



14 February 1975

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES: DIALOGUE--AND CONFLICT

Our first couple of articles this week concern the possibilities of dialogue and Christian witness in a culture which has very definite religious, social and moral values of its own. They are realistic and optimistic. We continue with a chapter from a book by an East African Bishop of the Anglican Community in which he puts forward ideas on the incarnation of Christianity in the local culture almost identical with those emerging from Catholic sources. Finally we publish the statements of the Episcopal Conference of Zaire on the causes of the growing conflict between the Church and the state apparatus which seems to have committed itself to the path of totalitarianism.

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COMING EVENTS:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	17 FEBRUARY 1975	4:15 pm	SEDOS SECRETARIAT
WCC-CWME: Report on the meeting.	18 FEBRUARY 1975	4:00 pm	SEDOS SECRETARIAT
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP	26 FEBRUARY 1975	4:00 pm	SEDOS SECRETARIAT
ASSEMBLY	10 MARCH 1975	4:00 pm	--

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OBITUARY: With deep sorrow we report that Sister Lourdes Palma, former General Councillor of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, died the 8th of February in Manila.

THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH

An English Benedictine monk long resident in India relates how Christianity and Hinduism are now engaged in dialogue on the mystery of salvation.

Until recently the Church in India has not been conspicuous for originality or creativity. It was content to receive the religion which was brought to it from abroad by foreign missionaries without any significant change. It accepted the liturgy, whether in Syriac or in Latin, which had grown up in Europe or the Middle East, without change. It followed the system of scholastic philosophy and theology, which derived from the Middle Ages in Europe, without reference to any system of Indian philosophy, and it adopted the spirituality and devotions of the post-reformation Church in Europe while ignoring the whole rich tradition of spirituality in India. In other words, an Indian Christian had to forget that he was an Indian, and adopt the language, the thought and the customs of Europe. Naturally, the architecture of the churches, the statues and holy pictures, the vestments and church furnishings were all faithful reproductions of European models. But today a remarkable change is taking place. The Indian Christian is beginning to discover his Indian inheritance, and the outlines of an authentic Indian Christianity in liturgy, theology and spirituality are beginning to emerge. For many years now an Indian liturgy has been coming into being, which has been approved both by the Catholic Bishops Conference of India and by the Holy See. In this liturgy it is customary for the priest to sit cross-legged on the floor, the traditional posture for prayer in India, and to wear a shawl instead of the usual Roman vestments. Both priest and people remove their shoes before entering the church, as is customary in all sacred places in India. During the offertory flowers are offered, and often fruits and other things, as a sign of the offering of the creation to God. Lights and incense are waved over the gifts in the gesture of arati, which is traditional in India as a way of consecrating anything to God. Following the introduction of the vernacular, Indian music has been introduced accompanied by drums and cymbals, and oil lamps are used instead of candles. With these changes in the external forms of the liturgy there have also come more profound developments of the actual structure of the Mass. An Indian anaphora has been published and a new form for the Mass in India, which attempts to create an Indian liturgy in accordance with the traditional ways both of thought and of expression in India.

All this development has not taken place without considerable opposition from the more conservative. But controversy has arisen especially over the question of the introduction of readings from the Hindu scriptures into the liturgy, which has become customary in many places. This raises the whole question of the relation between Hinduism and Christianity, which underlies also these other changes. Since Indian culture is predominantly Hindu, to introduce Indian customs and expressions normally means to introduce Hindu customs and expressions. The problem of the liturgy therefore becomes a problem of theology. How do we understand the relation of Hinduism and other religions to the Church? On what ground can we introduce Hindu ways of thought and expression and readings from the Hindu scriptures into our liturgy? It was to answer this question that a conference was called last month in Bangalore of scholars and theologians from all over India to study the question of revelation and inspiration in non-biblical scriptures. It was prepared by research papers on every aspect of the question from the

point of view of the Bible and the liturgy, of theology and philosophy and of the traditions of the non-biblical religions themselves, especially Hinduism and Islam. The findings of this conference are of profound interest and are of vital importance, I believe, not only to the Church in India but to the whole Church today. The Church today is being brought into contact with other religions, with their scriptures and traditions, in a way which has never taken place before. Here in India, living constantly among people of so many different religious backgrounds, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Jain, Parsee, Sikh and others, with their ancient traditions and their deep religious commitment we are being continually challenged to relate ourselves to them and to ask what is their place in the universal plan of God. It has been said that the Church has passed through four phases in her understanding of other religions. The first, which prevailed both among Catholics and Protestants until fairly recently, and was largely based on ignorance, was that Christianity alone is true and all other religions are false. As knowledge of the very evident virtues of other religions grew, this view was replaced by that which proclaimed that other religions belong to the sphere of natural religion, and Christianity alone is revealed and supernatural religion. As a more intimate knowledge of these religions grew, and the profound wisdom and holiness revealed in them became manifest, and especially as the universality of the grace of Christ became better realised, the view developed, which is still perhaps largely prevalent today, that revelation is to be found outside Christianity, and that other religions, on the analogy of the Old Testament, could be seen as "preparations" for the coming of Christ, in whom the fulfilment of all religion is to be found.

In this view the Church is not a closed society in which the knowledge of revelation is complete and nothing has to be added, but an open society in dialogue with other religions and with the rest of the world, ever seeking a better understanding of the truth which has been communicated to her and even seeking to express it in more adequate terms. Evangelization in this perspective can only be seen in terms of dialogue. The Church is in possession of a unique revelation of the mystery of existence, which she has received from Jesus Christ, and she wishes to share the knowledge and the love, which has been revealed to her, with other people. But she has to recognise that the same mystery is also present in other people under other "signs" and she has always to be ready to receive no less than to give. For a Christian of course, the criterion for his judgment of other religions will be the revelation which he has received through Christ and the Church, but he has to be continually open to the movement of the Spirit in other religions, to be able to listen to the Word of God in the scriptures of other religions and to respond to the presence of the Spirit in their religious rites and their holy men. It is this vision of the Church as an open society in dialogue with all the religions with all men who are seeking God, or truth or justice or whatever may be the terms in which the divine mystery manifests itself to them, which is giving new life to the Church in India and awakening a new understanding of what she is called to become.

