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THE ADAPTATION OF ART FORMS AND MOTIFS  
FOR USE IN THE INDIGENOUS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

By

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A Thesis

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I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb!"

Revelation 7:9-10

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Gift of the Author

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## INTRODUCTION

THE ADAPTATION OF ART FORMS AND MOTIFS  
FOR USE IN THE INDIGENOUS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem of the Thesis

1. The Problem Stated

The purpose of this thesis will be to study the emphasis increasingly given to adaptation of art forms and motifs for use in the indigenous church in order to see the problems and dangers involved as well as the values of this phase of the indigenization of Christianity. It will seek solution to some of the problems presented in situations where progress is being made in several parts of the world.

2. The Significance of the Problem

The naturalization and indigenization of Christianity is accepted as a vital emphasis in missions. This study considers one phase of the larger field. The phase under attention is one in which progress is bound to be particularly slow due to problems which are involved. It represents a change from early missionary policy. The precedent of early missionaries has largely been to use western art forms in the Christian cultus. They did this because of a lack of understanding of the local culture and a fear of retaining idolatrous associations. They used Western forms teaching their converts to do the same, thus creating the problems faced by those who seek to

indigenize the church in all its phases. The problem is well stated by J. Prip-Moller in an article for the International Review of Missions written in 1939.

It is not surprising that the pioneer missionary took his examples from his homeland; nor that the young local congregation was thereby inoculated in favour of a foreign style and against the well-known local style. This has created a barrier which now the local churches must break down slowly and often painfully. Slowly, because the barriers are high and the people are only beginning to see that here lies a cultural inheritance of their own which has been withheld from them; painfully, because they do not always meet with understanding and approval on the part of those foreigners to whom they look as their helpers and whom they have come to love.<sup>1</sup>

That the barriers must be broken down has become apparent and acknowledged. The ideological warfare in the present world which almost everywhere is fighting for men's minds has added pressure to the endeavor to take Christianity out of the guise of Western religion.

The indigenization of Christian art meets many problems. For some of these problems no adequate answers have as yet been given. That missionaries be aware of the need for adaptation and of the problems involved is vital.

### 3. Limitation of the Problem

This study will be limited to the art forms and motifs in the Christian church developing in lands of non-Christian tradition and culture. This thesis will deal with Christian worship and, therefore, is not primarily concerned with the political, economic, and educational developments in the Christian community. Recognition of the unity of

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1. J. Prip-Moller: Architecture: A Servant of Foreign Missions, International Review of Missions, January, 1939, p. 105.

all of life transformed by the power of the gospel prevents, however, any implication of compartmentalization in the Christian community.

The general principles involved in this study apply both to primitive people and to those of highly civilized cultures outside the traditions of the Western or Eastern church.

This study limits itself to the arts of form, shape, line and color; including painting, carving, architecture, emblems, and symbolic motifs; excluding music, literature, dance, and drama, except as illustration or contrast. The general principles, however, apply to all the arts.

The art forms and motifs of the indigenous church will not be treated exhaustively, but general principles will be investigated which have significance to the problem of adaptation.

Although many principles discussed will be true of a broader area this study is concerned with the "indigenous church," the Christian church which is newly becoming at home in cultures outside the older traditions of Western or Eastern Christianity.

#### B. The Method of Procedure

As a basis for study this thesis will first investigate the principles that are basic to adaptation of art forms and motifs to the indigenous church. Problems which have been encountered will be discussed with a view to seeking to understand the dangers involved and the barriers associated with adaptation of art forms.

Finally this study will make suggestions for a more effective adaptation of art forms.

### C. The Sources of Data

The source of material for this study will be reports mainly from missionary periodicals. Books from reliable authors who have written in this field will be referred to, as well as historical studies which have to do with basic principles involved in the problem of the thesis.

CHAPTER I

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A. Introduction

Chapter one will discuss and illustrate the ministry of art in the Christian cultus. The function of Christian art will be contrasted and delimited. Misuse of Christian art which is in danger of leading to idolatry or fetishism or a religion of esthetics will be discussed. The problem symbolism has become for Protestants will be shown to have both positive and negative results on the mission field. The nature and function of Christian art will be shown to make it imperative that indigenous art forms be used, and additional pressure being brought to bear on the problem will be seen in nationalism and associated conflicting ideologies.

B. Art Forms in the Christian Cultus

1. Contrasted with Art in Paganism

Art holds a different relationship to worship in Christianity than in any other religion of the world. It is the nature of Christianity which makes the difference.

a. In Expression

Christian art when it appeared in the Christian cultus was of a new and special kind for it was the expression of something new in





"Bethlehem" by Frank Wesley

Plate I Indian Christian Art

the world. The soul was brought into a new and indestructible relation<sup>1</sup> to the infinite. Man found God to be holy Love. The first Christian art used the forms of classical art, but yet it was different from<sup>2</sup> classical art. Christian art springs from life which has been transformed. In paganism the awful load which was felt to hang over<sup>3</sup> life was seen in art. Not only in the early church, but wherever Christianity appears in the world today the awful load gives way to a joyful trust in God who is known to be holy Love. As P. T. Forsyth describes it:

The mobility and uncertainty of paganism passed away. In importing interest, colour, and beauty into life, men came to feel they were painting in view of Eternity. For was not the Eternal Love like a red, red rose, as Dante imaged heaven? Were we not the children of One who in perfect justice and perfect love of men, was working world without end? And those of them who rose above considerations of mere justice, enhanced life's colour and content by the ardour of the devotion with which they repaid in love that infinite Love which had made them sons of God.

. . . . .  
The new feeling of triumph and security was sure to take outward shape in powerful ways. And it would have been very strange if one of these had not been the way of Art.<sup>4</sup>

b. In the Relationship to the Cultus

Christian art differs from the art of many pagan religions in that Christianity, being essentially spiritual, could dispense with<sup>5</sup> outward expression. The early church was, in fact, suspicious of art.

. . . . .

1. Cf. Peter Taylor Forsyth: Christ on Parnassus, p. 75.
2. Ibid., p. 78.  
Cf. Brooke Foss Westcott: Essays in the History of Religious Thought in the West, p. 309.
3. Cf. Forsyth, op. cit., p. 76.
4. Ibid., p. 77.
5. Cf. Westcott, op. cit., p. 280.

It must be kept in mind, however, in this respect that:

...the antagonism of Christianity to ancient art was an antagonism to the limited earthliness, of which it was the most complete expression;<sup>1</sup>

The independence of the religion from its art is not generally true of paganism. Often the art forms do not point beyond themselves to the sacred, but are considered themselves sacred. In varying ways art becomes identified with the religion. P. T. Forsyth says of classical Greek art, that it was much more than expression of Greek religion. It was more its essence.<sup>2</sup> He continues:

The art . . . became the religion, and the religion the art. They rose and they fell together at the last. Christianity, on the other hand, has outlived several developments of Art, as it outlives many forms of society; and it is independent of them all. It is supernational in Art as in Grace.<sup>3</sup>

c. In Function

That the art of Christianity differs in function from that of paganism is seen in the example of the pagan temple which is meant to contain the God; whereas the Christian temple contains the worshippers.<sup>4</sup> Christian art does not worship the world of the seen. Man's soul, or his heart, not his body, is its theme.<sup>5</sup> Christian art places the soul

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 340.

Cf. Edwyn Robert Bevan: Symbolism and Belief, pp. 11-27. Bevan's study is in the area of verbal symbols, yet the application to the symbolic language of art is clear in his setting forth of the idea that in Christian culture it is a religious commonplace that all symbols and concepts with which we express the eternal are inadequate, yet this is not so to the pagan mind. They did not use symbols and analogies as did the Jewish and then Christian faith. In Paganism even the anthropomorphic was literal. This is related to the limited earthliness of which Westcott speaks.

2. Cf. Forsyth, op. cit., p. 267.

3. Ibid., pp. 78-79.

4. Cf. Ibid., p. 60.

5. Ibid., p. 79.

eternally above nature.<sup>1</sup> Art is not itself the incarnation, but it serves to bear witness of an incarnation foregone.<sup>2</sup> Forsyth states it beautifully:

The sphere of incarnation was moved higher, beyond Nature, beyond the body, into the region of the spirit itself, and reflection was all that was left to Art with its material organ and deified body. Christianity was God incarnate in human nature, and not in a human body chiefly. That fact makes a great difference in the relations between Religion and Art.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. The Ministry of Art in the Christian Church

The ministry of art in the Christian church is to express and proclaim the Christian faith. Westcott says that "Christian Art is a necessary expression of the Christian Faith."<sup>4</sup> Edward Shillito believes that man's answer to God is not complete until he has spoken not only in words but in music and color and stone. He says:

Man in his earthly life has many parts to fill, and that of the artist is essential to its fulness; man is a maker who can impress his thought upon matter in such a way that when he has finished his work -- when Michelangelo lays down his brush or his chisel, or Bach takes his fingers from the organ -- something has been added to the answer of mankind to God. Not till this offering has been made, and man has come to his God with the works of his hands -- man in his part of artificer, artisan, artist -- will the human race have uttered its perfect word, and not till then will the gospel be completely known. It has to be translated into music and poetry and color and stone before it can be unfolded. Words are not enough.<sup>5</sup>

The primary ministry of a church building may be to contain the congregation, yet, just as the character of the artist is seen in his work, the architecture of the Christian church reveals the faith of the church. Naomi Nissley expresses this same thought in her thesis in the following statement:

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 85.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 104.
3. Forsyth, op. cit., p. 105.
4. Westcott, op. cit., p. 340.
5. Edward Shillito: *Craftsmen All*, pp. 74-75.

The church building itself can be a symbol of the faith that it serves, and as such it bears a testimony to all who see it or worship within its doors.

