

An Indian Christian Prophet: Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass (1932-1990)

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Divine Word Missionary (SVD). 1974-1983 studied theology in Mainz and Sankt Augustin near Bonn. After ordination (1983) did pastoral work in Papua New Guinea. 1987-1992 studied missiology at Gregoriana University (Rome). 1993-1995 lectured missiology in theological Institute Bomana (PNG), later worked as formator in Sankt Augustin priestly seminary. He lectured missiology at Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia (Philippines), and at University de la Salle (Manila, Philippines) in 2000-2002, and since then has been lecturing in Urbaniana University (Rome, Italy).

Father Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass (1932-1990) is one of the most significant Indian priests and theologians of the twentieth century. He stood 31 years as priest and theologian at the service to implement church renewal according to the vision and spirit of Vatican II in the Catholic Church in India. As founder-director of the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) in Bangalore (1967-1980) and of the a chair for Christianity at the Mysore State University in 1979, which he helped to become a Department for Christianity in 1981 and the Anjali Ashram in Mysore in 1979, he developed an authentic Indian Christian spirituality, liturgy and an Indian theology of evangelization and inculturation, which made him known not only in India but also internationally.

His family and origin

D.S. Amalorpavadass was born on June, 15th, 1932 in Kallery, Villupuram district, (archdiocese of Pondicherry) in Tamil Nadu, India and he died on May 25th, 1990 in Mysore, Karnataka, India.

His parents Duraisamy Simeon and Annamarie nee Matharasi educated their twelve children in the Christian faith and as members of the Catholic Church in the context of their South Indian Tamil culture and language. His eight years older brother D.S. Lourdusamy, (February 5th, 1924 – June, 2nd 2014) born in 1924, was already the seventh child, so that Amalor was one of the last born in the family. Like his elder brother he joined the Catholic priesthood of his diocese.

Pondicherry, since 2006 called Puducherry, is a Union Territory of India and had been a French colony in Southern India, with a certain French-European and French Catholic influence. The 102 (2014) parishes of the archdiocese of Pondicherry and Cuddalore are situated not only in the Union Territory but also in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Since the early 19th century there had been a Christian settlement in his village Kallery. The Catholics in Kallery belonged to Nagathur where a Christian settlement already existed since the 18th century. Only in 1986 a separate Parish, Jayarakina Madha was established in Kallery belonging to the Gingee deanery of the Pondicherry and Cuddalore archdiocese. When the Jesuit order was suppressed in 1773 the French *Mission Etrangere de Paris* (MEP) missionaries continued the evangelization and pastoral work in the diocese. In 1778 a seminary was opened to train local priests. In 1788 the first local priest was ordained. In the first century the seminary (1778-1878) trained one hundred local priests¹.

His educational journey

Amalorpavadass received his elementary education at St. Anne's School, Tindivanam, Tamilnadu and his secondary education at St. Joseph's High School, Cuddalore, where he had joined the diocesan minor seminary. From 1949 to 1953 he studied as a seminarian at St. Peter's Seminary in Bangalore. The diocesan seminary of his diocese was founded in 1778 near Pondicherry; it had been transferred in 1934 to Bangalore where it was renamed in St. Peter's Seminary. Despite his poor health Amalor became an outstanding student in the seminary.

¹ Cf. J.A.G. van Leeuwen, *Fully Indian – Authentically Christian. A Study of the First Fifteen Years of the NBCLC (1967-1982). Bangalore – India in the Light of the Theology of Its Founder D.S. Amalorpavadass*, Bangalore 1994.

During this time he already started publishing his first booklets in Tamil and helped his fellow students in their studies².