In the light of this vision of the Church it can easily be understood that the conference in Bangalore unanimously decided that the Church not only could but should use the sacred scriptures of other religions in her liturgy. We cannot understand the mystery of Christ, which is God's universal plan of salvation, adequately, unless we see how the other religions of the world are included in this plan. The mystery of salvation cannot be confined to the Judaeo-Christian tradition alone. It is present everywhere among all peoples and in every religion and embraces the whole course of human history. If the

Eucharist, in which this mystery of salvation is celebrated, is to have its full meaning, it must be seen to embrace the whole of this divine plan and not only that aspect which is contained in the biblical revelation. To discern the relation of these other scriptures and other rites to the mystery of Christ, which is celebrated in the Eucharist is the function of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Thus the Church will be seen to be always an open community, always living in dialogue not only in her theology but also in her prayer with other religions and with the rest of the world. Every Eucharist should be a celebration of the mystery of Christ, in which new dimensions of the mystery are being continually revealed, until the Church grows to the full realisation of the mystery, in which God's plan for the salvation of man is finally revealed.

One of the most interesting developments in the conference in Bangalore was that this view also came to be challenged, and another view, which has been called the sacramental of religion, was suggested. According to this view there is one, infinite and eternal Mysterium in which the ultimate meaning and purpose of human life is to be found. This mystery is in itself beyond conception and cannot properly be expressed, but it manifests itself under "signs", that is words and actions, which both reveal and communicate its saving power. In this sense Jesus Christ is the "sacrament" of God, the visible and historical sign of God's saving purpose for mankind, and the Church is the "sacrament" of Christ, the visible, historic institution, in which the mystery of salvation is revealed and communicated. But the same mystery of salvation is also present in other religions under other signs. Each religion from the most primitive to the most advanced has its own unique insight into the one mystery of salvation, and we have to learn to respect and understand these different manifestations of the one saving mystery of God. There is, for instance, an experience of God recorded in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita for which there is no real parallel either in the Old or the New Testament or in Christian mysticism. In the same way, there is an experience of the divine mystery, though not under the name of "God", in Buddhism, which gives a unique insight into the same mystery in quite other terms, akin to though distinct from the "apophatic" or negative theology of the Greek fathers. The task of the Christian theologian is to relate these different expressions of the mystery of salvation to one another and to the revelation of that mystery in Christ and the Church. In considering this question we must bear in mind that the revelation of the divine mystery which we have received in Christ was given in terms of a Semitic language and culture. Jesus himself could only think and speak in terms of the biblical tradition in which he had been brought up. The biblical revelation therefore necessarily suffers from the limitations of the language in which it was expressed. The Church, therefore, to whom revelation has been entrusted, has to be continually seeking new terms in which to express different aspects of the mystery, which in itself remains beyond all expression. It was for this reason that the Church needed Greek philosophy in order to develop her theology and Roman law in order to organize her life. In the same way today the Church needs the insights, which the different religions of the world can give into the divine mystery, in order that this mystery may be ever more fully and more adequately expressed. The unfolding of the mystery will not be complete until every people has contributed its own insight into the mystery and even then we shall have to wait for the Parousia before the final revelation can take place.

Bede Griffiths
in the Tablet, 1.2.75.

HINDU - CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER by Sara Grant, R.S.C.J.

A REBIRTH REQUIRED

In the Christa Prema Seva Ashram, Poona, there hangs a small water-colour by the Indian Christian painter Angelo da Fonseca, who lived and worked in the ashram for many years. It shows three men sharing a meal in the after-glow of sunset. A Christian immediately recognises the supper at Emmaus, and every Indian knows at a glance that the companions of the risen Lord are Mahatma Gandhi and Tabindranath Tagore. As a recent visitor perceptively remarked, the three figures are still separated from one another by their own thoughts: the moment of realization in the breaking of the bread has not yet drawn them into unity, but it is clear from their attitudes of hushed expectancy that it is close at hand.

This bold "transcreation" of the Gospel scene is rich in symbolism which it would be fascinating to explore, but the point which seems most relevant to our present purpose is its vivid presentation of the simple and obvious truth that dialogue between different religious traditions is necessarily dialogue between persons in whom those traditions are embodied. One of the most striking signs of the presence and action of the Spirit in the Catholic Church in India in recent years has, in fact, been the enrichment brought by the steady awakening to this truth, both in the lives of individual Christians and in the growth in self-understanding of the Christian community as a whole. The National Seminar on the Church in India Today, held in Bangalore in May 1969, and its preparatory seminars throughout the country, brought Christians face to face with themselves as seen through the eyes of their fellow-countrymen. The effect, on the whole was one of salutary shock: it was to many a considerable surprise to learn that, though the contribution of the Church and the dedication of so many Christians, missionaries included, in the fields of education and social service, was sincerely appreciated, the contemplative heart of the Church was for the most part totally unsuspected, even though Christians themselves were deeply conscious that what was really needed was a profound spiritual renewal for all, priests, laity and religious. It gradually came to be realized that, if the Church in India was to be really integrated into the country and undo the damage done, with the best of intentions, by the missionaries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and their successors, who had implanted there not only the Christiana Faith but also largely alien Western ways, cutting off from their own cultural and spiritual traditions all those who embraced the Faith, at least in the central and northern parts of India, she must return to her sources, Indian as well as Christian, and be, at it were, reborn from her own origins. It was, however, fully recognised that what was needed was not an attempt to put the clock back, which would in any case be futile, but rather that individual Christians and Christian communities should enter fully into the national life-stream in all its rich variety of cultural differences and local problems, and seek in the light of the Gospel to make their full contribution to that integration of all that is good and relevant in ancient traditions with the newer values of a modern and rapidly industrializing society.

PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS

One could easily embark on a theoretical discourse on the mutual enrichment the Hindu and Christian partners in such a dialogue can bring to each other, but, mindful of the lesson of Ennaus, it may be more useful first to describe a few such encounters which have taken place in recent years, and allow them to speak for themselves.

