

Ignatius Hirudayam

Aikiya Alayam, Madras

CHRISTIAN AWARENESS OF THE NEED OF INCULTURATION

The attitude of one religion towards another will vary according to the growth of its own self-understanding and the consequent right of understanding the other. An infantile faith lacks self-understanding and hence the proper understanding of other faiths. It develops itself with the continual repetition of a particular credal formulation without probing into its content and context. This shallowness breeds fanaticism in impetuous temperaments. "The tone for the Western Christian approach to unbelievers," writes Paul Gregorios¹ "was perhaps set by Augustine of Hippo". And he quotes Augustine's words to Nectarius of Calema: "The virtues of pagans were but splendid vices." If the great Western theologian's mature judgement were this, he would come under this classification. But the great Doctor of the Church was greater than this as we shall see below.

A less immature faith is more tolerant of other religions to which it would be reluctant to give the name of "faith", but would accommodate them all on the lower rungs of the ladder of intellectual progress claiming for itself the summit of spiritual attainment. It ignores that many other faiths make a claim to be the zenith of human achievement. The fulfilment theory of even the most broad-minded missionaries and writers and their conferences smacked of this theory, which in India non-Christians found to be intolerably patronising. Farquhar's "Crown of Hinduism" and scores of such Christian missionary publications are expressions of this attitude. Many an Indian religion manifests this supercilious attitude, for example, the Vedanta, Saiva Siddhanta and the Vaishnavite sects claim to each one of them—to be

1. cf. "Dialogue with World Religions," *Indian Journal of Theology*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 1, 2.

the highest religious position attainable by man, the others being lower standards of preparation for itself. Hence any religion, if and when it endeavours to propagate itself, will either take up the posture of confrontation, conflict and conquest or that of compromise, adjustment, accommodation, or adaptation of itself in order to be acceptable to people of other persuasions.

St. Augustine who in the heat of controversy and the pangs of his own self-development had declared, "Outside the Church there is nothing but the damned", ended up in his most mature stage by widening the concept of the Church to comprise all humanity in its totality: "Res ipsa quae nunc Christiana religio nuncupatur erat apud antiquos, nec defuit ab initio generis humani....". This was his last will and testament in his *Retractations*: I. 1. cl 3. No. 3. This was in consonance with his major writings² and in the spirit of the earlier Greek Fathers who had elaborated the Logos Spermatikos theology and had included the pre-Christian Plato and Socrates in the Universal Christian fold.

The present-day self-understanding of the Church will form our conclusion to this essay.

Inculturation

When communications were reopened between the East and West, Christianity came to the East in bits and pieces as the result of the Reformation and in the garb of the Courtier of the conquering colonial powers. Confused and conflicting self-understanding of the Churches blurred their vision of the world of religions and culture.

Among the great missionary pioneers who fought against this narrowness of vision in Missionary efforts must be mentioned one who is much less known than St. Francis Xavier, but whose policies were as universal and sound if not more, viz., the Jesuit Visitor to the East Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606). His spirit was passed on to Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) in China, and through the Indian Provincial Superior, to Robert de Nobili (1577-1656) in Madurai. This great man's policies can be summarised in one sentence: "Be Indian with the Indians, Japanese with the Japanese, Chinese with the Chinese; make yourselves as the natives of the country."³

2. cf. also *De Civitate*: I.18. C.47.

3. cf. Joachim Barranco, S.J., *A Galaxy of Missionary Pioneers in the East*.

We shall confine ourselves to Robert de Nobili and see how he put into practice this noble policy of the Visitor with the permission of his Provincial.