His work at the Regional Catechetical Centre in Tindavanam, Tamil Nadu

On April 12th, 1959, the auspicious year of the announcement of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII, Amalor received his priestly ordination from his bishop, Ambrose Rayappan (1901-1999), the first local bishop of Pondicherry. The first mission the bishop gave to twenty-seven year old Amalor was to work at the Regional Catechetical Centre in Tindavanam. His time there, from 1959 to 1962, gave Amalor the unique opportunity to learn the work of a formator-teacher and organizer of a Pastoral Centre beyond the diocesan level. He had to organize and conduct catechetical and pastoral courses for the clergy and religious of the dioceses of Tamilnadu and neighbouring places with Tamil communities. The French MEP director of the Centre, Fr. Edmond Becker, was for him a good animator and sponsor. He organized, for example, a permanent catechetical exhibition and from 1958 to 1965 worked as the editor of *Thozan*, a monthly catechetical journal in the Tamil language for pastors and catechists. He taught mainly liturgy and Scripture at the Catechist Training School and at the Teachers' Seminary. From 1960 to 1963 ten thousand priests, religious and lay people from nine dioceses attended his courses; six thousands of them were lay teachers and catechists. The years in Tindivanam prepared him for the great work he was assigned in 1967. But before this could happen he needed to study further to expand his knowledge, his outlook and experience³.

His studies in Paris, France

In 1962 Amalor was therefore sent by his bishop to the Institut Catholique in Paris to do further studies in catechetics. For his Masters in Catechetics he wrote his dissertation on "L'Inde à la rencontre du Seigneur" and for his Doctorate in Theology the thesis "Destinée de l'Église dans l'Inde d'aujourd'hui: Conditionnement de l'Évangélisation" (Paris, 1967). In his first paper he analysed the life of the Church in India, especially the factors, which promoted or hindered the evangelization work of the Church in India. In his doctoral dissertation he emphasized the need for inner conversion in order to

² Ibid., p. 9-12.

³ Ibid.

proclaim effectively the Good News of Jesus in the Indian cultural and social context.

“The Church should present itself not primarily as an efficient institution, but as a spiritual movement.... In both his theses DSA shows his extraordinary synthetic capacity combined – and this is rare– with great analytical ability”⁴.

In his two studies Amalor already used his specific human, anthropological and theological-incarnational method, which can be found in all his future teaching and publications. “He always starts from reality, from facts and figures.., and then – in the light of Tradition – he searches for the relevant Christian response which the Church is called to give”⁵.

Another important factor in his life was the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965, exactly during his study years in Paris, France. In those years Amalor was often asked by his bishop to come to Rome. That gave him the unique opportunity to talk to the Indian Council Fathers and to discuss with them the issues they had discussed in the Council. In those years his life-long passion for the Council developed and this became the major driving force for all his future work. Amalor was convinced that the renewal of the Church, its laity, religious and ministers would only be successful, if first the priests themselves would undergo such a renewal process.

His Parish Exposure

After returning to his diocese in India in 1965, Amalor got the opportunity to translate his renewal vision into concrete pastoral ministry in Our Lady of Refuge parish in Viriyur, Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu (archdiocese of Pondicherry) with its 63 villages where he stayed for over one year from June 1965 to December 1966. Here the man of studies “showed that all he had learned could be made very practical and relevant”⁶.

His new work as NBCLC Director and Secretary of the CBCI-commissions for Liturgy and Catechetics

The first plenary meeting of the Indian Bishops Conference (CBCI) took place in October, 13-20, 1966. The bishops decided to

⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

establish a National Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, an idea they had continuously developed during the Council years and even earlier on the Study Weeks on Liturgy and Catechetics, organized by Fr. Johannes Hofinger from 1959 to 1968, where Indian bishops had participated. Fr. Amalorpavadass was appointed not only to be the founder-director of this new pastoral institute; but also the secretary of the CBCI commissions for Liturgy and Catechetics. In 1971 the bishops decided to add the Biblical Apostolate to the tasks the National Centre should be responsible for. That resulted in a rather long name for the Centre: National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, the abbreviation *NBCLC* therefore became more common.

On February 5th, 1967 Amalor arrived at the location the new National Centre had been allocated by Archbishop Lourdasamy of Bangalore. February 6th was the day the Centre and its staff started to function. Amalor saw clearly the aim of the new Centre:

“[...] to plan and implement on a national level under the guidance of the hierarchy a programme of biblical, catechetical and liturgical renewal in India... according to the spirit and programme of II Vatican Council and the exigencies of the Post-Vatican period. Thus it is to be an agency to promote and coordinate renewal at the national level in collaboration with regional and diocesan agencies”⁷.