The Christian Prema Seva Ashram has itself seen a number of these fraternal meetings, formal and informal. Founded over fifty years ago by the Anglican Father Jack Winslow, who died in England last March at the age of 92, it was for many years a centre of inter-religious friendship where such diverse characters as Gandhiji, C. F. Andrews, Angelo da Fonseca, Verrier Elwin, and many others, Christian and Hindu, Indian and English, found themselves happily at home. Father Winslow anticipated Vatican II in the most extraordinary way in his understanding of the need for a simple Indian and Christian community life, integrating the best of the three margs, or "ways", of the Hindu spiritual tradition--the jnana marg, or the way of contemplative knowledge, the bhakti marg, or way of loving devotion and surrender to the Lord, and the karma marg, or way of selfless service: life-style, liturgy, studies, were all as far as possible thoroughly evangelical and thoroughly India. For various reasons, including the nomination of its then Acharya, as Anglican Bishop of Bombay--Father Winslow had by then returned to England--the original community had dispersed about 1961 and the ashram remained empty until, in 1971, it was reopened on an ecumenical basis by Sisters of the Anglican Community of St. Mary the Virgin and of the Catholic Society of the Sacred Heart. A most valued member of the community is an old Brahmin lady deeply familiar with the culture and religious traditions of Maharashtra, who looks after everyone with the loving and watchful care of a much beloved grandmother, and makes an irreplaceable contribution to the life of the ashram, spiritual and temporal. She once remarked to me: "You all go to the chapel and sit for a long time to pray. For me, all is prayer. Parameshwara (God) is in you (with a vigorous jab of her finger towards me), and in each one, so whatever I do for you, it is done for Parameswara!"

The ashram is a centre for the development of Indian liturgy, under the National Liturgical Centre at Bangalore, and this in itself offers many occasions for fruitful dialogue with Hindu friends. The chapel, like the rest of the house, is furnished very simply with a low tabernacle, mats, and a stool or two for anyone unused to sitting on the floor. The music is Indian, and the singing in Marathi (the regional language), Hindi or Sanskrit. Hindu music-masters and language-teachers have gladly helped with the composing or translating of liturgical or devotional chants, and one of the Indian members of the community is herself a gifted musician who has edited a book of Indian liturgical music which includes a number of her own compositions. This is a very important contribution to the Church in India at this moment in her history.

"THE POOREST? THE LOWLIEST AND THE LOST"

One of those who helped us most in this area and became a close friend was a dear and holy old pandit whom we first met at Vinoba Bhave's ashram at Purnar. We asked him if he would come and stay with us if we ever had an ashram of our own, and he said he would, on condition that we did something to help, in Tagore's phrase, "the poorest, the lowliest and the lost". We promised, and he came and stayed with us for a month, to initiate us into Hindu spiritual traditions. Later, he came back several times to help with seminars for Sisters and others, and came to regard the ashram as his second home. He was a wordless lesson in evangelical living, serene, utterly selfless, at the service of all. He gave us many insights into the meaning of the Gospel, and caused many a searching examination of conscience, quite unconsciously, for he never preached. He assisted at all our prayer, and was present daily with great reverence at the daily Eucharist. When it was explained to him that the consecrated Indian bread and wine

passed round on a thali (a round metal tray) was only for those "who have received the full Christian initiation", he quite understood, but added gently: "But you should have some other kind of prasad for others." The suggestion was taken up at the Paschal Vigil, when we had a sudden influx of Hindu guests; we put a bowl of grapes on the communion thali and explained once more about the "full Christian initiation", adding that any of our Hindu brothers or sisters present who would like to associate themselves with us in union with Christ's self-offering were invited to take the prasad of a grape. I think all did, and we and they were very happy at this solution of what had been a deeply felt problem in the ashram.

Thanks to Panditji's help and the presence of Swami Abhisiktananda (Fr. H. LeSaux) another great friend of the ashram, also now with God, whom, incidentally, Panditji fully recognised as an authentic interpreter of the Upanisadic tradition, the whole Paschal liturgy that year was set firmly in the context of the cosmic covenant, with the blessing of the fire out on the sandhyasthan (place for morning and evening twilight prayer, a wide circle of stone in the garden where Gandhi prayed in the past), incorporating relevant elements of Vedic tradition and a beautiful Sanskrit invocation to the Trinity composed by Panditji and theologically checked by Abhisiktanandaji.

I had my own high moment of dialogue with Panditji apropos of my study of Sankara (the great Hindu mystic and philosopher of the 8th-9th centuries). I had said that there seemed to be no necessity, on Sankara's own metaphysical principles, for the cessation of individual existence at the death of the "realised" man, though on other grounds Sankara teaches this. He fully agreed. "But," he asked, gazing at me with shining eyes, "why should one wish to continue in existence as an individual once one has realized that He is all?" I could only repeat what another man of God, an Indian Jesuit, had said to me some time before when I put much the same question to him: "Shall we not allow the Father to give us to Himself?" Doubtless Panditji did not fully catch all the Christian "harmonics" of this, as Abhisiktananda would have put it, but at least we were consciously and sympathetically one in our overwhelming sense of non-being in presence of the totally free and incomprehensible Love which alone sustains us in the fragile existence that is ours.

"ONE WHO KNOWS BRAHMAN"

We have found in our life at the ashram that prayful pondering of Hindu and Christian scriptures taken together, either by ourselves or with friends like Panditji, can lead to penetrating insights into the mystery of Christ and, above all, into the indwelling Presence of God in and through His whole creation, but most especially within our own being. For this, of course, one has to be completely honest and not yield to the temptation to twist the meaning of the texts to suit our own preconceived ideas, but, when the necessary discipline of study has been undertaken, it brings a wonderfully enriching reward. We received welcome sanction for this procedure some months ago, during a dialogue weekend with a small group of friends, Christian, Hindu and Muslim. Someone mentioned the Rig-Vedic hymn on creation which speaks of the mysterious Person, man yet more than man, from whose death creation was born, as a foreshadowing of Christ whose death in a mysterious sense preceded creation (cf. Col. i,15-20). A famous and venerable Hindu swami who was present immediately objected: "But that is not how we interpret it!" However, when he was asked whether it might not be possible for the

Christian revelation, which came later in time, to enable us to see in such texts, without destroying their significance, a further and perhaps even fuller meaning, he agreed that this was a perfectly acceptable suggestion. Such moments help one to grasp in a new way the thought of Paul and John regarding the Word of God pre-existing with the Father from all eternity, who is also the Kurios, the Lord of the entire universe transfigured through His death and resurrection and the gift of the Spirit.