.....  
The architects of Christianity have always strived to express the spiritual with the materials of their buildings.<sup>1</sup>

"Painting," said Gregory of Nyssa (A.D. 400) "even in silence can speak upon the wall, and do great service."<sup>2</sup> Art is one of the languages of the Christian religion. Just as the Bible with its symbolism in word, simile, parable and event is a language of universal appeal, so also is the art of the Christian church a universal language when it uses the familiar and tangible to lead us to understand great truths of reality. This thought is expressed forcefully in the Epistle to the Romans:

For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are seen being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity.<sup>3</sup>

The ministry of art in the Christian church is twofold. It expresses the faith of the Christian and it also proclaims that faith in effective language to others. Throughout the history of Christianity art forms have served the church in proclaiming, preserving, and establishing the doctrines of the faith. The language of art is understood by the illiterate. In the middle ages when books were rare and costly since printing had not as yet been invented, walls and windows were used to embody the Christian message.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it was the ministry of art to educate. This ministry is vitally needed in the missionary enterprise.

- .....
1. Naomi Nissley: The Principles of Functionalism in Art Expressions of the Christian Church, A Thesis, p. 49.
  2. Westcott, op. cit., p. 298, quoting from Gregory of Nyssa de S. Theod. Mart. iii, p. 733 (ed. Migne).
  3. Romans 1:20.
  4. Cf. Daniel Johnson Fleming: Christian Symbols in a World Community, p. 13.

In Western churches art does not substitute for the printed page as it once did, but speaks a language effective because of its own particular appeal.

To teach the abstract alone does not influence the popular mind.<sup>1</sup> There is no principle of education more recognized than this that truth needs concrete aids in order to "make itself at home in many minds."<sup>2</sup> When Jeremiah's message fell on deaf ears the Lord commanded him:

Go buy a potter's earthen flask and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests and go out to the Valley of Benhinnom at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you . . . Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you, and shall say to them, Thus says the Lord of hosts: So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, so that it can never be mended.<sup>3</sup>

The shattered vessel proclaimed the message more vividly to the on-lookers than many words. Christian art uses the visible to emphasize a spiritual message. The appeal of the imagination coupled with that of reason makes a double-barreled approach.

Whether or not art forms and motifs fulfill their important ministry in the Christian church depends both upon the skill of the artificer who enriches the church and upon the education of the believers who worship in the church, that the forms retain a vital significance.<sup>4</sup> The formal accepted symbols used in a church building

. . . . .

1. Cf. Ibid., pp. 12-13.
2. Ibid., p. 13.
3. Jeremiah 19:1-2, 10-11.
4. Cf. Fleming, op. cit., p. 22.

need to be re-created for each generation in order that they may be meaningful rather than dead forms. The emblems in church windows, walls or vestments do not fulfill their function if the public must be provided with a booklet in order to find out what they signify.<sup>1</sup>

### C. The Symbolic Character of Christian Art

#### 1. Symbolism Defined

A symbol is an outward form or action which has an inner meaning.<sup>2</sup> The thing symbolized is greater than the symbol. The etymological definition of the word symbol implies the throwing together or joining of an abstract idea and a visible sign of it. The sign recalls the idea, not by resemblance, but by suggestion.<sup>3</sup>

Edwyn Bevan in the Gifford Lectures on Symbolism and Belief makes a distinction between two different kinds of symbols. There are visible objects or sounds which represent something already within our direct knowledge. It is the purpose of such symbols not to give us information about the thing symbolized, but to remind us of it, or prompt us to act in a certain way because of it. The other kind of symbol exists for the purpose of giving information about the thing symbolized. It conveys knowledge not otherwise perceived. In the first case there is not resemblance but representation. In the second, resemblance is essential.<sup>4</sup> The cross symbolizing Christianity or the olive branch symbolizing peace are examples of the first kind of symbol. The verbal symbol "Father" referring to God is an example of the second. Only the

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1. Cf. Nissley, op. cit., p. 50.
2. Cf. Fleming, Christian Symbols in a World Community, p. 10.
3. Cf. Thomas Albert Stafford: Christian Symbolism in the Evangelical Churches, p. 17.
4. Cf. Bevan, op. cit., pp. 11-14.

first kind of symbol is relevant to this study.

Within the area of this first definition of symbol there are the emblems, seals, and identifying marks of Christian art whose meanings are established by traditional use. The popular use of the term 'symbol' in religious art refers to these formal accepted symbols. This study is concerned with this type of symbol, but also with all of Christian art of color, line and form which is symbolic in the sense that it points beyond the material to the spiritual concept.

## 2. The Symbolic Function of the Art Forms and Motifs of the Christian Church

It is the duty of a symbol to point to that which is beyond itself. If it ceases to do that then it is no longer symbolic. A symbol in art form has no meaning unless it speaks effectively and immediately to the one beholding it. When art forms, either the traditional, formal symbols of the church, or any of the plastic arts loose their symbolic significance and serve only as ornament they no longer fulfill their function in the Christian church. Fleming warns against the use of art forms which have become empty of meaning:

Significance must be restored to forms that for many have become mere ornaments--and, as has been noted, "significance" means literally that toward which a sign is made.

To rest content with the decorative value of an age-old symbol is what is called estheticism.<sup>1</sup>

The art forms and motifs of the Christian cultus are necessarily symbolic in function. Because Christianity is a spiritual religion the church requires of them that they point to the spiritual truths beyond themselves. Christian art as a language must speak in

1. Fleming, Christian Symbols in a World Community, p. 22.



familiar terms or not be understood. When art fails to convey spiritual truths and degenerates on the one hand into decoration or on the other into idolatry then conflict arises between art and the Christian gospel. Art must always be the servant, not the religion.<sup>1</sup>

It was in fear that art would not remain symbolic in function that the early church was suspicious of art and much more awake to its "perils than its possibilities."<sup>2</sup> Of the New Testament church it is said:

The primitive church possessed symbolic rites in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It made use of symbolic gestures, as in the laying on of hands. It had symbolic forms of speech, eg., "maranatha" (the Lord cometh) which served as a watchword by which Christians recognized each other. But there is no mention in the N.T. of visible objects connected with worship or dress and behavior. Christianity distinguished itself from pagan religion by avoiding these outward signs which savoured of idolatry.<sup>3</sup>

Caution in the early church was necessary in view of its circumstances, struggling as it was for existence in a pagan world. Up until the beginning of the fourth century it is seen from the Canon of Elvira and the writings of Eusebius that though art had then become a valued servant there was still much restraint. The church was especially averse to any representation of objects of worship.<sup>4</sup>

C.G. Coulton maintains that the best of the primitive Christians did without the help of art in worship. He states:

This remains true, even if we take the Catacomb pictures of Rome at the earliest date assigned to them. In perhaps the majority of cases, these are simply pagan motives adopted by the Christians; again, they do not represent the official teaching of the Church

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1. Cf. Ante., p. 4.
2. Forsyth, op. cit., p. 267.
3. Vergilius Ferm, An Encyclopedia of Religion, p. 755.
4. Cf. Westcott, op. cit., pp. 293-294.

at that time. It is incredible that all the early apologists should have spoken of image-worship as non-existent among Christians, if this repudiation had not been true in fact. For, it must be remembered, they had every temptation to exaggerate in the other direction; the pagan accusations of atheism could have been refuted in a single sentence if they had been able to say "we do in fact secretly paint Christ and the Virgin Mary and the saints, and say our prayers before them."<sup>1</sup>

These illustrations are used here to show how the early church in its deep spirituality sought to leave no room for an other than symbolic function of art in worship. The issue was idolatry. That the church in spite of its early caution later slipped into an idolatry, not indeed of theory, but of practice, which after all is what counts, is seen from history. The implications for the indigenous church will be dealt with in a later chapter.

The early church inherited its caution toward imitative art<sup>2</sup> from Judaism. But it is seen that the strict limitations of the law do not rule out a ministry of symbolism for art for God Himself called and appointed craftsmen to produce the art forms that were to enrich the tabernacle.

Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of workmanship, of the engraver, and of the skillful workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen and of the weaver, even of them that do any workmanship.<sup>3</sup>

The furniture of the tabernacle, as well as the rites of the sacramental system, were all symbolic in that they spoke of great spiritual truths. Each generation was thus reminded of God's character, His promises and His faithfulness. The Table of Shewbread on which loaves of bread were put with frankincense served as a reminder that God gives daily bread.

. . . . .

1. C. G. Coulton: The Art of the Reformation, p. 501.
2. Cf. Westcott, op. cit., p. 282.
3. Exodus 35:35.

The Candelabra served as a reminder that God is their light. The tabernacle was light because God gives the light. The Altar of Incense from which the smoke drifted through the curtain to the Holy of Holies was representative of prayer, communication with God. That these things were intended to serve a symbolic function, pointing to the eternal, is substantiated in that when the Eternal One came He said: "I am the bread of life"<sup>1</sup> and "I am the light of the world."<sup>2</sup> The Ark of the Covenant was tangible evidence of the covenant God had made with the nation. Everything about it was symbolic of the covenant relationship. It contained the Decalogue, the basis of the covenant. On it was placed the mana and Aaron's rod. The blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat was the covering between the broken law and God's presence.

It was only as the Jews lost sight of the eternal to which the symbol pointed that the symbolic became a stumbling block. Jeremiah among others had to cry out against their self deception:

Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'<sup>3</sup>

### 3. The Misuse of Symbolism

Symbolism being a great virtue has great dangers.<sup>4</sup> A symbol is misused when it becomes an end in itself. Illustrations of this have already been seen. When the church degenerates it turns its attention from the things that are "not seen" and is satisfied with the empty outward form.<sup>5</sup>

. . . . .

1. John 6:35.
2. John 8:12.
3. Jeremiah 7:4.
4. Cf. F.R. Webber: Church Symbolism, p. iv.
5. Cf. II Corinthians 4:18.

"Pure pleasure experiences do have a very real and legitimate place in Christian experience."<sup>1</sup> In the area of worship, however, Christian art is misused if its primary function becomes decoration.