Over the years Amalor developed a more integral understanding of the task and mission of the *NBCLC* where the commitment to social justice, inter-religious dialogue, inculturation and an authentically Indian Christian spirituality became part of all its activities.

During the fifteen years of his leadership, from 1967 to 1982, Amalor, together with his collaborators, developed the mission the *NBCLC* performed at the service of the Church in India. The way he formed the Centre, without having any model for it, showed his spirit-led creative imagination, his sense of commitment and tireless dedication.

This was particularly evident in the areas assigned to the Centre: the creative ecclesial renewal according to the spirit and documents of the Second Vatican Council; the ongoing development of the biblical apostolate and of a biblical pastoral ministry, catechetical renewal, as well as the promotion of the liturgical renewal movement in India. All these ecclesial ministries had to be rethought and designed according

⁷ Ibid.

to the decrees of the Second Vatican Council.

As the director of the NBCLC, Amalor organized the *Asian Seminar on Religion and Development* in 1973, which enabled participants to analyse and reflect on the role of religion in the renewal of society. The *Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures*, organized in Dec. 1974, was a novelty in the Indian Church and helped to open up more consciously to the spiritual heritage of the Indian and Asian religions.

The Indian theologian, Michael Amaladoss SJ, regarded Amalor as the most significant inspirer of church renewal in India. He was able to exercise this influence not only as the founder-director of NBCLC, but also as the editor of the magazine of the Centre *Word and Worship*, which he edited from 1967 to 1982, and the numerous publication series he published as NBCLC director.

The first number of *Word and Worship* (Vol. 1, No. 1, July-August 1967) carried the subtitle *A Review dedicated to promoting the Catechetical Movement and the Liturgical Renewal in India*. This clearly indicated that this magazine under the auspices of the National Commissions for Catechetics and for Liturgy of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and edited by the NBCLC was an organ of the CBCI commissions and of the NBCLC to promote the Catechetical Movement and the Liturgical Renewal and since 1971 also the Biblical Apostolate in the local churches in India. This is, of course, true not only for this journal, but for the whole work of Amalor and the Indian Pastoral Institute, the NBCLC founded and guided by him for thirteen years.

In addition, his job as secretary of the Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Commissions of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) gave him a lasting and nation-wide influence in the Church in India⁸.

His membership in international organizations

As an active member of many international organizations, such as the *Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians*, the *International Commission on English in the Liturgy*, the *Catholic Biblical Federation* (CBF), and the *International Association for Mission Studies* (IAMS), he was internationally recognized as an inspiring theologian of Inculturation. A. was also a consultant of the Roman Congregation for Divine Worship and a member of the Joint Working Group of the

⁸ P.B. Steffen, *The Long Road to Aggiornamento. Vatican II, the Church in India & the NBCLC*, [in:] A. Thottakara, J. Sagaya (eds.), *Towards New Horizons*, Bangalore 2017, p. 40-64.

World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church. His older brother D.S. Lourdasamy (1924-2014) was secretary to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in Rome from 1973 to 1985 and Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches from 1985 to 1991. In 1974 Amalorpavadass was appointed one of the two special secretaries of the Bishops' Synod of Evangelization in Rome.

His work as author and editor

Amalor wrote numerous articles on liturgical, bible-pastoral and catechetical questions, but also on questions of inculturation, interreligious dialogue, and spirituality, which appeared not only in Indian periodicals, but also in international periodicals in various languages as English, French and German. Amalor wrote papers for the research seminars, which he organized in the NBCLC in Bangalore. As the director of the NBCLC, he also edited a variety of reports, statements, and pastoral guidelines in the areas that were part of NBCLC's special mission like Liturgy, Catechetics, Biblical Apostolate, Indian Spirituality, Mission Theology, Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism⁹.

His work as a man dedicated to formation and education

Amalorpavadass became the most articulate promoter of the Second Vatican Council renewal movement in India. During the first 15 years of the NBCLC, more than 25 thousand people participated in the courses of the NBCLC, which introduced them systematically and creatively, especially in the field of inculturated and integrated pastoral ministry, catechetics and liturgy, into the renewal vision of the Second Vatican Council.