“Narratio Fundamentorum quibus Madurensis Missionis Institutum caeptum est, et hucusque consistit,” which de Nobili wrote and got Mgr. Francis Ros, Archbishop of Cranganore to sign in order to give it weight at the Goa Conference, elaborates the four principles that guided the adaptations of the Madurai Mission. Robert de Nobili showed how assimilation of various cultures of the nations evangelized by the Church was a phenomenon that was real from the very birth of Christianity down through the centuries up to his own times. “To sum up,” Fr. de Nobili says, “the evangelical preacher following the precepts of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the example of the Apostles is to make himself all to all and to take up that mode of life which will make him acceptable to the people among whom he works. We have explained how this mode of life requires holiness of life, solidity of doctrine and the adoption of the way of living of the people. In this consists the First Foundation on which stands the Madurai Mission. Secondly, we find that the Church never prohibits the diverse customs and practices observed by different nations. This is the Second Foundation. Thirdly, we have seen how innumerable, partially social and partially superstitious, practices were allowed by the Church to continue after they had been rid of their superstitious elements. This is the Third Foundation. Finally, we have shown how the Church allowed innumerable *ceremonies* and *rites* which were wholly religious in character but which she rid of all superstition and turned into practices of Christian piety.”

De Nobili's method was approved by Rome and his Madurai Mission flourished. St. John de Britto followed in his footsteps and reaped abundant harvests in Tamil Nadu. Joseph Constantius Beschi embellished the local Church with his copious Tamil poems and a great epic depicting the life of St. Joseph and provided a great impetus to the Tamil Catholic elite that came after him. De Nobili's method had become the policy all over South India.

But with the deplorable controversies over what was called the Malabar Rite fifty years after the death of Robert de Nobili and with the suppression of the Society of Jesus, the theological pendulum of the Church swung in the other direction. The Malabar Rites controversies led up to an unfortunate decision by Rome which only Pope Pius XII revoked in 1950. May the Lord prevent a similar set-back in Church history today.

As for the Protestant Churches, during the first two centuries following the Reformation, as Dr. Herbert Hoefler points out,⁴ there was little missionary zeal and still less pre-occupation with non-Christian religions. He traces many reasons for this myopic attitude, but he does not mention what strikes me as the main reason for this closed mind, viz., the Protestant dictum "cujus regio ejus religio." When, however, formalism, scholasticism and chauvinism gave place to resurgence of personal religion, the desire to share one's faith with others was the natural outgrowth.

During the period of the suppression of the Society of Jesus, the spread of the Christian message took a surprising turn in the North and North-East India. Hindus who wanted to reform Hinduism turned to "The Precepts of Christ", as did Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the Father of Indian Renaissance and prophet of Indian nationalism who founded the Brahmo Samaj. His unitarianism and his controversies with the Serampore missionaries clouded the issue.

Keshub Chunder Sen, said to be the co-founder of the Brahmo Samaj, said: "India asks...Who is Christ?" and he answered: "This was the Christ who was in Greece and Rome, in Egypt and India. In the bards and poets of the R̥g-veda was He. He dwelt in Confucius and Sakya Muni. This is the Christ whom I see everywhere."⁵

Lecturing on *The Future Church* in 1969, Sen said: "All mankind will unite in a universal Church; at the same time it will be adapted to the peculiar circumstances of each nation and assume a national form...national growth and national organization. Neither will Germany adopt the religious life of China nor will India accept blindly that of England or of any other European country. India has religious traditions and associations, tastes and customs, peculiarly sacred to her, just as every other country has... We shall see that the future Church is not thrust upon us, but that we independently and naturally grow into it; that it does not come to us as a foreign plant, but that it strikes its roots deep into the national heart of India, draws its sap from our national resources and develops itself with all the freshness and vigour of indigenous growth." Brave words and tall, 90 years before the Second Vatican Council and the Upsala Conference!