Apart from such opening-up of new horizons and unsuspected depths in our own faith (not new truths, but new insights), there are sometimes striking indications of the living and active presence and initiative of the risen Lord and His Spirit among our Hindu brothers. So, at the International Conference on the Theology of Evangelization, at Nagpur in 1970, it was agreed that the criterion for the presence of the Spirit in the prayer of any man, Christian or Hindu, was a sense of responsibility and concern for his fellow-men shown in his life as a whole. A few weeks later, an old disciple of Ramana Maharsi said to me out of the depths of his own inner silence: "The silence of a man of understanding (literally, "one who knows Brahman", who has a deep experiential knowledge of God) is dynamic; it is not a dead silence. Every form, everything we see, is a manifestation of the supreme Reality; everywhere is Bliss--it is the ego that spoils everything. The silence of a man of understanding, his awareness of that Bliss, is a perpetual tapas (redemptive penance) which is of benefit to the whole world." Naturally speaking, such an insight into what we would call the redemptive value of contemplative prayer in and of itself is something quite alien to the extreme form of acosmism which has for centuries been widely if mistakenly regarded as the authentic teaching of Sankara.

THE RISEN CHRIST

A Christian sannyasi (ascetic) friend told me of another old advaitin who had never read the Gospels and was, in fact, quite anti-Christian, who had such an overwhelming vision of the cosmic Christ stretching out His arms to him that he could not distract himself, try as he would (he tried playing with a child to drive the vision away!). He could not doubt that it was Christ, though there was nothing in his background to explain such a thing: quite to the contrary. When the sannyasi, turned devil's advocate, asked him how he could account for this experience, given his advaitin antecedents, he said helplessly: "What can I do? It happened!" "But Christ died 2000 years ago. How could he appear to you now?" At this the old man became extremely indignant: "How can you, a Christian, so limit Christ? Christ may have died 2000 years ago, but the Christ-consciousness is eternal!"

One last instance: a week or two ago, a boy from a distant village arrived at the Ashram in search of Marathi literature about Christ, for himself and a group of companions who had learnt about Him from a passing preacher some time before, and had continued their study of Him and His teaching on their own ever since. He asked one of the Sisters in the ashram: "What do you think about Christ?" She said she believed that He was God who became man. He replied, with deep personal conviction: "I think Christ was a man who took the suffering of the whole world into His heart."

It may have been noticed how often the risen Christ has been mentioned here. It has, in fact, been suggested that "for the Church in India, the Paschal season has a special significance, for, whereas the people of Israel were being prepared throughout the time of the Old Testament for the birth of the Lord at a given moment in history, it was specifically towards the coming of the risen Christ that the long and slow praeparatio evangelica of her own experience of God was leading India, since Christ came

to her through His apostles only after His death and resurrection. This suggests a mutual complementarity between the scriptures and traditions of the two peoples. In revealing Himself to the Jews, God makes use above all of the historical process, speaking through events as well as through words; the time-factor, therefore, has great significance, and everything converges on that dateable moment which has to be par excellence the point of intersection between the Timeless and time. In India, on the other hand, while the disregard of history was certainly not so complete as has sometimes been imagined, attention has normally been focused with greater intensity on that other dimension of human experience which transcends the world of space and time, though it also gives it whatever meaning it possesses.

"It may well be, then, that while the specific contribution of the more historically-minded Western Churches has been to stress the reality of the Incarnation, the 'materialisation', if one may so express it, of the eternal and transcendent God, India is called to provide the means for a deeper insight into the mystery of Christ under the aspect of what we may call the 'Spiritualization' of matter, which is implied in the tremendous reality of Presence indicated by the long-familiar words of the Pentecost liturgy: 'The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole earth' and yet the greater mystery of fulfilment of the 'Promise of the Father' made possible by the death and resurrection of the Lord, which is ultimately to lead, as St. Paul tells us, to the transformation of the whole cosmos".

FASTING AND CONTEMPLATION

It is certainly true that the encounter with Hinduism has proved, for individual Christians and for the Church in India, wherever it has been sincere and deep, a relentlessly challenging experience: a challenge especially from two closely related and essential aspects of Hinduism, a profound awareness of the total transcendence of the ultimate Mystery, which is yet only to be found through the realisation that it is, in fact, the Ground of one's own being, the Self of one's finite self, and the recognition that acceptance of this fundamental truth leads with inexorable logic to the total renunciation, in spirit at least, of every created thing. Devout Hindus accept as a matter of course that fasting is a normal feature of life, and the usual Christian form of fasting makes one ashamed in face of their far more exacting regimen. This, however, is but one small point (though we find it sufficiently humbling as embodied in the Hindu member of the ashram community who religiously fasts every Monday, and for a whole month once a year). The challenge which Indian Christians have to face and meet, for their own sakes and for the sake of the Universal Church, is that of the questioning of the quality of their spiritual lives, and especially of what they have done with the gift of the Spirit--of their radical lack of contemplation. This seems to me, is the reminder addressed to us by the Lord, not only in our Hindu brothers, but in the thousands of young and not so young people from the West who are still flocking to India in search of a spiritual experience, a depth of relevance to modern living which they have not found in the Christianity in which they were brought up. It is only in the measure that we meet this challenge that the Christians of India will become convincing witness to the truth that in Christ the impenetrable Mystery sought with intense longing by their fellow countrymen down the ages has in Christ become a man like ourselves, "familiar with suffering", a man in whom that Mystery stands irrefutably revealed as total Love. In fact, her recent honest and steady reflection on her relationship with Hindu India has

lead the Catholic Church in India to a new understanding of her mission of evangelization as not simply a verbal communication but, rather, a life lived in close dependence on the Spirit of God, the life of a community in and through whom the Spirit is free to radiate and reveal "the deep things of God" because each member is interiorly guided by his action.