His specific theological contributions

Amalor's particular concern was the promotion of an authentic Indian spirituality and liturgy. In catechetics, he favoured the newly developed anthropological method. He was committed to updating the clergy and religious and to helping the laity to find their rightful place within the mission of the Church. The interreligious dialogue found

⁹ Cf. bibliography of D.S. Amalorpavadass, [in:] J.A.G. van Leeuwen, *Fully Indian - Authentically Christian...*, op. cit., p. 344-353.

with his help an authentic Indian character. In his understanding all authentic religions, play according to God's providence a special role in the history of salvation, which does not diminish the special contribution Amalor attributes to the unique salvific mission of Jesus Christ. Amalor had an inclusive and open understanding of evangelization, in which the option for the poor and the commitment to a more just world order played a significant role. In his typically Asian contribution to Indian theology, the emphasis on contemplation and the religious dimension of human life played an important role in his search for harmony and well-being. Amalor himself contributed significantly to a new Indian theology of inculturation, to interreligious dialogue, and to the theology of evangelization and to an authentically Indian Christian spirituality.

"Inculturation has been the way of life of Fr. Amalorpavadass throughout his thirty years of priestly ministry in the society and in the Church. It has been a major dimension of his apostolate, a constitutive element of all-pervasive reality in his ashram way of life and in the academic teaching and research at the University level"¹⁰.

On the basis of his theological reflection, based on the vision and teachings of the Second Vatican Council Amalor was able to inspire the Indian clergy, the Indian religious and the lay people, in the field of pastoral theology and praxis, catechetics, biblical apostolate, and especially an inculturated Indian liturgical practice.

"In animating the renewal movement Fr. Amalor attuned himself to the spirit. He was a man who listened with intense interiority to the promptings of the Spirit; he was Spirit-guided... It is his great sensitivity to the Spirit who prompted him to encourage and support any movements that contributed to the renewal and growth and mission of the Church, for example, the movement of laity through All India Catholic Union (AICU), the Ashram movement, the Charismatic movement and the Women's movement, the liberation and the inter-religious movements in our Country"¹¹.

¹⁰ S.J. Bosco, D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Golden Jubilee Souvenir of the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) 1967-2017*, Bangalore 2017, p. 134. S.J. Bosco wrote his doctorate on *Socio Feministic Perspectives of Anjali Ashram Mysore* at the Tamil University, Thanjavur. Cf. D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Theological Reflections on Inculturation*, Mysore 2004; Id., *Gospel and Culture. Eoangelisation and Inculturation*, "FABC Papers", no 15, 1979, p. 1-51.

¹¹ J. Theckanath, D.S. Amalorpavadass, *His Legacy*, [in:] *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*

Amalor himself explained what Indian Spirituality means:

“The core of Indian Spirituality is interiority or deep experience of the Spirit, the Spirit who dwells in or hearts and who permeates all reality; awareness of the identity and unity of the indwelling Spirit and all - pervading Spirit!”¹²

Although not all of his prophetic visions were accepted and followed by all, he has nevertheless become one of the most important and influential Indian theologians of the 1970s and 1980s.

“One of the areas of Vatican II in which Fr. Amalor invested a great deal of energy is that of inculturation of liturgy, prayer, art, and architecture and several other such pastoral areas and aspects of the life of the Church. Inculturation efforts made him a sign of contradiction. He was admired because of it, and he was viciously opposed, criticised and taken to court for it by those individuals and organisations opposed to inculturation, and to any change in any aspect of the Church’s life”¹³.

According to Felix Wilfred, Amalor’s most important theological contribution was that he contextualised and deepened the teachings of the Second Vatican Council for the Church in India.

“As Wilfred notes, one of Amalor’s greatest achievements was to help crystallize Indian theological thinking on various themes by bringing together experts on different subjects: theology, indology, sociology, etc., to interdisciplinary research seminars. Such a gathering of experts not only clarified Indian theological thinking but it also shaped Amalor’s own personal vision to a more mature one”¹⁴.

His work at the University of Mysore

In 1979, Amalorpavadass was able to found a chair for Christianity at the Mysore State University, which he helped to become a Department for Christianity in 1981. The teaching and research

of the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) 1967-2017, Bangalore 2017, p. 61.