4. Dr. H. Hoefler, *Debate on Mission*: Madras Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, 1979, pp. 27 ff.

5. F. Max Müller, *I Point to India*, p. 7.

But before the dream could be declared the official policy of the Christian Churches, many a heart had to bleed and many a head had to be crushed. Pratab Chander Mazoomdar, who came closest to Keshub Chunder Sen in his discipleship of Christ wrote : "When we speak of the Eastern Christ we speak of the incarnation of unbounded love and grace; and when we speak of the Western Christ we speak of the incarnation of theology, formalism, political and physical force."⁶

Besides these unbaptized *bhaktas* of Christ there were converts who recognized the necessity of Christianity taking root in Indian soil. Nilakanta Sastri Goreh who became Nehemiah Goreh, developed what is called the Church-in-witness-and-Defence-theology. He and his convert, Panditha Ramabhai, attempted to prove to the Brahmo Samajists that they were like the man who had found the pearl of great price but was unwilling to sell all he had and buy it. Yet, they, as well as Krishna Mohan Bannerjee and Lal Behari Dey made a positive response to Brahmo Samajists' demand for a national Christianity, what is now called the Local Church. Bhavani Charan Bannerji, a Bengali Brahmin who under the influence of Keshub Chunder Sen became warmly attached to the Person of Jesus Christ became a Catholic in 1891. He chose for himself the name of Theophilus which he translated as Brahmabandhab, the name we know him by. His "Vande Saccidanandam" has given to India an immortal poem embodying the gist of the Indian Vedantic theology of the Holy Trinity. The indigenous expression of the Catholic faith was Brahmabandhab's great concern, and this is revealed in his efforts for : (a) an integration of the social structure of India into the Christian way of life; (b) the establishment of an Indian Christian monastic order; (c) the employment of Vedanta for the expression of Christian theology; and (d) the recognition of the Vedas as the Indian Old Testament.

Brahmabandhab's Indian Christology is expressed in his Sanskrit hymn which he translated as the Hymn of the Incarnation :

The transcendent Image of Brahman
 Blossomed and mirrored in the full of overflowing
 Eternal Intelligence
 Victory to God, the God-Man (Narahari).

He wrote : "In short, we are Hindus so far as our physical and mental constitution is concerned, but in regard to our immortal souls we are

6. Mazoomdar, *The Oriental Christ*, p. 42.

Catholics. We are Hindu Catholics." Such language was too much in advance of its times and, therefore, was unpalatable to the Church leadership. Yet it expressed the simmering thoughts at a deep level among Christian believers, which would find theological and official formulation in Vatican II.

Such simmering thoughts were also expressed by several missionary journals of the Protestants. For instance, Dr. MacNichol's report of the Jerusalem Conference in 1928 affirms that "Christ is no stranger to Hinduism" (Vol. I, p. 47). While the earlier Fulfilment theory could still complacently think that the Missionary brings Christ to Hinduism, this statement of the Jerusalem Conference suggests that the Missionary should try to discover Christ who is already present and at work in Hinduism.

When the Jesuit Fathers returned to India after the Society was restored, they did not follow the methods of adaptation for which de Nobili had fought and won more than two centuries earlier. Hence their involvement in the culture of the people was nil. Whatever might be the reasons for the new trend, the assessment of Jesuits by Cardinal Newman in 1846 was not quite without justification; however, Newman admired them and "their only defect seemed to him was too much conservatism. He thought them suspicious of change with' a perfect incapacity to create anything positive for the wants of time."

The initiative passed to laymen, poets and artists like Vedanayagam Pillai, Chinnasamy Mudaliar and others in Tamil Nadu. At a time when inter-religious wars and inter-religious sectarian bickerings made daily news, it is exhilarating to find Vedanayagam Pillai in the centre of a vortex of Tamil culture. His *Sarva Samaya Samarasa Keerthanaigal*, a work of 192 songs published in 1878, are well known to all music-lovers in Tamil Nadu. They are sung even today. As the title indicates, these songs are catholic in spirit and non-sectarian, capable of being espoused by 'all believers of whatever religion', to use a phrase from *Ad Gentes* of Vatican II. The special traits of this Christian *bhakta* give a peculiar flavour even to his typically Catholic hymns and poems (which he published in plenty), capable of alluring *bhaktas* of all faiths.