Symbols must be used wisely. From the vast amount of symbolism that originated in the ancient and medieval church, it would seem that there was a lavish use of symbols. Actually, however, symbolism was rarely used merely as decoration. It was employed where it was necessary.<sup>2</sup> The lack of visual symbols in the New Testament church has already been noted.<sup>3</sup> Later during persecution, however, certain pictures and abbreviations were used in order to conceal some truth from the enemy. The Greek letters IHC became the abbreviation for IHCOYC, Jesus. The cross signified the crucifixion and later it came to denote Christianity. A circle was the symbol for eternal life, and the trinity was signified by an equilateral triangle.<sup>4</sup>

In the pictures in stained glass and carving in the middle ages there was a need to identify the characters and since many could not read, symbols were commonly used as a means of identification. There was a symbol for each of the evangelists. The symbol of the lamb was used to identify the figure of Christ. Mary was usually seen clothed in pale blue, a symbolic use of color.<sup>5</sup> Such symbols served a purpose. This may be contrasted to a more recent use of symbols.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Nissley, op. cit., p. 25.
2. Cf. Ferm, op. cit., p. 753.
3. Cf. Ante., p. 10.
4. Cf. Ferm, op. cit., p. 753.
5. Cf. Ibid.

During the second and third decade of the present century there was a profuse, and frequently needless use of symbols. Instead of using, for example the symbols of the apostles in order to distinguish them for one another, these symbols were painted and carved at random, often where there were neither painted nor carved figures to identify. Frequently such symbols were used inappropriately.<sup>1</sup>

Thoughtless and lavish use of symbolism robs it of any meaning.

#### D. The Problem of Symbolism in Protestantism

##### 1. Historically

Symbolism since the Reformation has been a problem to Protestants. The gross misuse of art forms led Protestantism to limit severely the use of symbolism.<sup>2</sup> Protestants for the most part are anti-symbolic because of the fear that symbolism will degenerate into misuse. This fear has basis both in history and in man's nature. Forsyth states that "It is not till a religion is in a very strong position that it can afford (for the sake of sinful men's fickle, inflammable, and presumptuous souls) to hold close terms with Art."<sup>3</sup>

What was the nature of the misuse of art forms that resulted in such iconoclastic zeal during the Reformation? It does not have to do with the validity of using the visual aid as a crutch, as is sometimes superficially supposed. The real issues are mode of worship and one's concept of the nature of the picture or image which is used as a visual aid.

It was the attempt of the Reformers to get back to a more nearly New Testament Christianity. They found that the New Testament

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1. Ferm, op. cit., p. 273.
  2. Cf. Coulton, op. cit., p. 323.
  3. Forsyth, op. cit., p. 268.

church continued the Jewish concept that any image of the sacred was expressly forbidden by God.<sup>1</sup> The early Christians did not follow the Rabbinical complications but rather the clear Old Testament teaching against idolatry.

Throughout the Old Testament there are two main objections to idolatry. First the worship of pagan images by pagans is looked on as ridiculous, something to be mocked since an inanimate thing has no power.<sup>2</sup> This objection to idolatry is seen in Isaiah 44.

All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. Who fashions a god or casts an image, that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are but men; let them all assemble, let them stand forth, they shall be terrified, they shall be put to shame together . . . . No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, Half of it I burned in the fire, I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted flesh and have eaten; and shall I make the residue of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?<sup>3</sup>

The other objection to idolatry is objection to any attempt to represent Jehovah by means of an image.<sup>4</sup> This is what the second commandment deals with. This kind of idolatry was the worst form of wickedness. God could never be represented by an image. Moses warns against this form of idolatry emphatically in Deuteronomy.

Therefore take good heed to yourselves. Since you saw no form on the day that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, beware lest you act corruptly by making a graven image for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the

1. Cf. Bevan, Holy Images, p. 84.

2. Ibid., p. 39.

3. Isaiah 44:9-11, 19.

4. Cf. Bevan, Holy Images, p. 39.

water under the earth. And beware lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and worship them and serve them, things which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.<sup>1</sup>

The early Christians continued the protest against idolatry on this second basis. The Christian protest differed, however, in two ways from what had become the Jewish interpretation. The Jews felt it wrong to make representations at all of anything sacred. The Christians felt that it was the making of idols that was wrong, not the making of representations. The prohibition was not against art, but against making a representation that was to be worshipped.<sup>2</sup> Another difference was that the Christians took more seriously the pagan claim that the images were animated by spirits.<sup>3</sup> Later, when pagan idolatry became a thing of the past it is seen that the Christian Church itself made images and pictures to which it offered religious homage just as the pagans had done to the images of their gods.<sup>4</sup> Bevan explains this very strange departure from Biblical teaching about worship by the fact that by the Christian's own identifying the gods of pagan images with devils the emphasis of the polemic against idolatry was put upon the objects of worship rather than upon the mode of worship. Slowly the objection became not so much that use was made of an image, but that worship was directed to an evil power.<sup>5</sup> The Church fell into error when it lost sight of the fact that worship by means of an image even when directed to God is wrong worship and forbidden by God.

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1. Deuteronomy 4:15-19.
2. Cf. Bevan, Holy Images, p. 86.
3. Ibid., p. 90.
4. Ibid., p. 84.
5. Ibid., p. 95.

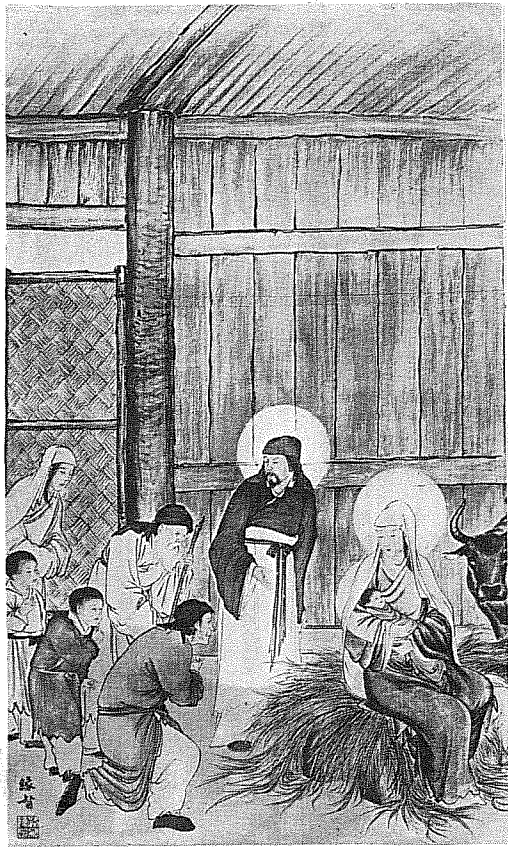


Plate II Chinese Christian Art



In the fourth century it was still the view of the church that making pictures and representations of sacred persons was permissible in order to instruct simple minds, to use the concrete in order to stimulate devotion. However, it was considered wrong to offer any form of homage to pictures or images.<sup>1</sup> By the eighth century image worship had become a general practice. Not until the sixteenth century was there a return on the part of the Reformers to the Biblical prohibition of offering any kind of homage to images.<sup>2</sup>

It is the Protestant principle, then, that symbols or representations of Bible stories or sacred persons may be used profitably for educational purposes or to inspire devotion, but it is wrong to suppose that the material object has any magical or supernatural power, and it is wrong to address signs of reverence or homage to the material object. The Roman Catholic argument is often heard that the part played by material things in stimulating the senses cannot be eliminated in religion. This is not the real essence of the issue. Bevan puts it very clearly:

We may be ready to allow any amount of sense-stimulation in religion, and not abandon Protestant principles, so long as the material object is not held to produce the supernatural effect directly, but only to condition consciousness in the way it normally would.<sup>4</sup>

Protestantism agrees with the early Christians in making a valid use of the visual and concrete, yet heeding the Biblical prohibition of idolatry.

## 2. The Problem

The problem of using symbolism in Protestantism is the great

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1. Ibid., p. 116.
2. Ibid., p. 116ff.
3. Ibid., pp. 167, 168.
4. Ibid., p. 168.

diversity of practice in using the visual, yet avoiding tendency toward any form of idolatry. Some groups severely limit the use of visual arts. Other groups are pressing for a revival of a more lavish use of symbolism. These groups inevitably misunderstand each other. The movement toward a return to rich symbolism is not always characterized by wisdom. Ralph Adams Cram in his introduction to F.R. Webber's book on Church symbolism says:

After a long period of rejection of the symbol by many peoples, with the consequent loss of sense of Reality, there is now surprisingly, a recurrence of this old idolatry. The symbol returns, but it is now not this, but a fetish. Of course at the same time, though thus far chiefly in certain manifestations of religion, the true use of the symbol and of symbolism is being restored. The true and the false confront each other, diametrically opposed in nature and in ideal.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. The Problem Transferred to the Mission Field

As each Protestant missionary group transplants its own particular custom to the mission field these become conflicting and confusing to those who do not have all of Western history behind them. History has robbed the Protestant church of symbols that could have been rich in a valid sense. It is the unthinking tendency of some to prevent a rich meaningful symbolism to develop among the Christian believers of Asia and Africa.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the Protestant caution toward symbolism has a contribution which proves extremely valuable. The fact that Protestants feel much more at ease using art forms in education and other phases of church outreach, but not in connection with worship, may be a much needed safeguard for people who do not have a long Christian tradition to prevent them from slipping back into idolatry.

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1. Webber, op. cit., p. iv.

2. Cf. Fleming, Christian Symbols in a World Community, p. 22.

## E. The Necessity for Indigenous Christian Art Forms

### 1. In Fulfilling the Function of Christian Art.

If art forms in the indigenous church are to fulfill their high function and avoid the dangers of misuse then it follows that they must be truly indigenous. Art must speak the same language as the people. Fleming states:

One way of bringing about this naturalization of Christianity so much needed and well justified is to use, in the various arts, forms and techniques which are native to any given people--to use their artistic language just as already we use their literary language. For example, the Reverend H.P. Thompson tells how, at Kronstad, a black Babe was placed in the Christmas crib, thus making it quite natural for the African boys and girls to think of the Holy Child as one of them. It was in no less concrete terms, though doubtless with a figurative meaning, that an Oxford-educated Indian put the matter: 'You have brought us a Christ wearing a hat and trousers; we want to see him in a turban and dhoti.'<sup>1</sup>

The full impact of the vital need for indigenous art forms in the growing church in mission lands has been realized late in the missionary effort. There have been both failure to realize the importance of speaking in familiar terms artistically and failure to recognize the values in indigenous cultures. This serious lag was expressed by the world meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram, India, in 1938.