¹² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 61.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁴ J.B. Barla, *Christian Theological Understanding of Other Religions According to D.S Amalorpavadass*, Documenta Missionalia, vol. 26, Roma 1999, p. 70-71.

activities of this department contributed greatly to a successful dialogue between the religions and the cultures of India. In addition, the Department became an important place for meeting and exchanging knowledge among representatives of various religious, cultural, social and ideological backgrounds.

His work as founder and member of the Anjali Ashram in Mysore

In his last years, Amalor was a guest professor at the Department of Christianity at the University of Mysore. For a short time he was dean of the Department. In 1979 Amalor founded the Anjali Ashram in Mysore. In doing so, he was convinced that his teaching and study of the Christian faith must be accompanied by faith in a milieu that leads to the experience of God¹⁵. In the ashram he adopted the name *Swami Amaloranandu*. Until his premature death, caused by a car accident on May 25, 1990, many people came to his ashram to get his spiritual advice and support.

“The ever loving God led Amalor gradually but surely from home to the diocese, from the diocese to the region, from the region to the nation, from the nation to the entire creation, as a co-pilgrim, journeying with the seekers towards the ultimate goal of self-realization and the reign of God. This pilgrimage had the added support of Anjali Ashram from 1979 to 1990”¹⁶.

A recent tribute to D.S. Amalorpavadass

On the occasion of the opening of the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of the NBCLC on February 5, 2016, the chairman of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI), Baselios Card. Cleemis, praises contextualization work NBCLC has done after Vatican II.

“The establishment of this Centre was praiseworthy, precisely because our bishops wanted to ensure that under their stewardship the best insights and instructions offered by Vatican I are integrated into the day-to-day life of our parishes and Christian

¹⁵ Cf. D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Integration and Interiorization*, Mysore 1990; Id., *Atma Purna Anubhava. Within Ashram Anubhava Experience of Indian Christian spirituality (ICS)*, Mysore 2000.

¹⁶ A. Louis, *Swami Amalorananda. An Indian Christian Guru*, [in:] A. Thottakara, J. Sagaya (eds.), *Towards New...*, op. cit., p. 36.

families in India. One of the main thrusts that NBCLC cherished in its renewal attempts was to ensure that all its programmes are properly contextualized. In fact, much effort was put in this regard, not only to study the mainstream cultural and religious paradigm of India, but also to study and adopt from the regional and local cultures and religious practices. From this angle, I must say that the establishment of the Centre was a praiseworthy attempt from the part of the Church to truly incarnate the Word of God and the traditions of the Church¹⁷.

The prelate is aware that this work NBCLC did was performed by the unique charisma of its outstanding founder director

“It is worthy to recall that the CBCI entrusted this herculean task to an able and admirable priest, Rev. Fr. D.S. Amalorpavadass, who was not only gifted but also had the required scientific training as well as the touch of the Spirit. We now recall his great contributions that made NBCLC, a sure guide in post-Vatican renewal. His insightful leadership of this Centre helped it to climb to greater heights and during his tenure, NBCLC became one of the most known ecclesiastical institutions in India¹⁸.”

The Archbishop of Bangalore, Bernard Moras, also refers at the same celebration to the contribution the founder-director has made not only with his theological insight but even more with “his personality and lifestyle”.

“Fr. Amalor was not just another Indian guru; we can truly call him an Indian Christian Prophet, who challenged and educated the Church in India to grow and become mature and authentic, relevant, and effective through the process of inculturation. His personality and lifestyle as well as his words and actions were great examples of inculturated living. He believed that the Church should become creative and responsible and be present in India as authentically Indian and passionately Christian. According to him only an inculturated Indian Church, i.e., a Church that is incarnated in the Indian culture and has penetrated the heart of India, can live and thrive in India as the sacrament of Christ and the evangelizer of salvation¹⁹.”