Vedanayagar's poems give us a good idea of the inter-religious openness of both himself and his friend Savarirayalu Nayagar of

7. Meriol Trevor, *Newman: The Pillar of the Cloud*, pp. 405-406.

Pondicherry, and how steeped these two were in Hindu culture while living a fully committed Christian life. These qualifications were exemplified by many a less known Tamil poet who flourished in the last century. All this points to the aloofness of the hierarchy in matters cultural. Gone and forgotten were the days when de Nobili built his little *mutt* and the Church in Madurai in Indian style, and when Beschi installed in Konan Kuppam the statue of the Blessed Virgin. Mary executed according to the requirements of Indian iconography, like a Tamil Queen and named her *Periya Nayagi Ammai*. Hundreds of churches arose all over the land, which can very well fit in Paris, London or Washington. In the twenties of this century Fr. Heras S.J. was touring all over India pleading for churches in Indian style. Only in three villages near Nagercoil in the extreme South of India have his suggestions become concrete.

In Bengal, Fathers Dandoy and Johannis in their "Light of the East" maintained the plea for a Christian synthesis of the Vedanta systems and intuitions. Their attempts gave rise to a rejoinder in "The Examiner" of Bombay in the series, "The Great Antithesis." The article attacked, on the one hand, "Rigorists or Intransigents" who had no "spirit of accommodation or regard to human psychology" in presenting the Gospel and, on the other hand, what it called "the synthesists". The article pointed out the dangers of synthesisism and said: "And our first business in delivering the message is to make them realize their deficiencies and wants, in order to make them appreciate the new thing which is to remedy them..." The rejoinder from Tamil Nadu Jesuits was less well informed and more vehement. And we see still today the results of their mentality and methods of conversion.

Christians neglected the study of their mother-tongues. And in music, the Indian instruments were taboo, and foreign tunes were habitually used. A Tamil hymn book printed in 1923 contained over 200 hymns practically all set to European tunes with Tamil words thrust into them. A generation brought up in this atmosphere, no wonder, loses its taste for the local culture and develops insensitivity to its requirements.

The "Rethinking Christianity in India" group, and sundry other writers among the Protestants, kept the debate on indigenization alive. A. J. Appasamy, before and after his consecration as Bishop, wrote frequently on making use of India's heritage to give expression to Christianity. In Tamil Nadu, a substantial part of the rising generation

in the Catholic Church reflected the mentality of the "Light of the East" and of Fr. Heras and Fr. Monchanin. It was in this state of affairs we approached the eve of the Second Vatican Council.

Vatican Council II

The awareness of the Indian Church leadership regarding the need for inculturation can be gleaned from the replies of the Ordinaries of India, Pakistan and Ceylon to the questionnaires sent to them from Rome on the eve of the Second Vatican Council. These are to be found in the *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparando Series I. Antepreparatione* : Vols. I and II (I-II-III), Vol. II. Pars. IV. Asia].

On the subject under our consideration, we have copious declarations and decrees throughout the documents of Vatican II. Thus the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church gives the theological foundation of the inculturation of the Church as found in its very catholicity which "strives to bring all humanity with all its riches back to Christ its Head in the unity of the Spirit" (No. 13). This inculturation is a constitutive element in the development of particular and local Churches (No. 17).

The Protestant response to this Dogmatic Constitution was voiced by Albert C. Outler who wrote : "The Council intends this Constitution to be the major resource in the renovation and reform of the Catholic Church—and in the further progress of the ecumenical dialogue. It is equally certain that history's verdict on Vatican II will turn largely on how far this intention is realized." This colloquium is yet another effort to make that intention to be realized.

The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (No. 4) quotes as its basis the Epistle to the Hebrews I : 1-2. And R. C. Zaehner's comment is quite relevant that the writer of the Epistle knew little about the many more places and varied ways in which God had spoken. "Even in the Liturgy, the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community"; and therefore the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy wants to respect and foster the spiritual adornments and gifts of various races and peoples (No. 37) and acknowledges that in some places and circumstances "an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed" (No. 40).