We strongly affirm that the gospel should be expressed and interpreted in indigenous forms, and that in methods of worship, institutions, literature, architecture, etc., the spiritual heritage of the nation and country should be taken into use. The gospel is not necessarily bound up with forms and methods brought in from the older churches . . . . There are valuable cultural elements which ought to be preserved and integrated into the life of the new Christian community from its very beginning. An adequate understanding of the religions will recognize in them the presence of such valuable elements, side by side with other elements which are wholly opposed to the Christian

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1. Fleming, Each With His Own Brush, pp. 2, 3.

revelation . . . The inner life of worship becomes incarnate in words and acts and in the wordless speech of architecture and the other arts . . . We would urge upon missionaries the duty of helping the younger churches to express their Christian life in forms that are part of their nation's heritage.<sup>1</sup>

Missionaries have too often failed to recognize these principles. Yet if architecture, painting, emblems, etc. are to have a ministry in the church, pointing to the spiritual by means of the material and familiar, indigenous forms must be used. J.C. Adams, writing on "African Art and Its Possibilities" says:

It is one of the saddest facts in the history of Christian missions that too little thought has been given to sympathetic understanding of native traditions, or what contribution they could make as parts of the great unity of the church. The church of the early centuries found it to be far more expedient to emphasize points of contact which the heathen world had with the fuller richness of the new Gospel, and thus to lead converts from the lesser to the greater. But Christianity in Africa has charged in among a primitive people with all the temerity of a wild elephant in a chicken-coop saying to the bewildered inhabitants, "all your ideas are wrong--Christianity means a clean slate, and you must begin all over again in architecture, carving, painting, and music." Thus, for instance, instead of adopting the native style of rondavel and thatch, the Church in her building operations, felt herself bound to introduce either a debased Gothic or domesticated Perpendicular--very often without the 'perpendicular'!<sup>2</sup>

It was seen that a departure from a symbolic function in the worship of the Christian church results in art forms constituting more a danger than an aid. It has also been shown that for art forms to be symbolic they must use the familiar, thus the indigenous forms.

## 2. In Proclaiming the Gospel

The power of art in proclaiming the gospel has been seen.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Fleming, Christian Symbols in a World Community, p. 3. Quoted from The World Mission of the Church, pp. 45, 55, 57.
2. J.C. Adams: African Art and Its Possibilities, East and West, 1927, p. 319.
3. Cf. Ante., pp. 4-6.

This power rests on the effective use of the familiar, thus the indigenous forms. Robertson Smith's much quoted statements have specific application here:

No positive religion that has moved men has been able to start with a 'tabula rasa' and express itself as if religion were beginning for the first time. A new scheme of faith can find a hearing only by appealing to religious instincts and susceptibilities that already exist in its audience and it cannot reach these without taking account of the traditional forms in which all religious feeling is embodied and without speaking a language which men accustomed to these old forms can understand.<sup>1</sup>

It is not the Scriptures alone that must be translated, but "Christian thought and aspiration" must find expression in meaningful art forms. The purpose of missions is not to share the culture of the West but the Gospel of our Lord and Savior.<sup>2</sup> Christ who clothed himself in human flesh can come to man in any culture.

### 3. Necessary If Art Is to Be an Avenue of Expression for the Believer

A Christian must express his faith. The sincere expression true to his deepest self will be in his own language, whether vocal or artistic.<sup>3</sup> Alice Reid in her thesis on indigenous art in India says: "It must go without saying that the church can never really express all that is in her of worship as long as she uses alien forms."<sup>4</sup>

If Christianity is vital in the life of a people, if there is transformed life and the "fruits of the Spirit," then it is almost

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1. Robertson Smith: The Religion of the Semites, p. 2.
2. Fleming, Christian Symbols in a World Community, pp. 3-4.
3. Cf. Henrick Kraemer: The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, p. 421.
4. Alice Reid: The Development and Further Use of an Indigenous Christian Pictorial Art in India, A Thesis, p. 59.



ANNUNCIATION was painted by Lu Hung Nien in style whose tradition goes back to 17th Century, when missionaries learned Chinese techniques.

inevitable that indigenous art become an avenue of expression for the church.

#### 4. In Meeting Rising Nationalism and Communism

In view of the nature and intensity of nationalism in many parts of the world today it is especially harmful to the Christian cause when the Christian community is cut off from the roots of indigenous culture.<sup>1</sup> Outward forms of religion which are often more Western than indigenous immediately identify the Christian church with the West, a "foreign religion." In many countries not only is the church ineffective in being identified as foreign, but it is put in a very precarious position.<sup>2</sup>

The implications for the church are obvious in what Charles Iglehart says of Japan:

It is not to be wondered at that in the desperate effort to maintain strength through unity resources should be sought in the common heritage of the past--the past that in Japan is still living in the present. Thus during the 'thirties and 'forties a new integration of old and new took place and was consistently carried into every area of life as it touched the common man. This process inevitably included cultural and religious elements, and made difficult the position of anyone who stood apart from the tradition.<sup>3</sup>

It is becoming more and more imperative that the Christian church avoid the label "white man's religion" in countries like Africa and Indonesia where colonialism is a bigger issue than Communism and the "color of colonialism is white."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Cf. J. Russell Chandran: The Church in and Against Its Cultural Environment, The International Review of Missions, July, 1952, p. 299.
2. Cf. Fleming, Each With His Own Brush, p. 2.
3. Charles Iglehart: The Christian Church in Japan, The International Review of Missions, July, 1952, p. 274.
4. Cf. Reid, op. cit., p. 84.  
Cf. The Brown Man's Burden, Time, December 21, 1953, p. 41.

The Christian church might well learn its lesson from Communism which rather than being defeated by nationalism seeks to use it. Communism seeks to appeal to the masses, but particularly the enlightened, as the ideology that gives a meaningful interpretation to the whole of life. The approach Communism uses integrates communist philosophy with every aspect of man's experience including man's esthetic needs. In India they plan culture conferences to encourage the development of art, literature, music, folk-songs, and folk dances.<sup>1</sup> J. Russell Chandran, discussing the Church against its cultural background in India, declares:

When the Communists are winning the sympathy of the people and are integrating their teaching with the cultural background, no other ideology can claim their loyalty unless it is equally sympathetic to the common needs of the people and is appreciative of the cultural background.<sup>2</sup>

Chandran holds further that:

The Church can take deep root in the cultural life of India by playing an active part in the revival of those patterns of art, music and dance which are expressive of the Indian genius.<sup>3</sup>

The Westerner is unfortunately so accustomed to thinking in terms of Western superiority that he often fails to understand the intense emotion in the nationalism of Africa and Asia.

Roland Allen reveals some of the implications of the linking of Western civilization and the gospel in the missionary effort. In his graphic way he gives a glimpse of the limits missionaries placed upon themselves. About buildings he says:

Outwardly and inwardly these mission compounds were little bits of England transplanted into a foreign country. Within their walls

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1. Cf. Chandran, op. cit., p. 270.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.



was a European civilization; outside was a heathen civilization or barbarism. When a man crossed the threshold of a mission compound, he stepped from one world into another, from one age into another. Many a weary traveller has described them for us, and expressed the delight which he felt in passing for a moment into these homes of quiet, order, cleanliness and decency, before he plunged again into the barbarism outside . . . . When the early missionaries built the first houses in those compounds they were taking a step which must have seemed of the simplest and most commonplace character. They must have houses; they must have houses fit for Europeans to live in. What could be more obvious! Yet in building those houses they fixed the character and the limits of mission work in that country for a century, perhaps for two or three centuries. Those houses represented a spirit, they revealed the relationship which was to be between the missionary and the people. They argued the immobility of the Christian force; they prophesied that European missionaries would still be there a hundred years later, calling themselves missionaries still, ministering to the third and fourth generations of Christians. They proclaimed that the missionaries would not be men wholly given to the preaching of a religion alone, but that they would consider the introduction of their civilization as part of their new religion. They foretold a history: the spread of the religion would be as easy and as difficult as the multiplication of houses like those.<sup>1</sup>

John F. Butler writing for the International Review of Missions states that it has been both foolish and unkind to have so westernized the externals of Christianity in the East. In his own words:

It was strategic folly, since it has aroused nationalist suspicions --and aroused them not unjustly, as our general cultural, if not our political, record shows. And it was psychological unkindness; we ought to have realized how full of strains is the situation of the convert, and to some extent of his successors also, even apart from overt persecution; and we ought in understanding love to have reduced, wherever Christian honesty permitted, the tension between the new truth coming from outside and the old culture in which the deepest self had been moulded.<sup>2</sup>

It is imperative to the future of the indigenous church that it be able to demonstrate in the midst of the present day conflict of ideologies that Christianity transcends Western civilization.

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1. Roland Allen: The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It, pp. 104-105.
  2. John F. Butler: The Visual Arts in the Younger Churches, The International Review of Missions, July, 1952, p. 377.

## F. Summary

In this chapter the principles basic to the adaptation of art forms and motifs to the Christian cultus of the indigenous church were investigated. The place of art forms in the Christian cultus was contrasted with art in paganism. The ministry of art in the Christian cultus was found to be both to express and to proclaim the Christian faith. Art was seen to be a language and as such must speak in familiar terms or not be understood. Its particular value as a language is found to be in that it uses the concrete to reveal the abstract, the material to point to the spiritual. The effectiveness of the ministry of art to the Christian cultus depends not alone on the skill of the artificer, but upon education of each generation that the forms retain vital meaning.