¹⁷ *Address by His Eminence Baselios Cardinal Cleemis, CBCI President, at the Inauguration of the Golden Jubilee of NBCLC on 5th February 2016, “Word and Worship”, no 49, 2016, p. 1, 90-91.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁹ *Homily Delivered by His Grace Archbishop Bernard Moras of Bangalore during the*

The chairman of the CBCI Commission for the NBCLC, Bishop Thomas Dabre of Pune, however, pointed out that

“[...] the pioneering, defining and visionary role of Fr. Amalorpavadass as the Founder - Director of NBCLC deserves a special mention with profound gratitude. He was suffused with the vision of the Council. He certainly was an outstanding and creative thinker - not an ivory-tower one - who was passionately committed to his mission and traversed the length and breadth of this vast sub-continent to ensure the faithful implementation of the programme of the Council”²⁰.

Dissertations on the theological work of D.S. Amalorpavadass

Amalor's life and work has inspired countless people. Remarkable are the numerous dissertations, which have been carried out on his work. In the first place the work of his long-time co-worker Gerwin van Leeuwen OFM, *Fully Indian - Authentically Christian. A Study of the First Fifteen Years of the NBCLC (1967-1982), Bangalore -India in the Light of the Theology of its Founder D.S. Amalorpavadass* (Nijmegen, Netherlands, 1990), deserves to be mentioned. The author of this study “has shown how the theology of the Centre's founder has been pastorally implemented. In this way this research is a good example of a healthy combination of theological reflection and pastoral action”²¹.

In 1992, Annu Variyamattam wrote his thesis at the Institute for Missionary Catechesis of the Pontifical Urbaniana University on *Adult Catechumenate in Amalor's Vision* (Roma, 1992). The contribution Amalor made to a renewed and inculturated Indian catechetics or practical theology was researched by Cyril de Souza in his dissertation at the Salesian University in Rome: *Catechetics for India Today. An Appraisal of the Catechetical Proposal of D.S. Amalorpavadass*, (Bangalore, 1994). Cyril de Souza states

“In the course of this study I have tried to keep in mind the following three objectives: (1) to help the catechetical system of Amalor emerge in all its force: its place in the Church's mission,

Inaugural Holy Mass, Ibid., p. 109.

²⁰ Th. Dabry, *A Walk Down the Corridors of Time as Golden Bells Chime at NBCLC*, Ibid., p. 1, 105-106.

²¹ P. Puthanangady, *Foreword*, [in:] J.A.G. van Leeuwen, *Fully Indian - Authentically Christian...*, op. cit.

the aims and tasks it envisages etc., by entering into the dynamics of his evolving catechetical vision, conditioned as it was, by the particular reality of the Church in India"²².

The author is convinced that "Amalor's contextualized catechetical approach is remarkable for its forthrightness and completeness"²³. A well-known lecturer of catechetics in India writes:

"In analyzing Fr. Amalorpavadass' catechetical proposal Fr. Cyril de Souza SDB, strives to discern how his vision of the ministry of faith formation evolved in the course of years. Besides being a very rich heritage handed on to us, the vision of Fr. Amalorpavadass is also a complex reality fraught with deep insights as well as relevant questions, aspirations, commitments, statements and interrogations"²⁴.

Suvackin Jesudoss wrote his dissertation at the Faculty of Spirituality Teresianum in Rome: *Inculturation: An Evangelical Imperative Culminating in God-Experience and Committed Service According to Fr. D.S Amalorpavadass* (Rome, 1996). The author comes in his study to the conclusion:

"[...] the creativity of Amalor is to be attributed to his New vision and his capacity to blend this vision and the reality of India for a relevant theology which is essentially incarnational. In spirituality, Amalor's originality was his painstaking effort to explore a relevant, contemporary spirituality within the religious tradition of India"²⁵.

At the Roman Jesuit University Gregoriana, the Indian Capuchin, Father John B. Barla explored *Christian Theological Understanding of Other Religions According to DS Amalorpavadass* (Roma, 1999). For this author Amalor

"[...] synthesised the vision of the Second Vatican Council on the incarnational and anthropological levels and animated the

²² C. de Souza, *Catechesis for India Today. An Appraisal of the Catechetical Proposal of D.S. Amalorpavadass*, Bangalore 1994, p. 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁴ H. Morissette, *Foreword*, [in:] C. de Souza, *Catechesis for India Today...*, op. cit.