"THAT GREAT PERSON"

I have suggested that India has a special affinity for the Paschal feast: if the risen Lord had indeed met Gandhiji and Tagore in the flesh, their hearts too would undoubtedly have "burned within them" as He explained their own scriptures to them. In view of the fact that all our meetings with our Hindu brothers and sisters it is, or should be, the Lord Himself who is present in both partners, revealing to each, through His Spirit, the mystery of eternal life, we have found it good and helpful to juxtapose texts from the Paschal liturgy with passages from the Upanisads which seem to respond to them, "deep calling unto deep". By doing so, we come gradually to understand something of the great work of God in which we are invited to share through inter-religious dialogue. So, I would like to conclude with the prayer for the Office of Readings for Easter Sunday and the reading from the Svetasvatara Upanisad which is included in the Office for that day in the collection of optional readings from Indian sources for use in the Catholic Church in India:

"O God, who through your only begotten Son's victory over death today unbarred for us the entry into the eternal life, grant, we beg of you, that we who celebrate the solemnity of the Lord's resurrection may rise again in the light of life through the renewal wrought by your Spirit."

"I know that great Person, shining like the sun, beyond darkness, knowing whom a man passes beyond death.

There is no other way to the Abode.

I know him who is beyond age, who is the Self of all, who goes everywhere, all-pervading.

Desirous of liberation, I take refuge, I surrender,

I fly to him who tells me by his light that I am the Self."

(Svetasvatara Upanisad III, xi and VI, xviii)

By whatever name men may call that great Person, we know that there is only one "way to the abode" in whom man can say "I live now, yet not I" and cry in the Spirit "Abba, Father!" We know too that in secret ways known only to him, the Father gives to every man the possibility of being associated with the Paschal mystery of His Son. We all know this in theory, but in living contact with men still finding the great inspiration of their lives in the cosmic covenant, such realities of our faith leap suddenly into life.

INDIGENIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA--AN ANGLICAN VIEWPOINT

by Bishop H. Okullu of Maseno, Keyna

If the Church in East Africa is to make its voice effectively heard in the spheres of public life of these nations, then it must speak the language of Africa. But making Christianity indigenous does not mean engaging in a cultural excavation to resuscitate the Africa of a hundred years before Christianity came. African culture is what we are today and tomorrow. The Church's task is to speak to the people of East Africa here and now in their varied forms and degrees of development. The Church must speak to the peasant, the illiterate, the elite, the young, the old, the rich businessman in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Kampala and to the poor folk living in the urban slums and rural areas. It must speak to the university lecturer and to the illiterate street cleaner, to the ruler and to the ruled. It must speak to him in today's language and his today's situation and his today's aspiration.

What this chapter is attempting to show is that only when the Church is seen to be truly an African church will it be able to speak to African governments. Many African leaders have tried to discredit foreign opinion on the way they run their affairs by saying, 'Oh, but you don't understand the African way of doing things'. A church which is led by African thinking will be in a position to express itself more forcefully when African political leaders are not behaving in a right way.

In talking about indigenization of Christianity one cannot overlook or try to ignore the truth that there are two Africas: the urban Africa and the rural Africa. This fact sets up a road block to some African theologians and churchmen who feel that the Christian faith must be expressed in the language of Africa, but the barriers are not insurmountable. The Church must be instrumental in helping Africa find its authentic identity.

Christianity in Africa naturally bears the marks of those who introduced it into Africa. Because of the assumed superiority of the western culture, missionaries did not bother to find out African religious ideas and thought forms and practices of the African peoples. Despite the difficulty with the term 'African', there is a strong and widely--shared conviction across the continent that there is such a thing as African theology which will seek to interpret Christ to the Africans in such a way as to make them feel comfortable in the Faith. This was the conclusion arrived at the Kampala Consultation early in 1972 when several prominent African theologians came together to seek ways of putting meat into the term 'African theology'.

But it has already been observed, the criteria for formulating such a theology will have to be examined with utmost care in the light of the different stages of understanding prevailing in Africa today. First of all, theology in this context is a function of the Church. Theology is not found in the volumes of books which decorate the libraries of our theological schools. Theology is lived out in the lives of our congregations and individual Christians. African theology is, in this sense, Christianity as it is understood and practised in Africa; theology which aims at translating God's self-disclosure in the African context. Thus the criterion for African theology should be drawn from within the cultural context of Africa, and this theology must be Christ-centered in order to enable the theologian to communicate with all Christians for the building and establishing of the Church.

This means that when we are looking for African theology we should go first to the fields, to the village church, to the Christian homes to listen to those spontaneously uttered prayers before people go to bed. We should go to the schools, to the frontiers where traditional religions meet with Christianity. We must listen to the throbbing drumbeats and the clapping of hands accompanying the impromptu singing in the independent churches. We must look at the way in which Christianity is being planted in Africa through music, drama, songs, dances, art, paintings. We must listen to the preaching of a sophisticated pastor as well as to that of the simple village vicar. We must try to understand what these sermons are saying and how the congregations understand them. Everywhere in Africa things are happening. Christians are talking, singing, preaching, writing, arguing, praying, discussing. Can it be that all this is an empty show? It is impossible. This then is African theology. This is not a racist theology, but an expression of the Christian faith in the African language.

But in all this the task still remains to find common basic concepts and African philosophy--that is the African world view; their concept of the universe and the influence of that concept on religion, social and cultural behaviour.

Having discovered these common concepts, we have to go back much further and appeal, through our preaching and teaching, to help the African Christian to rediscover his identity and to be able to articulate it. One of the major tasks facing the African theologian is to clear the ground first; to create an atmosphere where indigenisation can take place. So that instead of finding criteria in Germany, England or America, African Christians develop authentic theology within the emotional, cultural and social concept of the people.