Symbolism was defined in order to show that the art of the Christian cultus is necessarily symbolic in its function. When the art form ceases to symbolize the unseen it fails in its function and falls into misuse detrimental to the Christian cultus.

Symbolism as an historical problem to Protestants was discussed. It was concluded that the problem provides a necessary caution in approaching adaptation on the mission field, yet much of the negative attitude resulting in the West need not be transferred to the mission field.

It was shown that the nature and function of Christian art makes it imperative that the art forms of the Christian church be indigenous. If art is truly symbolic it must use familiar forms.

The rising nationalism and conflicting ideologies in the world today have brought a consciousness that the outward forms of the

indigenous church must not identify the church with the West. The indigenous church is called upon to demonstrate that Christianity transcends Western civilization.

CHAPTER II

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE ADAPTATION OF ART FORMS AND MOTIFS

TO THE

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A. Introduction

It must be kept in mind in discussing the problems of adaptation that there are different degrees of adaptation. Fleming describes six steps of increasing departure from Western forms. He is speaking of adaptation of emblems, and identifying marks, symbols in the more restricted sense, yet most of the visual arts fit into this scale. His steps are (1) strict adherence to the classical symbolism of the West, (2) placing a Western Christian symbol against a distinctively indigenous background. Thus Chinese style is used in building but in place of the dragon, lotus and swastika the cross, vine and breastplate are used. (3) Some indigenous symbols, especially those on the shields or seals of schools, are mainly geographical. The institutions in this way identify themselves with the land in which they find themselves. (4) New symbols are evolved growing out of the local culture, though not previously associated with any non-Christian religion. This is a more creative step. An example of this is the use of the banyan tree, whose branches drop roots to the ground so that branches extend widely in all directions, as a symbol of the missionary expansion of the church. (5) The association of a classical symbol from the West with a classical symbol of some non-Christian religion, for example the

cross superimposed on the open lotus flower. (6) The outright adoption of a classical symbol of some non-Christian religion with an attempted Christian reinterpretation of its meaning. These last two types come into more criticism than the others.<sup>1</sup>

The dangers and problems that this chapter will describe do not apply in general to each of these kinds of adaptation but specifically to what is being done in a particular instance.

#### B. Lack of Recognition of the Values in Indigenous Cultures

As it has already been seen the world meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram, India, in 1938 strongly urged the recognition and use of values in indigenous cultures.<sup>2</sup> Two main hindrances the Western missionary must overcome in recognizing values in another culture are the almost inescapable Western attitude of superiority and the concept that identifies everything in another culture with pagan religion with no possible value to Christian life. Fleming in his book, Whither Bound in Missions, written in 1925 states that even then discriminating leaders and nationals alike did not welcome junior missionaries coming to China with the attitude that any condition they discover among the Chinese which differs from Western tradition is inferior. He mentions a fact which is even more true at the present, that there is a growing pride of race and culture in Africa and countries of the East.<sup>3</sup> This means increasing resentment of Western attitude of superiority.

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1. Cf. Fleming, Christian Symbols in a World Community, pp. 4-8.
2. Cf. Ante., p. 19.
3. Cf. Fleming, Whither Bound in Missions, pp. 6-7.



**CHRISTIAN MARTYRS** were painted by Chang Woosung in the costumes worn in his native Korea.

Fleming lists four kinds of relationships which may be distinguished in our contacts with other countries: the blind ignorance of isolation and prejudice; the dawning recognition of values; a time of suspicion, fear and rivalry; and a final confidence in the certainty of helping interchange. He feels that we are in the process of entering into this fourth stage of development which will be characterized by the recognition of interdependence and mutual obligation.<sup>1</sup> In a later book he states:

It is one thing to realize that the world Christian community is made up of a multitude out of every nation, of all tribes and peoples and tongues; it is another to sense the natural corollaries from that fact. For one thing, it means that each race will have its characteristic thoughts about God; each tongue will have its favorite metaphors; each people, its meaningful representations. Western Christian symbols, though older, are just as national as are Asian or African forms, and should not naively be assumed to be ordained for universal use. The older Christendom will undoubtedly share its rich store of symbols with the larger community attained by the expansion of the faith. But the older churches must none the less be ready to understand and to appreciate what is worthy in the artistry of lands to which their messengers have gone. In this mutuality of giving and receiving the Church Universal will be enriched.<sup>2</sup>

It is clearly the nature of Christian fellowship which is real that there be mutuality.<sup>3</sup> Spiritual giving between nations and cultures is not one-sided. Christians in the West, however, because of an almost inescapable Western superiority complex have commonly found it difficult

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1. Ibid., p. 24.
  2. Fleming, Christian Symbols in a World Community, pp. 28-29.
  3. Cf. Fleming, Whiter Bound in Missions, p. 26. It is mentioned in this connection that even on a secular level many in the Orient are hungry to enter into this relationship of reciprocity. "Rabindranath Tagore values his Nobel Prize as a recognition of individual merit, and still more, so he says, as an acknowledgement that the East is a collaborator with the West in contributing its riches to the common stock of civilization."



in the missionary enterprise to evaluate properly and value qualities of indigenous cultures which are of intrinsic value. This hesitancy to recognize indigenous cultural values is much less a problem today than it has been in the past. Increasingly, missionaries have been effective interpreters to their churches at home of the culture to which they were sent.<sup>1</sup> Yet the problem still exists. It is very difficult to rise above the isolations caused by race and distance.

The West has much to learn from other countries. In art, for example, it is said that out of five specified elements China surpasses the West in four.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary painters in China are the inheritors of a great tradition in art which differs in many respects from that of the West. They paint in outline rather than in mass. They use soft colored inks rather than oils. Their figures are subordinate to the rest of their picture.<sup>3</sup> The pace of life in the West has been rather shattering to creative art. It has been said of Chinese art, however, that it is still a true vocation, a life's calling followed patiently and not controlled by passing fashion or second-rate desires of the public.<sup>4</sup> One wonders if in the present destruction of life and culture in the Orient this same spirit of high respect for true art can survive. If so, the great Christian art of the future may come from the church of the Orient.

In any country cultural differences must be recognized and appreciated. Western art is largely pictorial. Japanese art is seldom so.

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1. Ibid., p. 41.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 28.

3. Elsie Fox: The Church and the Artist, Overseas News, No. 80, August, 1948.

4. Cf. Ibid.

It conveys its message by something whimsical, bizarre or mystical. It is commentary.<sup>1</sup> In India's recent revival of art they have turned away from Western objectivity and returned to the pictorial interpretation of Indian tradition.<sup>2</sup> For a long period the Art of India was ignored or misunderstood by Europeans. Within the last several decades, however, there has been a renaissance in Indian painting. It is not a limited revival of ancient Indian art forms, nor is it an adaptation of Western art, but it is a revivalist movement which expresses India today.<sup>3</sup> The cultural values which are producing this renaissance are being recognized by the world. It can no longer be thoughtlessly assumed that any culture will gradually fade away in favor of the West. Eventual recognition of the values in art of the culture of the missionaries' adopted country seems inevitable.

Recognition of cultural values is slow also because of caution concerning symbols, customs, or motifs that are associated with heathen worship. This is much more true in some church groups than in others. Liturgical groups, of course, traditionally make a more lavish use of art, whereas free church groups not only have traditionally placed limitations upon art, but are more suspicious of the power of heathen influence through art. It will be seen that caution is justified. In any case adaptation must be faced.

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1. Cf. W.F. France: *L'Adaptation, The East and the West*, p. 331.
2. Cf. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
3. Karl Khandalaivala: *Indian Art Yesterday and Today*, *The Atlantic*, October, 1950, p. 135.

### C. Dangers in Adaptation

#### 1. Idolatry

The young churches growing under the missionary enterprise are usually more cautious than the missionaries themselves about the danger of idolatry in using adapted art forms. It is a fact even with people of a long Christian tradition that unless they are spiritually awake, they tend to see the sculptured or painted form rather than the idea the form was intended to call to mind.<sup>1</sup> The danger is to experience only the visible rather than the spiritual. This danger is much more real for people from a background of idolatry, and they are therefore more sensitive to it.

The danger of idolatry in making adaptations is both that the literal-mindedness of converts from paganism will result in the art forms becoming ends in themselves, failing to direct attention from the visible to the spiritual, and that the adaptation will so savor of pagan associations that it will be more a reminder of the beliefs left behind than it will be a symbol of Christian truth.

A missionary in India who has been experimenting in indigenous architecture, attempting to incorporate local designs and traditions, has reported great difficulty in finding suitable symbols. The apparently innocent-looking birds or flowers taken from Hindu art have connection with one of the gods and therefore savor of idolatry to the Indian Christian.<sup>2</sup> He also reports that converts are often fanatically

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1. Cf. Fleming, *Christian Symbols in a World Community*, p. 30.
2. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 32.  
Cf. Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

opposed to the carving of the human figure, thus preventing representation for design purposes of Christian saints or martyrs.<sup>1</sup>

Amy Carmichael writes of an experience which led her to avoid using pictures of our Lord in her work in Japan and later in India:

One day, I heard a little girl talking about magic-lantern pictures which were to be shown that night. "They will show their God," she said. I had just enough Japanese to understand those words and they startled me.

I remembered how a very beautiful picture of our Lord, hung alone in a room curtained with crimson velvet and treated with great reverence, had impressed me as a child. I remembered the story of Zinzendorf and the picture of the Crucifixion.

This have I done for thee,  
What hast thou done for Me?

And yet here, in this pagan land, where a child could say, "They will show their God tonight"--was this the place to use such pictures? And my heart answered, No, I cannot use them.<sup>2</sup>

In her work in India she never attempted to influence others to follow her pattern but she herself continued to avoid using pictures of the Lord. She reported finding that "when converts were given, we found that unless they were taught to do so, they did not want pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>

It must be said in this respect that the experience of missionaries has been varied and that others no doubt found that with careful education such pictures could be used to advantage. Indeed, it is more common to find representations of the Lord used than not used, yet it is the intention here to point out the need of a keen sensitivity to the mind of the pagan or new convert in order that pictures which

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1. Ibid.