²⁵ S. Jesudoss, *Inculturation. An Evangelical Imperative Culminating in God-Experience and Committed Service According to Fr. D.S Amalorpavadass*, Pars Dissertationis in Theologia in Instituto Spiritualitatis Pontificae Facultatis Theologicae Teresianum, Romae 1996, p. 81.

renewal of the Church in the ministry of the Word. He considered evangelization, catechesis and liturgy as pedagogical means in his renewal plan to allow the Word of God to influence the Christian community"²⁶.

Another Indian priest, investigated in his dissertation at the Gregoriana in Rome different aspects of the theological work of Amalorpavadass: Mathew Pulinthanan, *The Theology of Amalorpavadass: A Practice-Integrated Theology for the Post-Conciliar Church in India* (Rome, 1999). According to this author "Amalorpavadass has translated his theological notion into praxis. His pastoral undertakings were always underpinned by a theological vision and vice versa"²⁷. Another thesis was written at the Gregorian University by Manickam Soosai and is entitled: *Inculturation through education: Acharyaguru Swamy Amaloranand*, (Rome, 2000). A recent dissertation written by Peter Susaimichael at the Institut catholique de Paris focuses on a different aspect: *A historical and critical study of the theology of Indianization in the work of D.S. Amalorpavadass* (Paris, 2010).

All these dissertations prove that the theology and apostolate of Fr. Amalor have captured the attention of students and researchers all over the world, but in a special way for people of Indian background²⁸.

Concluding remarks

Under the inspiring leadership of Fr. Amalor the NBCL did pioneering work and studies in many fields of human life by contextualising and inculturating formation and education work and theology, especially theology of Spirituality, Evangelization, Ministry,

²⁶ J.B. Barla, *Christian Theological Understanding...*, op. cit., p. 69.

²⁷ M. Pulinthanan, *The Theology of Amalorpavadass. A Praxis-Integrated Theology for the Post-Conciliar Church in India*, Excerpta ex dissertatione ad Doctoratum in Facultate Theologiae Pontificiae Universitatis Gregoriana, Romae 1999, p. 11.

²⁸ Cf. P. Puthanangady (ed.), *Church in India. Institution or Movement? A Tribute to the Memory of Fr D.S. Amalorpavadass, Founder-Director of NBCLC*, Bangalore 1991; A. Kalliath, Th. D'Sa (eds.), *Retelling the Story of Jesus. Through the Stories of People*, Bangalore 2011; G. Gispert-Sauch, *Christians in Asia Read Sacred Books of the East*, [in:] F. Wilfred (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, Oxford-New York 2014, p. 480-492; P.B. Steffen, *Amalorpavadass Duraiswami Simon (1932-1990) Theologe*, [in:] F.W. Bautz, T. Bautz (eds.), *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 38, Nordhausen 2017, p. 48-66; P.B. Steffen, *Amalorpavadass Duraiswami Simon (1932-1990)*, [in:] B. Kanakappally et al. (eds.), *Hindu-Christian Dictionary. Essential Terms for Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Mumbai 2017, p. 3-5; A. Louis, *Swami Amalorananda. An Indian Christian Guru*, [in:] A. Thottakara, J. Sagaya (eds.), *Towards New...*, op. cit., p. 27-39.

Inter-religious dialogue, Christian and Human education and Catechetics, Ecology and Human Right issues, the Rights of Women and the Marginalized in Indian Society like Dalits and Tribals were promoted by Fr. Amalorpavadass and his co-workers.

“That was only possible by pioneering new ways of learning together, sharing, listening and finding new ways approaches of respectful ways of study and dialogue. This could be called the promotion of an Indian way of study and dialogue in harmony among sisters and brothers”²⁹.

For Fr. Jacob Theckanath, who worked many years alongside the founder-director of NBCLC, Fr. Amalorpavadass was “a prophetic leader” and a man “obedient to the Spirit”.

“One of the features of Fr. Amalor was his prophetic spirit. ... Fr. Amalor spelt out the socio-political and prophetic challenge for proclaiming the Gospel in India. This and others opened the path for theologizing on the role of religion for liberative mission”³⁰.