From this point onward the process must be a thoroughly self-criticising exercise. African theology is not an antidote for the missionaries' complete rejection of every indigenous religious concept. Rather, it is an honest, positive appraisal and re-assessment of the essentials of the gospel. Rejecting the impression that the African religious background is one whole lot of superstitions, taboos and magic, the theologian's task is not, however, to Christianize what is African, but merely to express the gospel in African terms. African theology does not aim to found a new church for the Africans only. There can be no other foundation beyond that which is already laid: Jesus Christ Himself (I Corinthians 3:11). The theologian is to sort out from the great value of African religious background that which he considers to be a valuable heritage, that which provides the preparatory ground for the planting of Christianity. For that reason the theologian will make it a pre-requisite to make a thorough study of this African background. For until this is clearly understood it will not be possible to make a fair judgement on what is good or bad. A careful treatment of the facts so discovered, to serve as an aid to Christianity, is of absolute necessity. Present church leaders in East Africa will have to be convinced by the theologian that Christianity is not being diluted by heathen beliefs and practices from which we have been saved. Fear of syncretism has been one of the main obstacles to indigenising Christianity in East Africa. Most of the present leadership is drawn from those who were taught too well by the missionaries, and are determined to keep the Christian faith 'pure'. For some there is a clear distinction between worldliness and sacredness, so that any semblance of 'contamination' is anathema. After a wedding reception in the Parish Hall of All Saints' Cathedral in Nairobi in which many of the

Luo ceremonial practices at marriage were performed, a leading churchman remarked, 'We should not allow them to reintroduce these heathen things in our church buildings.'

A leading Uganda churchman once said that his greatest fear for Christianity in Africa was that old heathen practices would one day be mixed with Christianity. The theologian will have to make sure that these very sincere fears are overcome, not only in the leaders but in many lay people as well. People will have to be convinced that what is desired is the Church of Christ in Africa in full communion with, and enriching, the whole world-wide Church. This will mean that the starting point for allaying fears and carrying out the required sifting of African traditional religion should be the theological colleges. Bishop Tucker Theological College in Uganda is making a not too revolutionary, but well-timed pioneering effort in introducing African tunes and dances.

The area of a much bigger tension in the effort to indigenize will be the questions as to what is genuinely African and what is western. Is the theologian to regard the cultural concepts of Africa's rural past as the frame of reference for an African theology? We have already seen that development has become a magic word in Africa's modern vocabulary. Development means, to a great degree, running away from the past. Many African families, for instance, use a knife and fork instead of their fingers for eating. They are ready to explain that this is more hygienic than using fingers. Suggestions for congregation adaptation of traditional concepts and rituals must take into consideration the hard, cold fact that to many African folk in the city such practices will be meaningless. Is it realistic to criticise the expensive imported silver communion vessels without suggesting that Africans should stop using extremely expensive plates and cups in their churches? Or going back to eating meat or ugali at communion, whereas in many parts of Africa, ugali has almost become a staple diet? In such houses eating ugali could be replaced with potatoes or bananas, whereas bread would be eaten with oil-smeared fat every single day. In this case eating of bread at communion might be part of African theology. Again wine is now not a strange thing met only at communion, but a common commodity consumed by Africans at parties and in their homes. But of course, there is no reason why poor congregations in the villages should not resort to making their local communion wine cheaply from local fruits which are available in plenty, instead of spending money on the expensive imported wine. Very good wine can be made very cheaply, say, from local strawberries which are found in many areas, or other fruits. This means that African theology might also contribute to the education of the village toward development not excluding development with westernization, of course. Thus African theology, in many cases, will have to meet the African right where he is today, instead of trying to take him back where he was many, many years ago. Yet it is essential that this African theology should be based on the truth as revealed to us by God through the Bible and finally revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

The complexities of the contemporary African society--educated, uneducated, rural, urban--will thus make the exploration of African theology not a simple job. Are we therefore to talk of theologies in the plural and not theology in the singular? This may be so, although there will still remain the basic religious concepts buried in the African soul to be discovered, and to be used to teach Christianity.

To all these one must add the very delicate question of financial assistance from the west. Some churchmen, including younger leaders are known to be holding a strong view that financial aid from western countries is one of those things hindering or delaying

the indigenization of Christianity in Africa. Yet there is the usual disquieting ambivalence over the issue, and those who feel strongly about this matter are afraid to say it too loudly in case money stops coming for their fancied projects, such as theological education.

Different denominations overseas are happy to see that the traditions which they imparted on the continent should be kept intact and it is feared that a church which has lost every trace of its Lutheran or Anglican traditions might lose the money with the traditions.

Financial aid, in fact, is tied to the missionary personnel from the western nations. In many cases money comes to aid projects which are organised and supervised by the missionaries, and both money and the missionary are often seen as obstacles to Africanization.

The writer was recently asked by a young missionary to tell him 'what is the future of missionaries in Kenya'. My reply was, 'missionaries have got no future here'. What is meant is this. The missionary must quickly put aside the old concept of coming to Africa to lead and guide the young church. It is true that this was not the original intention of the first pioneers like Dr. Krapf, Alexander Mackay, Alfred Tucker and others. These men and women came to spread the message of the gospel to the people who needed it. But as Roland Allen says, they should have withdrawn after planting the seed, to allow a spontaneous expansion of the church. By overstaying their mission and sitting on the infant church, they eventually became more preoccupied with teaching the doctrines and establishing traditions than with a witness to the worship of Christ.

Some of the present missionaries are still under the shackles of this misconception, and to such their future in Africa is important. The time is far gone when one should still see missionary archbishops, bishops, moderators, superintendents and archdeacons 'sitting' on the infant church to guide its doctrines and traditions. Africans should by now have grasped the full implications of Christianity or they will never do so. In any event they have to go it alone now. The Church Missionary Society in England recently passed this resolution at its General Council: 'to pledge the Society's wholehearted support for the desire of overseas churches to attain responsible selfhood.'

Of course it must be made clear that missionaries from overseas countries are still welcome, but they should be those who are willing to have no future. The modern secular concept of mission is the one that could be adopted. People speak of a United Nations' mission, for example, sent to a particular country with specific terms of reference for a specific scientific project for a specific period of time. Its mission accomplished, it must hand over its report and disband. The churches in East Africa and the missionary organisations must immediately think of adopting the same policy by employing expatriate church workers on short term contract basis for a specific project requiring their skills. This should be essentially a training appointment. The man or woman whose services are so acquired should be given at least two and at most four years to finish his 'mission' and to fade away.