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World is therefore forthright in its declarations. Thus it acknowledges that "the institutions, laws and modes of thinking and feeling as handed down from previous generations do not always seem to be well adapted to the contemporary state of affairs" (No. 7) and hence it affirms that the Church "labours to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires... of our age" (No. 11). It believes that the "Holy Spirit, in a manner known only to God, offers to every man the possibility of being associated with the Paschal Mystery" (No. 22) and hence proposes brotherly dialogue on the "deeper level of inter-personal relationship" which "demands a mutual respect for the full spiritual dignity of the person" (No. 23). It acknowledges that "all believers of whatever religion have always heard God's revealing voice in the discourse of creatures" (No. 36); "Man is constantly worked upon by God's Spirit" (No. 4) and "The Word of God, before He became flesh... was in the world already as the true light that enlightens every man" (No. 57). And now "appointed Lord by His resurrection and given plenary power in heaven and on earth, Christ is at work in the hearts of men through the energy of His Spirit" (No. 38). And so local cultures emerge in which the Church takes flesh, since "in virtue of her mission and nature she is bound to no particular form of human culture" (No. 42). "For, from the beginning of her history, she has learned to express the message of Christ with the help of the ideas and terminology of various peoples... for thus each nation develops the ability to express Christ's message in its own way" (No. 44). The Council realises that "a more universal form of human culture is developing" (No. 54); but it adds immediately that this universal culture is "one which will promote and express the unity of the human race, to the degree that it preserves the particular features of the different cultures" (*Ibid.*).

Hence the Decree on Ecumenism speaks of "differences in theological expressions of doctrine... to be considered complementary rather than conflicting" (No. 17). The Decree on the Bishop's Pastoral Office exhorts Ordinaries to be mindful of their obligation to set an example of holiness through charity, humility and simplicity of life (No. 15). The Decree on Priestly Formation wants better integration of philosophy and theology (No. 14), and the knowledge of other religions to "better understand the elements of goodness and truth which such religions possess by God's Providence" (No. 16).

The Decree "De Accommodata Renovazione" speaks of "the manner of living, praying and working to be suitably adapted to... the require-

ments of a given culture" (No. 31), taking into account the natural endowments, and the manners of the people, and the local customs and circumstances" (No. 19).

The laity are exhorted in the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity "to penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the spirit of the Gospel" (No. 5); "to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community" (No. 13) and to seek loftier motives of action in their family, professional, cultural and social life" (No. 16).

The Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests exhorts priests "to spurn any type of vanity and have the kind of dwelling which will appear closed to no one and which no one will fear to visit, even the humblest" (No. 17). It urges them to remember that "impelling the Church to open new avenues of approach to the world of today, the Holy Spirit is suggesting and fostering fitting adaptations in the ministry of priests" (No. 22).

The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church proclaims that missionary activity takes its origin "from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit" (No. 2), and that "the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified" (No. 4) and in No. 9 gives the charter for the method of evangelisation: "Whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations as a sort of secret presence of God... whatever good is found to be sown in the hearts and minds of men, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various peoples is not lost. More than that, it is healed, ennobled and perfected for the glory of God, the shame of the demon and the bliss of men." Missionaries themselves can learn by sincere and patient dialogue "what treasures a bountiful God has distributed among the nations of the earth" (No. 11). Again, the "congregation of the faithful endowed with the riches of its own culture should be deeply rooted in the people" (No. 15), and priest-students should learn the "special social, economic and cultural conditions of their own people" (No. 16). It also urges that young churches while preserving an intimate union with the universal Church "should embed her traditions in their own culture thereby increasing the life of the Mystical Body by a certain mutual exchange of energies" (No. 19), and that the laity must "give expression to their newness of life in the social and cultural framework of their own homeland according to their own natural traditions. They must be acquainted with this culture, they must heal it, preserve it...develop it...in accordance with modern

conditions" (No. 21). We leave out No. 22 which is the most explicit and oft-quoted and which must be studied thoroughly and learnt by heart so that "living out their lives in a manner accommodated to the truly religious traditions of the people, they can bear splendid witness to the majesty and love of God and to man's brotherhood in Christ" (No. 40).