Fr. Theckanath deepens our understanding of Fr. Amalor as listener to the Spirit:

“This awareness of and sensitivity to the Spirit led him to deeply commit himself to a methodology and spirituality of reading the signs of the times and life experiences to discern what the Spirit is beckoning the church to engage in with passion”³¹.

Let’s conclude with a thought of Fr. Amalorpavadass, who is considered but the archbishop of Bangalore *not just another Indian guru, but an Indian Christian Prophet*, who contributed so much for an inculturated and contextualised Christian faith and Church in India and Asia.

“It is here that the Church will realize her true Indian identity and will be able to minister to India through dialogue and conscientization. Through dialogue she will guide the multicultural and multi-religious India to communal unity and through conscientization she will lead the poverty stricken and politically oppressed India, to liberation and development”³².

²⁹ P.B. Steffen, *The Long Road to Aggiornamento...*, op. cit., p. 55.

³⁰ J. Theckanath, D.S. Amalorpavadass, *His Legacy*, [in:] *Golden Jubilee...*, op. cit., p. 57.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³² Quoted: *Homily Delivered by His Grace Archbishop Bernard Moras of Bangalore during the Inaugural Holy Mass, “Word and Worship”*, no 49, 2016, p. 1, 109.



PAUL B. STEFFEN SVD

**An Indian Christian Prophet:
Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass (1932-1990)****Abstract**

Fr. Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass (1932-1990) was one of the most important Indian theologians of the twentieth century. He became involved in the renewal of the Catholic Church in India in accordance with the vision and spirit of Vatican II. In 1967, he founded the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) in Bangalore, and then headed it until 1980. The way he shaped them showed his spiritual imagination, commitment and tireless dedication. In the years 1967-1982 he was the editor of the magazine "Word and Worship", published by NBCLC. In 1981, at the initiative of Fr. Amalorpavadass at the State University of Mysuru the Department of Christianity was established. He developed an authentic Indian and Christian spirituality, liturgy and theology of evangelization and inculturation. In catechesis he advocated a newly developed anthropological method. In turn, interreligious dialogue, in which he presented the inclusivist position, gained with his help an Indian figure: all religions have a special role in the history of salvation, but this does not diminish the special contribution of the salvific mission of Jesus Christ.

Keywords: interreligious dialogue, Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass, inclusivism, inculturation, Catholic Church in India.

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**Chrześcijański prorok w Indiach:
Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass (1932-1990)****Streszczenie**

Ks. Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass (1932-1990) był jednym z najważniejszych indyjskich teologów ostatniego stulecia. Zaangażował się w odnowę Kościoła katolickiego w Indiach zgodnie z wizją i duchem *Vaticanum II*. W 1967 roku założył Narodowe Centrum Biblijne, Katechetyczne i Liturgiczne (NBCLC) w Bangalore, a następnie kierował nim do 1980 roku. Sposób, w jaki je kształtował (bez korzystania z jakiegokolwiek wzoru), pokazał jego duchową wyobraźnię, zaangażowanie oraz niestrudzone poświęcenie. W latach 1967-1982 był redaktorem czasopisma "Word and Worship", wydawanego

przez NBCLC. W 1981 roku z inicjatywy ks. Amalorpavadassa na Uniwersytecie Stanowym w Mysuru utworzono Wydział Chrześcijaństwa. Omawiany autor należał do licznych organizacji międzynarodowych, był na przykład członkiem Międzynarodowego Stowarzyszenia Studiów Misyjnych (IAMS). Ks. Amalorpavadass rozwijał autentyczną indyjską i chrześcijańską duchowość, liturgię oraz teologię ewangelizacji i inkulturacji. W katechezie opowiadał się za nowo opracowaną metodą antropologiczną. Z kolei dialog międzyreligijny, w którym prezentował stanowisko inkluzywistyczne, zyskał z jego pomocą indyjską postać: wszystkie religie pełnią szczególną rolę w historii zbawienia, jednakże nie umniejsza to szczególnego wkładu zbawczej misji Jezusa Chrystusa.

Słowa kluczowe: dialog międzyreligijny, Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass, inkluzywizm, inkulturacja, Kościół katolicki w Indiach.