At a World Council of Churches meeting in Bangkok in early 1973 a suggestion was put forward, backed strongly by the African and Asian block, to ask all the missionaries to withdraw for a period of time in order to allow African churches to assess their own

situation, discover their own identity and then, if they wish, to invite missionaries back again. The argument in favour of a 'moratorium' as it came to be **known** is that the continued presence of missionaries with the material and psychological dependence it has created will be hard to overcome unless the missionaries withdraw completely.

There are those, particularly of the Missionary Societies, who hold that both the 'recipient' and the 'sending' bodies can live through this by negotiations and re-adjustments in order that African churches could still attain their desired goal of mature adulthood without a break. This is not impossible, and yet there is a third alternative which, in the opinion of the writer, is a better compromise, and is what has come to be known as the 'Ecumenical Sharing of Personnel' in which money and personnel would be channelled through an ecumenical body.

This system would seem to express the desire of many people in Africa and Asia who feel strongly that mission is not the appropriation of churches in the West to Africa and Asia, and confines the mission of the Church only to its geographical setting. But in the modern concept of the mission of the Church this should be understood to be a movement in which all share. Ecumenical sharing of personnel, organised centrally would be the best way to register in the minds of all, their commission to 'go into all the world and to proclaim the gospel'. Besides it would curtail dependence on some missionary body sitting in Washington or Stuttgart or London. Yet consideration must always be given to the traditions which have been established by churches in different areas and, when considering personnel for these places, it should be made certain that they can fit in so as to share in the outlook of the local church. For example, it would be harmful to the church in some areas to send them a missionary who held sherry parties in his home and so scandalised the Christians of that neighbourhood!

TWO DECLARATIONS OF THE ZAIREAN EPISCOPATE REGARDING THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

1. At the end of their XIIth Plenary Assembly, the Bishops of Zaire published a declaration which was read on Sunday, January 19, in the churches of Kinshasa.

Facts occurred during their meeting, the Bishops say, question the status of the Church and its action possibilities and implicate its future in Zaire. This is the reason why they affirm the Church's position on its fundamental faith and on its particular nature in the communion with the Universal Church; they show the conditions of its contribution to national development and consider new pastoral orientations.

After this preamble, the Bishops point to significant facts which have led to this declaration. The principle of "secularity of the State" as understood in the sense of the Constitution does in itself not create any problem, but in Zaire it appears to be understood in an anti-Christian sense. The proof thereof is the suppression of Christian names, of youth movements, of the Christian press, of the Faculty of Theology at the National University of Zaire, and the proclamation of the M.P.R. (People's Revolutionary Movement) as a Church. This is why the Bishops affirm their faith in Jesus Christ and in the Church as expressed in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicean-Constantinople Creed and in the proclamation of Paul VI (1968).

The Church confirms her desire for collaboration in the development of the nation, but this has been made difficult by the reduced possibilities of dialogue with the state representatives and by the unilateral breaking of agreements.

Consequently, the Church can deliver the evangelical message solely through the witness of her being and that of the Christians themselves. The Bishops are of the opinion that they must in conscience take the following position regarding the insertion of the Church into the development of the country:

- A. After having taken cognisance of the suppression of courses of religion in the schools, the episcopate withdraws from the school all ecclesiastical professors of religion so as to transfer them in an outside school catechesis. Lay professors of religion may teach other branches.
- B. No Catholic pupil or teacher may renounce his faith.
- C. Ecclesiastical teaching personnel of other branches may continue to lend their aid by personal right in conformity with the guarantee given by the President not imposing on them any doctrine contrary to their faith.
- D. In the medical and social fields, the Church remains disposed to continue, in dialogue with the authorities of the country, her wide collaboration in so far as possible. It will associate in this field more lay people capable of assuming its responsibility. The same holds true for the Church's contribution to development.

After having ascertained that the Church-State relations constitute a delicate problem, the Bishops conclude that they want to collaborate with the State in the greatest loyalty, without, however, making a direct intervention in the political field.

2. OUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST: THE PASTORAL LETTER OF THE BISHOPS OF ZAIRE

The original text of this joint pastoral letter, which is a declaration of faith consists of some 4,500 words. The affirmations of principle are supported by 57 references to Sacred Scripture, the Constitution of the Republic of Zaire, Government declarations, Vatican II, the directives of Pope Pius XII, etc. As in their first declaration, the Bishops repeat under the title "Present Context" the facts, which according to the opinion of the Bishops have an anti-religious sense.

PREAMBLE

At this time in which our country finds itself at a decisive turning-point of its history, we deem it our pastoral duty to urge the people of God to persevere in its faith in Jesus Christ: "the Way, the Truth and the Life."

A. Present Context

Certain facts generate a feeling of uneasiness: such as the secularity of the State, proclaimed by the Constitution, and the principle of recourse to authenticity, which appear to be understood in an anti-religious sense and opposed to the Christian religion (measures taken and declarations made). It is therefore expedient to re-state the fact that secularity does not mean either laicism or religious indifference. The State must respect and protect the religious convictions of all citizens (Revised Constitution, title II, Articles 12 and 18). The Church respects a sound and legitimate secularity. The Church appreciates the recourse to authenticity as a step which enables us to be ourselves, but does not in any way exclude the universal and saving action of Christ. Moreover the reforms realized and the research work already done in the field of sacerdotal and religious formation, and in the liturgy, clearly show the Church's concern to contribute to the preservation of our cultural heritage.

B. Our Faith in Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, God made Man, is Lord, Chief, Principle and Plenitude of life and salvation. He is the only Saviour and Mediator between God and men, the Alpha and the Omega. Such is our Faith, which we are proud to proclaim. (Here follows the text of the Creed.)

C. Our Faith in Jesus Christ is ecclesial communion.

Our Faith in Jesus Christ creates the people of God, which is the Church. The Church is not a temporal power but a humble service. This is the reason why the Church of Zaire feels itself responsible for the evangelization of Africa and wants thus to contribute to the building of the Universal Church. It is therefore clear that every particular Church must remain united with the Roman Pontiff, principle and visible foundation of that unity. In the same way, the Bishops are the principle and foundation of unity in their particular Churches, formed after the image of the universal Church. In them, the Catholic Church exists, one and unique.