2. Frank Houghton: Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur, pp. 60-61.

3. Ibid., p. 61

have been of great spiritual value to the missionary not become stumbling blocks to those the missionary would guide.

From one area of China it is reported that converts commonly do not desire adaptation of art forms that remind them of idolatry.

Paul W. Wiant, writing in 1941 on church architecture said:

A really large number of our Chinese friends take the position that now as Christians they are forever done with idols; they don't want to be reminded of idolatry, especially when in their Houses of Worship.<sup>1</sup>

He adds that the argument that what we now think of as Christian forms had their roots in paganism makes but little impression.<sup>2</sup>

H.P. Thompson in his unique book about Christian worship in other lands points out many examples of spontaneous and successful adaptation, yet while encouraging greater indigenization of Christian ways of worship he also cautions of real danger. He says:

The missionary does not like to override the judgment of those who know, as he does not, the heathen associations that still cling to the ceremonies or music that he would like to adapt. And so western ways retain their hold, and Christianity keeps the guise of the white man's religion, in spite of the white man's wish for experiment.<sup>3</sup>

W.F. France writing of the Japanese Christians in 1927 said:

... the real reason for the present style of our church buildings is that the Christians themselves are steadfastly hostile to even adapted and modified temple architecture. And this is not merely an expression of admiration for things Western for often they are anti-foreign; nor is it because they admit the beauty of the temples; nor again is it in deference to the missionary's wishes or tastes, for already the people are building their own churches in places where the missionary has long ceased to serve; it is wholly because of all that a temple stands for in the life of the people.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Paul W. Wiant: An Architect Looks at Chinese Churches, The Chinese Recorder, Vol. 72, 1941, p. 193.
2. Ibid.
3. H.P. Thompson: Worship in Other Lands, p. 8.
4. France, op. cit., p. 327.  
Cf. Fleming, Christian Symbols in a World Community, pp. 31-41, 103-104.

Thus it is seen that the problem of adaptation is not entirely in the realm of the aesthetic, nor the psychological, but has theological implications.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Syncretism

The most subtle of the theological complications to adaptation is syncretism. It is defined as the mingling of faiths which come in contact with one another.<sup>2</sup> There are modern religions which are deliberate products of syncretism such as Bahai, but often syncretism occurs as an unconscious process where differing faiths meet. The Sikh faith of India is largely a fusion of Moslem and Hindu ideas.<sup>3</sup>

The church can encourage the kind of cultural fusion which falls in the category Fleming calls "helpful interchange,"<sup>4</sup> but the church can never allow fusion in the realm of theology. The problem of syncretism has been especially difficult in India since it is the nature of Hinduism to be syncretistic. In this respect J.F. Butler says:

Hinduism is so easy to glide into; from acceptance of national externals it can be a short and hidden step into acceptance of the Hindu tenet that "all religions are the same"; hence one cannot but respect the obstinate refusal of the more old-fashioned Indian Christian to put on any degree of Hindu appearance. The missionary can with safety be more Indian than can the Indian Christian.<sup>5</sup>

J. Russell Chandran writing about India expresses the opinion that religious syncretism is not a major issue within the church in India now, but there is an awareness of danger. He cites several instances

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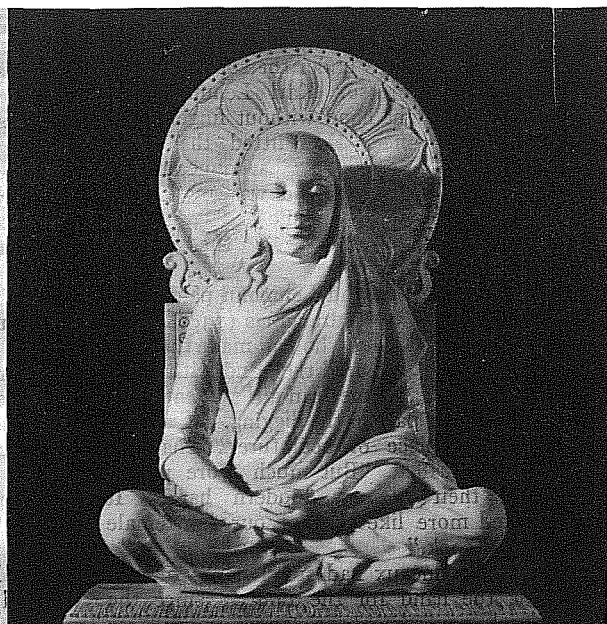
1. Cf. Butler, op. cit., p. 384.

2. Cf. Ferm.

3. Cf. Ibid.

4. Cf. Ante. p. 29.

5. Butler, op. cit., p. 384.



AFRICAN, INDIAN & KOREAN MADONNAS  
One of the altars was bewildering.

TIME, AUGUST 14, 1950

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### All Roads...

In Rome last week, the Vatican welcomed visitors to one of the biggest and most patiently collected art exhibits of the year. It consisted of religious paintings and sculptures by native artists in 600 Roman Catholic mission centers around the world.

The show had been organized for Rome's Holy Year by Monsignor Celso Costantini, Vatican Secretary for the Propagation of the Faith, and himself for twelve years an apostolic delegate in China. Under his direction, the Church's missionaries had collected what they could from churches in their own mission districts, commissioned some works, and accepted a great many more from native artists who had heard of the project and wished to be represented. The Vatican hopes to keep the show together after Holy Year

ends, exhibit it next year in Paris and Manhattan.

Prominently featured in the Chinese section were six paintings by a non-convert named Chang Chao-ho, who has been commissioned to illustrate the Church's first full translation of the Bible into Chinese. To him, as to Korean Sculptor Kim Chong Young, the Madonna was an almond-eyed lady in a flowing kimono. A Maori artist decked her in a long grass skirt. African carvers made her a Negro, often bare-breasted, sometimes put heavy coils of beads round her neck. Indo-Chinese versions of the Madonna were apt to resemble the Buddhist goddess of Mercy, Kuan Yin.

To Monsignor Costantini, all that seems right and proper. European artists, too, had often represented the saints as being of their own race, place and period. The Buddhist goddess Kuan Yin, he explains, had many of the same virtues that Christians revere in the Madonna: purity, motherhood and the understanding of sorrows. He also approved of Hindu representations of Christ that looked like the god Siva, "because Siva is a highly spiritualized deity. But we do object to Christ being represented in the guise of Buddha, since Buddha is worshiped as a man, not God."

Critics and most visitors praised the show, but a few found it bewildering. Looking at a red-lacquered altar from Japan, a woman from Germany exclaimed: "I just couldn't pray properly before such a thing!" Since a Japanese might have equal difficulty at a Gothic altar rail, the objection pretty well illustrated Monsignor Costantini's point: that native art may serve faith better than the alien kind.

Plate V

where enthusiasm for indigenization has taken extreme forms: the attempt at the beginning of this century by Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya to formulate an Indian Christian theology in terms of Ramanuja's Vedanta, or at the present time the suggestion that the Old Testament should be replaced by selections from the sacred scriptures of the Indian religions. These efforts, he states, are strongly resisted by the Church.<sup>1</sup>

In India the problem of representing Christ in local dress comes into the area of syncretism since Hindus welcome the timeless effect created. In view of the nature of Hinduism Butler feels that it is necessary to avoid any weakening of the sense of the historicity of Jesus. He says:

Hindu syncretism so eagerly welcomes the 'spiritual' flavour of the Christmas and Easter scenes, regarded as symbols of something timeless; what it jibs at--and thereby rejects the Gospel--is the recognition that these are actual and unique Mighty Acts of God for Salvation. Dare we, in India represent these scenes in ways which cannot but weaken the sense that they are not symbols but history? . . . it is central to our message that He did once actually wear clothes and He was then seen neither in trousers nor in dhoti, but in a seamless robe of first century Palestine.<sup>2</sup>

This illustrates the need for careful consideration of all the elements involved in adaptation.

Indigenization seeks to remove the foreign externals of Christianity and make spontaneous expression possible but when some adaptationists overlook the theological, psychological and sociological problems that are involved syncretism may result. Kraemer speaking of extreme adaptationists says:

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1. Chandran, op. cit., p. 261.
2. Butler, op. cit., p. 389.



Their idea of adaptation, although they intend the opposite, inevitably leads to the weakening of Christianity, for in practice it is not the endeavour to bring Christian truth to its most vigorous and clear expression by indigenous ways, but to recast Christianity into an indigenous philosophy of life, in which the dominant elements are the pre-Christian apprehension of existence, coloured and sanctioned by supposedly kindred Christian elements.<sup>1</sup>

Kraemer mentions also that the tendency toward religious syncretism may come from another source. Among the Christians of the younger churches there are those who are impetuously carried away by their vision of the reconstruction and regeneration of their country after a long period of humility and impotence. Their nationalism is very understandable but may result in the cultural and religious heritage of their country becoming so dear to them that adaptation may mean amalgamation. If being good Chinese, Japanese, or Africans unconsciously becomes more important than being good Christians, then their efforts tend more to save their higher cultural and religious heritage than in trying to find the way for a vigorous translation of essential Christianity through indigenous means.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Superficiality

The danger of superficiality is that adaptation will be attempted without sufficient understanding of the importance of the problems or the nature of national psychology. Superficiality will also result from attempts which make accommodation primary rather than the expression of the Gospel in its invariable essence.

Fleming, in this respect, warns against urging the use of symbols from an older faith upon young Christians on the basis of

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1. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 317.

2. Cf. Kraemer, op. cit., pp. 318-319.

superficial and sentimental understanding.<sup>1</sup> The uncritical adoption of local motifs and the superficial assumption that Western forms are universally standard are equally bad.

