indigenisation: Creation of an Indian atmosphere in worship: postures, gestures, forms of homage, silence and songs, objects and elements used in the service.
2. The second phase: Vernacular translation and original composition of new texts. From translation—to cautious adaptation—and to original composition. (a) Translation. (b) The Sacramental Word: composition of Anaphora. (c) An Order of the Mass for India.
3. The third phase: use of Scriptures of other religions in the Christian liturgy.
4. The Fourth phase: A celebration relevant to life in the present context and with reference to special groups.

Indigenization Challenges our Whole Life

Adaptation in the liturgy—whether accepted or resisted—challenges our whole life. For adaptation is not limited to liturgy alone; indigenization is a process that affects our whole person, our whole life, our whole surrounding. If we accept it, it becomes incongruous in our life since we will be Indians in the church for an hour and westernised outside during most of the day. To yield in liturgy is to lose in everything; the effort that is demanded of us to convert ourselves and our whole life is formidable and long-drawn out.

Indigenization is a global problem and hence:

- (1) it is connected with every aspect of the Church, her nature and mission, with every field of human life: socio-cultural, religious and spiritual.
- (2) it is basically and first of all, a theological question: theology of creation, incarnation and the Church;
- (3) it is situated in the relation between the Church and the world, Christianity and the other religions, faith and culture;
- (4) it touches on catechesis and pastorage;
- (5) it challenges every aspect of our personal and social life: our own attitudes and comportments, our way of life, our language and cultures, our values and relationships, our ways of

thinking and speaking, acting and living, it questions us at the level of our innermost being;

(6) it interrogates our prayer life and our worship.

That is why it sparked off such a controversy in the newspapers. The question of liturgical adaptation cannot be adequately solved without having repercussions on all these areas of our personal, social, cultural and religious life. None of us is ready to meet such a challenge. That is why Christians took sides so quickly for and against it, as never before in history; acceptance of an Indian liturgy would call for indianisation in all our habits, in all the aspects, forms and areas of our life.

The present reaction of the public has unveiled beyond doubt the type of Christianity that we have in India, the type of theology that is inspiring the action of the Church in India, the type of catechesis that has formed and educated the faith of our Christians.

It is the touchstone of the mentality of our bishops, clergy and the laity. It indicates the degree of renewal that has taken place in the Church of India and it has brought to the fore deeper issues that need to be tackled in our onward march for renewal.

Above all, it is a providential occasion offered to us to pass from a notion of the Church that is sectarian and parochial, territorial and static, introverted and imported, to a notion that is catholic and universal, authentic and interior, adult and dynamic; we pass now from importing and copying to creativity and originality. Christ's mission is to be no more understood in terms of imperialist conquest, geographical expansion, territorial limits, numerical additions, but by the all-round, ever-ready presence through the spirit of Christ which is one of humble and loving service, losing one's identity.