D. Some Requirements of the Christian Life.

The Christian faith is a gift of God, which presupposes the personal involvement of the entire man and a continuous conversion. Christian conversion is being open to Christ, and as a "free act" it respects man's identity. Consequently, the African accepting the Gospel does not in any way disown his authenticity. On the contrary, the Christian finds in his faith in Christ a new approach to the world which is not fed by ideologies and illusions.

Faith in Christ is true when it changes us thoroughly. Christ acts in the hearts of men by the power of his Spirit, which urges the human family to improve its conditions of life and to submit the entire world to this end. Christian ethics do not form a letter which kills but a spirit which vivifies. It is not an imposition but a loving communion. It is the imitation of Christ, who by the acceptance of the Cross wants to have the love of God and of the neighbour triumph.

LIST OF PERIODICALS RECEIVED DURING JANUARY compiled by Sr. Agnetta, S.Sp.S.I. EXTERNAL PERIODICALS

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Name of Periodical</u>
No. 34	Action
No. 1815-1825	Agenzia Internazionale FIDES Informazioni
December	AMECEA Information
No. 114	Bulletin (Canadian Catholic Conference)
Vol. 4, No. 3	Catalyst
Nos. 38-46	La Chiesa nel Mondo
Vol. 19, No.6	Christ to the World
September 1974	Christian Leadership Letter
No. 4, 1974	CICIAMS News
Nos. 49; 1-4	Circulars (USG)
No. 18	ComMuniCatie
No. 46	CONDOR
Vol. 10, No. 1	Contacts
Nos. 633-683; 1-9	Documentation and Information for and about Africa
Nos. 1666-1668	La Documentation Catholique
No. 5/6	Ekumenisk Orientering - Aktuellt
No. 5	Ekumenisk Orientering - Church and Society
No. 9	Ephemerides Notitiarum
No. 26	IDOC Bulletin
No. 59	Impact (Zambia)
No. 12; No. 1, 1975	Informatiedienst (ID)
Nos. 468-472	Informations Catholiques Internationales
No. 4, 1974	Inter Caritas
Nos. 11 and 12	International Associations
Vol. 63, No. 252	International Review of Missions
No. 18	Justitia et Pax Bulletin
No. 50	LADOC
Nos. 16-19	Letters from Asia
Nos. 96 and 97	ManiTese
No. 110	Mensaje Iberoamericano
No. 258	Messages du SecOurS Catholique
Vol. 27, No. 1	Messis
No. 3	Ministries and Communities
Nos. 40 and 41	Mission Intercom
November-December	Missions Etrangères
No. 74	Le Mois à l'Unesco
August and September	News Bulletin (CHAP)
December 1974	Newsletter (Kenya Catholic Secretariat)
January 1975	News Notes (AFPRO)
Vol. 2, No. 1	Notes and Comments (AGRIMISSIO)
November-December	ODI (Overseas Development Institute)
Nos. 63 and 64	Omnis Terra (English edition)
Vol. 7, No. 7	One Spirit
Vol. 1, No. 2	One World
Vol. 14, Nos. 2 and 3	The Outlook
Nos. 76 and 77	Peuples du Monde
No. 56	Prudentes
No. 17	Quarterly Record

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Name of Periodical</u>
December	Report from INU
No. 561	Revista de Misiones
Vol. 10, No. 2	Risk
Vol. 16, No. 51/52; and	
Vol. 17, Nos. 1-4	Ruhr Wort
Vol. 21, No. 3	Social Compass
October 1974	South African Outlook
No. 25	SSRC Newsletter
Nos. 7016-7018	The Tablet
No. 33	UISG (French edition)
No. 20	Vida en Fraternidad
No. 120	Vinculum
Vol. 25, No. 3	Worldmission
 II. INTERNAL PERIODICALS	
Nos. 223 and 224	AIMIS (FSCJ et al.)
Vol. 5, No. 1	ANS (SDB)
No. 12	Arnoldus-Nota (SVD)
Vol 27, No. 1	Blueprint (SJ)
Nos. 448; 1, 1975	Chronica (CICM)
1/75	CMM News
Nos. 67-70	Communications (SM)
No. 11	CSSP Documentation
Nos. 49 and 50	CSSP Newsletter
No. 80	Echos de la rue du Bac (MEP)
Vol. 8, No. 1	Euntes (CICM)
No. 284	Famiglia Comboniana (FSCJ)
No. 10	Fede e Civiltà (SX)
No. 11	FMM Documentation
No. 21	FMM Information Service
Nos. 12; 1/1975	Hello? Frascati! (SA)
No. 8	ICA-ICM
No. 9	Information (RSCJ)
No. 3	International Information ND (SND-N)
December 1974	Maryknoll (MM)
Nos. 1 and 2, 1975	Missioni OMI
November 1974	Monde et Mission (CICM)
No. 24	Mondo e Missione (PIME)
January 1975	Nigrizia (FSCJ)
No. 14	Notiziario Cappuccino (OFMCap)
No. 55/75	OMI Documentation
No. 102	OMI Information
No. 7	Orientamenti Giovanili Missionari (SX)
No. 656	Petit Echo (PA)
Nos. 1 and 2, 1975	Piccolo Missionario (FSCJ)
No. 14	Roman Bulletin (SCMM-T)
December 1974	SECOLI (FSC)
No. 25	SMA
Nos. 162 and 163	Mundo Negro (FSCJ)
No. 1, 1974	FN (CMM)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING - AGENDA

A meeting of the Executive Committee of SEDOS will be held on Monday, February 17th. at 4.15 p.m. at the SEDOS Secretariat, with the following agenda:

1. Minutes of the previous meeting (75/23 - 25).
2. The March Assembly and the Task Force reports.
3. The Executive as a core group: a review.
4. Staff: new contracts and vacancies.
5. Report on the CWME meeting in Portugal.
6. Other matters.

Sincerely

B. Tonna