Great care should be taken that symbols are understood in their total significance before attempts at adaptation are made. W.F. France reports some unfortunate examples of adaptation where understanding was lacking. He says:

I have seen many such attempts. A Madonna dressed in colours that would only be worn by a dancing girl. An attempt at The Light of the World with the figure carrying a tea-house lantern. An Oriental Madonna with the Infant in her arms standing before a group of adorers. A Bethlehem in which the stable was European, the figures Japanese, and their dress could only be called grotesquely Eurasian.<sup>2</sup>

He continues by cautioning the missionary to avoid bewildering his people by exhorting them to be truly Oriental and make use of their heritage, and then being shocked when they are very Oriental indeed.<sup>3</sup>

#### D. Psychological Barriers

##### 1. Pagan Associations

The pagan associations which old art forms have in the minds of new Christians have been mentioned as a danger of possible retrogression into idolatry. It is also a psychological barrier even in cases where there is no real threat of idolatry. Christians who have never had a personal knowledge of any other creed or faith find it difficult to understand the psychological impact of architecture, for example, which in every way reminds the worshipper of the pagan temple.<sup>4</sup> France

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1. Cf. Fleming, *Christian Symbols in a World Community*, p. 36.
  2. France, *op. cit.*, p. 330.
  3. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 331.
  4. Cf. France, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

says of the Japanese Christian's attitude toward temples:

...it cannot be disputed that the life of which the temple is a centre is so soaked in superstition, so built up on fear, and sometimes so definitely committed to evil that the Christian Japanese who refuses to have any reminder of it in his Church life is at least entitled to have his convictions respected, nor can he be accused of odium theologicum.<sup>1</sup>

He continues, giving specific examples of psychological barriers:

Attempts have been made to use the temple "crane standing on a tortoise"--emblem of long life--as a candle-holder, and Japanese flower arrangement on our altars. They have been resisted strenuously. The bend of every leaf in the flower arrangement has a Buddhist name and significance. The candle-holder, too, is a temple ornament. "It looks like a temple," said the people, and that is final disapproval. In one well-known church the wardens obstinately refused to have even candles on the altar. Their reasons had nothing to do with ritual or doctrine; they were much more simple--"They have them in temples."<sup>2</sup>

Elsie Fox writing of Africa in Overseas News in 1948 brings out the fact that national Christians often prefer and sometimes insist on a foreign expression of their faith. They fear the power of the associations of their pagan heritage, and also admire Western forms, without necessarily understanding them.<sup>3</sup> The recent violent reaction against the attitude that blindly accepts all things Western may result in many artists being encouraged to express their faith in their own familiar forms.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Prejudice for All Things Western

The preference for Western church art is not so evident now in the tide of rising nationalism as it once was. The picture varies

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1. France, op. cit., p. 329.
2. Ibid.
3. Cf. Fox, op. cit.,
4. Cf. Ibid.

from one area to the next and a general statement is impossible.

Butler, in discussing architecture in Africa states that there is little adaptation of local forms. One reason for this is that there is not a suitable local style in many places which may be copied but also the preference for Western forms is predominant. Butler illustrates the sometimes grotesque results of the use without understanding of Western motifs in church furnishings.

Pitch-pine, red baize, Victorian dining-room table-cloths, fleurs-de-lis decoration, brass eagles, bathroom linoleum, European carpets--these are the order of the day. No African can be expected to be at home in such things. It is astonishing that the lovely cloths, mats and hangings made in different parts of Nigeria are so rarely used to adorn and furnish the churches. Some congregations disapprove, saying that what is suitable for their own houses is unworthy of the house of God.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of India, Butler says:

Give the average Indian Christian a church in nineteenth-century Nonconformist Gothic, and he is happy; give him something more Indian, and he is uneasy. . . . If we had forced westernism on an unwilling East, that would have been bad enough; what is really dreadful is that we should have so conditioned the Christian East that it does not want anything but our westernism.<sup>2</sup>

Kraemer explains this preference for Western forms from two aspects. He says:

If we consider the matter objectively, they suffer severely from this foreignness, because, on account of their being obliged to move in the awkward and uncongenial framework of Western modes, their indigenous and spontaneous faculties of religious expression are continuously being hindered and inhibited. If, however, we consider the matter in its subjective aspect, we find that

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1. Butler, op. cit., p. 379. Quoted from Rev. O.W.J. Bowles, The East and West Review, xviii, I, January 1952, pp. 19-20.
2. Ibid., p. 376.

they do not trouble much about it, because in most cases they already cherish the forms in which they received Christianity from the Western missionaries as a previous tradition and a symbol of social prestige.<sup>1</sup>

There is more likely to be a preference for Western art in large metropolitan centers, both in architecture and symbolism. In rural areas where Western influence has been less, the local forms are likely to be used in a natural way. The picture varies according to country and to denomination. In those areas where there is a recent realization of the need for an increased indigenization of art forms it is very often found that a preference for Western forms constitutes a psychological barrier in the minds of Christians. Westernization is often an effort to avoid pagan associations, but the offensiveness of foreign externals of religion in turn leads to renewed efforts toward indigenization.

#### E. Practical Problems

In speaking of the practical problems of adaptation of art forms in new Christian communities the practical aspects of style and function will be discussed rather than technical matters of building or composition.

##### 1. In Architecture

One very important function of the architect is to make his building fit for its use.<sup>2</sup> In using local styles in building Christian churches the principle that form follows function must be kept in mind. The problem immediately arises that there is often no local style suitable for the function which the Christian church must fulfill. The

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1. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 321.
2. Cf. Wiant, op. cit., p. 190.

Christian church building must be suitable for corporate worship. The buildings associated with religion in many cultures have never served that function. The Indian Hindu temple architecture of southern India is not adaptable for this reason.<sup>1</sup> There are other practical difficulties in India. The Islamic mosque is structurally a possible model, and has a Christian background. It was developed from the Armenian, Syrian and Byzantine churches. Used in India, however, it would give an unfortunate impression of identification with intolerant Islam.<sup>2</sup> The north Indian temple-form is unacceptable for economic reasons. There has been fruitful experimentation in the adaptation of southern style architecture as found in the village temples.<sup>3</sup>

In China there was much the same situation. Paul P. Wiant reports:

There is not such a thing as corporate worship in the ordinary Chinese temple. . . . By using their thinking powers down through the centuries the architects of China have developed a form, type and shape of building that is most admirably suited to temple use, but it does not fit Christian church worship.<sup>4</sup>

These temples then did not offer a suitable model for the Christian church. Architecture which is truly good grows out of use and structure. The ideas of use in a temple and in a Christian building of worship are different and demand different forms.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Cf. Butler, op. cit., p. 383.
2. Cf. Ibid.
3. Cf. Ibid.
4. Wiant, op. cit., p. 191.
5. Cf. Wiant, op. cit., p. 192.

Wiant continues to say that one material should not be made to look like another.

. . . if plastered brick columns must be painted to look like wood, if a recalcitrant material is tortured into a shape it was never intended to take, the results will always be less than successful.<sup>1</sup>

It becomes a very complicated problem to build in a style which is truly indigenous, yet both structurally possible and suitable for the function of a Christian church.

In addition to the consideration of form appropriate to function there is the economic problem. Butler states that Christianity will not survive in modern Africa and the East unless the local churches become financially self-supporting.<sup>2</sup> This cannot be done with a heavy burden of building upon them. Even where cultural sensitivity permits use of more elaborate than local forms, economic factors may forbid. Regardless of other issues, the economic problem is of importance in any decisions of architectural form.

## 2. In Other Visual Arts

### a. The Immaturity of Indigenous Christian Art

Indigenous art is still in its infancy.<sup>3</sup> The amount of local Christian art in existence is small compared to the extent of mission work carried on in the world. In China Christian art is further advanced than in most other lands in the East, yet even there it was reported that "there is no widespread public for the works of Chinese painters even within the church itself, and none outside it."<sup>4</sup>

. . . . .

1. Wiant, op. cit., p. 192.

2. Cf. Butler, p. 374.

3. Cf. Fleming, Each With His Own Brush, p. 4.

4. Ibid.



**MARY MAGDALENE** weeping at Christ's feet is watercolor in Oriental style by Indian Frank Wesley.



**ST. PETER AND COCK**, crowing when he denied Christ, was work of West African Bruno Hountouaji.



Dr. Y.Y. Tsu, the chairman of the Church Art Society in Nanking, is quoted as saying further that:

The works so far produced are little better than what is known among connoisseurs as 'artisan' grade, and mainly intended for pedagogic purposes in religious education. When an outstanding Chinese artist who has an independently established name turns his energy and attention to the development of Christian themes,<sup>1</sup> then Chinese Christian art will receive recognition as art.

It is only natural that the development of a Christian art in cultures of non-Christian tradition be slow. Not until there is a strong spiritual foundation will there be outward expression of real life.<sup>2</sup>

In India there have been attempts to encourage Christian Indian art and attempts have been made to give one or two Indian Christian artists a world fame. Butler states, however, that a comparison of their work with that of Tagore's great Bengal Hindu renaissance shows that they really fall short of that standard.<sup>3</sup>

In Mexico it is reported that Roman Catholic pictures are of distinctly Spanish or European style. The Protestant church felt it necessary to eliminate all religious art at first and as yet has produced nothing noteworthy in non-European style.<sup>4</sup> Fleming reports that from the Philippines, Korea, Siam and Hawaii there have been no encouraging efforts in indigenous Christian painting.<sup>5</sup>

1. Ibid.

2. Cf. France, op. cit., p. 326.

3. Cf. Butler, op. cit., p. 389.

4. Cf. Fleming, Each With His Own Brush, p. 5.

5. Ibid.

Causes of this backwardness are varied. Fleming analyzes the reasons as follows:

Most art has been the product of stable and independent civilizations; societies strained by the impact of modern industrialism and by Western civilization are distinctly handicapped. Art is generally fostered by the wealthy and the learned; but the Christian communities are not wealthy and, in general, do not contain many men and women versed in the higher art and culture of their respective countries. As one thinks of relatively small Christian communities, pressed upon by pervasive non-Christian environments, one finds another reason in the fact that great periods of art have been the expression of their times. These great periods have embodied not the dreams of individuals but the hopes of a nation; they have been nourished and inspired by tides of thought and emotion. How different the whole milieu which conditions the struggling Christian minorities! We must acknowledge, also, that Christianity has been mediated by men and women who, however highly equipped with the culture of their Western lands, in many cases have not been deeply acquainted with, or alas, even concerned about, the indigenous culture of the lands to which they go.<sup>1</sup>

The immaturity of indigenous Christian art has led some to lack confidence in the possible values of indigenous expression. Yet as the Christian church itself matures there will be spontaneous expression in art as well as in all other languages of praise. That the Christian faith be expressed indigenously is necessary to the growth of the church. The spiritual growth of the church is in turn necessary to a mature indigenous Christian art.

b. The Economic Obstacle Faced by Young Artists

The economic obstacle met by artists who would like to devote their whole time and effort to the work is very real. Indigenous art is needed by the churches yet an individual artist may meet serious economic limitations in his work.