The other Decrees and Declarations are in consonance with and in confirmation of these declarations.

The present-day self-understanding of the Catholic Church is thus expressed in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and a similarly maturing attitude is reflected in the statements of the Upsala Conference and later meetings of the World Council of Churches.

Post Vatican II Awareness

The All-India Seminar on "The Church in India Today" at Dharmaram, Bangalore, in 1969 recognized the role played by non-Christian religions in the divine redemptive plan and affirmed that "the Church is set on seeking and discovering and meeting and worshipping God, wherever He is present and active. This openness of the Church leads us spontaneously into dialogue with other religions." This brotherly dialogic approach respects the identity of the other faith as organically the other.

It was at that Seminar that the adaptations in the Liturgy allowed by Rome were first put to public use in our worship in the auditorium of Dharmaram College. The same was repeated in Rome some months later and won approbation.

But a small, adamant minority remained opposed to all adaptation, the people about whom Archbishop Attipetty and his group made the remark quoted above, those who are "*mira Grecorum et Latinorum sapientia et culturae abnormiter capti; aliarum gentium culturam repellere vel ignorare sibi sumunt...*" And these have grown more vociferous in the past few years and adopted dubious means to thwart all Liturgical updating.

The CBCI meeting in Calcutta in 1973 was very clear on these two questions of Inter-Religious Dialogue and Intra-Church updating. This was voiced by Archbishop L. T. Picachy at the Synod of Bishops

in 1974 on behalf of the CBCI. Addressing the Pope and his fellow missionaries he first explained that the Holy Spirit is the principle from which all evangelical activity in the Church is derived. The role of the Church should be contemplative. Then the CBCI President went on to say : "India has cradled and nourished many ancient creeds which even now are a source of inspiration for the religious life of millions of their followers. We in India are daily witnesses to the religious experience of these men whose deep sincerity often puts us to shame. We can testify from experience to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the aspirations and undertakings of the adherents of these great religious traditions. These traditions set great store by the genuine experience of God, of communion with the divine. They believe that for a human being self-realization consists essentially in a vital awareness of the presence of the Supreme dwelling in them. With unremitting zeal they cultivate asceticism, renunciation of worldly goods, prayer and meditation."

"Thus circumstanced, the Church in India sees inter-faith dialogue as a normal expression of evangelisation. It is indeed inseparable from it. This dialogue consists of a sharing between religious souls of their experiences. Through this dialogue God calls on each of them, drawing them onwards to a higher spirituality and a profounder commitment to Him. We see inter-faith dialogue, then, as something good in itself. Through mutual edification and communion men evangelize one another. This should not, of course, prevent us from proclaiming the Word revealed to us Christians in Jesus Christ... inter-faith dialogue does not dispense us from proclaiming that Word."

Thirdly, Archbishop Picachy spoke of the betterment of the human conditions as an integral part of evangelization. Then, in the fourth part of his intervention, he spoke of the local Church as the concrete sign and instrument of evangelization, "To enable it to evolve in accord with its nature, pluriformity is indispensable."

"The local Church is the community of the faithful in a particular place and in a concrete situation. It is brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit in order to proclaim the Word, while it gives expression to, and celebrates its togetherness in the Eucharist. As a humble community of communion and service, the local Church should be open to the world around it and fit itself into the life of those in whose midst it lives.

"Now it is clear that human cultures, religious traditions, circumstances of life, along with men's needs and expectations differ from

one place to another. Through this diversity the Spirit is manifested in different ways. Hence pluriformity in the life of local churches is by all means to be encouraged and fostered. Pluriformity is likewise desirable in style of evangelization, forms of ministry, ecclesiastical law and administration, religious life and its organization as well as in the promotion of a truly creative liturgy. Real unity and sharing among the local churches is not obtained through external uniformity. Rather it is found in mutual openness and sharing in and through a plurality of forms. We would like to invite the bishops here assembled to dare to begin some profound reflection on the theology of the local Church and its relation to the Universal Church....”

So pleaded the President of the CBCI in the Synod in 1974. Now six years after that would it be so impertinent to invite again all concerned “to dare to begin (or continue) some profound reflection on the theology of the local Church and its relation to the Universal Church”?

In the same Synod the Archbishop of Delhi, Angelo Fernandes, pleaded for a comprehensive view of evangelization, for a theology of World Religions and for a theology of the Particular Church. He explained what he called macro-evangelization, saying “...all men of good-will are unwitting collaborators with us in promoting Gospel values. We must therefore join hands with them for common action at all levels, wherever and whenever we find them engaged in promoting what is truly human and truly Christian... Our vision, therefore, must be not Church-centred but Christ-centred.”

Cardinal Parecattil of Ernakulam, in the same Synod, said that “the success of the Church in India has been quite limited, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the more so because she has had very little access to the intelligentsia... On our part, no serious effort has been made to draw on the rich religious treasures of the country and build up a genuinely local Church on the basis of indigenous cult and culture, except perhaps in the South of India and there too in a small measure...” He alluded to Matteo Ricci’s efforts in China: “Though it was first approved by Pope Alexander VII, it was later prohibited by Pope Clement XI, resulting eventually in the expulsion of the missionaries from China and the stagnation of the Church in that part of the world.” He continued, “Liturgy should reflect the needs, tasks, tastes, interests, concerns, hopes and aspirations of the worshipping community and be made relevant and meaningful to contemporary man for whom the Church exercises her ‘*diakonia*’.”

In his explanation of this question he went on to say : " Theoretically speaking, therefore, the introduction of readings from non-Christian scriptures into the Divine office and even in the Liturgy of the Word is not in itself objectionable. But the time may not be ripe for that, because the faithful are not yet prepared for such an innovation, having been accustomed to look upon non-Christian religions as superstition and idolatry, an attitude that has to be set right at the earliest." in spite of all these adjuncts mentioned, Cardinal Parecattil's suggestion was spiritedly objected to by Mgr. Knox. And it is understandable, therefore, that even the Pope was not given an opportunity to witness the real African Eucharistic celebration during his recent visit to the Africas, as it was regretfully pointed out by the local Archbishop.

A casual remark of G. K. Chesterton in the form of a question in an unusual place (to explain a character in one of his detective stories) made me think a little. He asked, " When will people understand that it is useless for a man to read his Bible unless he also reads everybody else's Bible ?" In our Ecumenical age we have learnt that the Catholic Bible is not understood truly till the non-Catholic Bibles are also read and compared with it, that the Canonical Books of the Bible are not understood till the non-canonical works also are consulted. Can we not widen this truth to say that the Sacred Scriptures of one religion are not fully and truly understood until we have read the Sacred Scriptures of other religions ?

After quoting Pope Paul VI at Kampala in 1969 and at Manila in 1970 Cardinal Parecattil quoted Benedict XV's words : " The Catholic Church is neither Latin nor Greek nor Slav but universal"; " Unless the Church can show herself Indian in India, and Chinese in China and Japanese in Japan (how reminiscent of Valignano's words !) she will never reveal her authentically catholic character." " In my humble opinion," Cardinal concluded, " if this Synod is to make any positive contribution to the theory and practice of evangelisation, it must give a strong impetus to the idea of adaptation, assimilation and indigenization at every level of the Church's activity in order that she may become all things to all men that she serve all."

We are reassured that the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India has decided that there is " no going back " on the road to indigenization. But the going forward is the big question now with the CBCI being a divided house on this important question and a very small but vociferous minority sworn to thwart any movement forward at any cost,