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1. Ibid., p. 6.

Butler reports that in India there are several encouraging efforts to provide funds to promote both the production and the publication of Indian Christian pictures. Yet even there money is sadly lacking for an attempt to develop a desired art press at Mysore to turn out inexpensive but good Christian pictures for the home, posters for evangelism and illustrations for books.<sup>1</sup>

A market for the pictures produced by Christian artists is needed in order to solve the economic problem. Fleming suggests that the West can help the younger churches in a practical way by providing a market for this new art.<sup>2</sup>

#### c. Mixed Cultural Backgrounds in a Christian Community

In some areas the fact that the Christian church is made up of individuals of differing cultural backgrounds sometimes makes the development of indigenous Christian art difficult. This is true in sections of India where Moslem converts retain a horror of any representation of the Savior and those of Hindu background are sensitive about any of the traditional Hindu art forms since they embody Hindu philosophy.

There is also a conflict in some places between the Roman Catholic encouragement of abundant use of art forms and the Protestant discouragement of the use of art in worship.

#### F. Summary

This chapter has presented the problems encountered in attempts

1. Cf. Butler, op. cit., p. 389.

2. Cf. Fleming, Each With His Own Brush, p. 6.

that have been made to adapt indigenous forms to the Christian cultus. On the part of the missionary there is commonly a lack of recognition of the values in indigenous cultures. This is based on an almost unavoidable attitude of Western superiority. Theological dangers which make adaptation difficult were examined. There is danger that adapted forms will so savor of paganism that there will be retrogression into idolatry. There is also danger even in absence of pagan associations that the literal-mindedness of converts will lead to the more subtle kind of idolatry, a trust in external forms rather than in that to which the art form seeks to direct attention. Religious syncretism is another danger. This has been an issue especially in India. It was seen also that care must be taken to avoid superficiality in making adaptations. Adaptation should not be forced in the name of indigenization. There must be careful consideration of all issues involved. Spiritual keenness is a requisite in dealing with adaptation.

There are psychological barriers to adaptation of art forms. On the one hand there is a barrier against all forms which are associated with paganism. This leads to taking refuge in Western art forms. This preference for Western forms in turn becomes a barrier to indigenization.

Practical problems in adaptation were considered and it was seen that it becomes very difficult to copy indigenous styles in building, and yet use form which is in keeping with the function of the Christian church building. In the plastic arts a discouraging factor is the immaturity of Christian art. The indigenous church will produce a more mature art when there has been a deepening of spiritual life and a solution to some of the economic problems faced. Some communities

have the added problem of mixed cultural elements within the church.

The necessity for great caution and the existence of these difficult problems may make adaptation seem inadvisable. There is no easy way out, however. Adaptation must be faced.

CHAPTER III

SUGGESTED STANDARDS IN EVALUATING ART FORMS AND MOTIFS OF THE INDIGENOUS  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

### CHAPTER III

## SUGGESTED STANDARDS IN EVALUATING ART FORMS AND MOTIFS OF THE INDIGENOUS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

### A. Introduction

This chapter will present suggestions for standards to be used in evaluating the art forms and motifs of the indigenous church. These standards will be developed from the principles basic to adaptation of art forms and motifs and will seek to meet the problems that were seen to exist when adaptations are attempted.

### B. Must Express Biblical Christian Truth

It is the aim of all adaptation and hence adaptation of art forms and motifs to present the essential truths of Biblical Christianity. This aim should be kept clearly in mind. Western civilization is not to be identified with Christianity.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand the approach which tries to build bridges by assuming Christianity to be merely the crown of the best in the non-Christian religions is also wrong.<sup>2</sup> It overlooks the radical difference between Christian revelation and the other religions. As Kraemer adequately expresses it:

. . . Christianity is no religious philosophy with a theistic God-idea, but a religion that proclaims the God and Father of Jesus Christ as the sole and absolutely trustworthy Lord of life, to whom alone allegiance is due. God is proclaimed as the Eternal

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1. Cf. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 285.

2. Ibid., p. 301.

and not recommended as the most satisfying conception of God, which is the end of religious philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

If art forms and motifs faithfully express the Christian revelation they will avoid idolatry, syncretism or superficiality.

#### 1. Avoid Idolatry

New life in Christ is itself the best safeguard against slipping back into pagan idolatry. It has already been seen that groups that have experienced this new birth and new life do not desire any reminders of past idolatry.<sup>2</sup> It is suggested that it is best in all cases to avoid using art forms or adaptations that are so reminiscent of pagan idolatry as to call to mind to the Christian convert the power that was once felt to be there.

In avoiding the more subtle idolatry of estheticism or the idolatry of Roman Catholicism the use of visual arts must constantly be evaluated in light of such warnings as Bevan's:

Any discussion of symbolism in connection with religion must make it plain that, whereas, on the one side, religion cannot dispense with symbols for its apprehension and expression, there is, on the other side, a constant liability for the mind to catch in the accidents of the symbol and so confuse, instead of furthering, its approach to reality. There is no kind of symbol in regard to which this liability may seem to be more signally exhibited than the pictorial or plastic images which have been so conspicuous an element in the worship of nearly all religions.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to these cautions in using visual arts it is suggested that those who would help the indigenous church find vital expressions in art of their living faith should understand the mind of the national Christian and the nature of the religion which formed his

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1. Ibid., p. 300.
2. Cf. Ante., p. 35.
3. Bevan, Holy Images, p. 13.



concepts. The literal-mindedness common to heathen people should be remembered. For example, it is pointed out by Vincent Masasi in The Church Overseas that Africans in some places regard pictures as photographic reproductions made at the time of what actually took place.<sup>1</sup> A tendency to think in literal rather than abstract terms is very significant in seeking a use of art forms which inspires devotion and instructs yet does not lead to a danger of idolatry but rather avoids idolatry.

## 2. Avoid Religious Syncretism

In avoiding religious syncretism there must be the kind of approach made which does not blur the fact that there is only difference and antithesis between Christianity and the non-Christian religions.<sup>2</sup> This does not mean, however, that missions must use the blunt aggressive controversial approach that has been of limited effect in missionary history. The reaction to this approach has often gone to the extreme in identifying Christianity as the crowning goal to which the best thought in non-Christian religions has almost climbed.<sup>3</sup> This extreme approach must be recognized as untrue to the essential nature of Christianity and in danger of syncretism. In discovering an approach which is true to Christian character and to the Christian message Kraemer points to the New Testament example. He says:

Paul and John in their day expressed and formulated the essential meaning and content of the revelation in Christ against the background of, and in conflict with, the moralistic and legalistic conception of religion in Judaism, and with the naturalistic and

. . . . .

1. Cf. Vincent Masasi: The Arts in the Mission Field: Africa, The Church Overseas, 1931, Vol. 4, p. 20.
2. Cf. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 300.
3. Ibid., p. 301.

gnostic mysticism of the pagan of that time. So it is obvious and legitimate that Christian truth must be at present expressed against the background of, and in conflict with the moral and religious content of the non-Christian religion. Here we touch the problem of adaptation at its deepest point. Adaptation in the deepest sense does not mean to assimilate the cardinal facts of the revelation in Christ as much as possible to fundamental religious ideas and tastes of the pre-Christian past, but to express these facts by wrestling with them concretely, and so to present the Christian truth and reveal at the same time the intrinsic inadequacy of man's religious efforts for the solution of his crucial religious and moral problems. The New Testament, especially in the Synoptists and in the writings of Paul and John, is the unsurpassed document of this deep adaptation and so is our indispensable model.<sup>1</sup>

In wrestling with the facts concretely the New Testament writers used the terminology and modes of expression of their own time. Paul uses Judaistic terms in discussing the Law and the Gospel. He uses the terminology of the naturalist and sacramental mysticisms of the mystery-religions and thereby forcefully expresses the opposite character of Christian revelation.<sup>2</sup> Kraemer points out that the New Testament writers were not consciously occupied with either making contrasts or building bridges, but were entirely absorbed in expressing the truth.<sup>3</sup>

It is suggested that inasmuch as the gospel must be expressed to any people in their own familiar terminology if it is to be understood in its deepest significance the indigenous church can also safely use its own familiar terminology of art forms. It remains true, of course, that art forms which involve a danger of syncretism must be avoided. It is possible, however, to use art forms characteristic of

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1. Ibid., p. 308.
2. Ibid., p. 310.
3. Ibid., p. 311.

a race or nation and yet avoid syncretism. The Christian art of China is an example. It is said to be both truly Chinese, and truly Christian.<sup>1</sup> It is suggested that to be aware of the dangers but absorbed in expressing the truth is the best safeguard.

It has been previously mentioned that Hinduism welcomes the life of Christ portrayed as part of the Indian scene.<sup>2</sup> The timeless effect created fits in well with Hindu syncretism. The church must be aware of such dangers as this. No weakening of the historicity of Scripture is to be desired. This does not deny a valid place for Christian Indian art. Pictorial art may be truly Indian, yet not deny in any way that these events took place in first century Palestine. India's problem will not necessarily be true in other countries. When the Italian masters painted Christ as an Italian, and the Dutch painters made Him Dutch and the English painted Him as English this did not in any way involve syncretism or weaken the historical aspect of the Christian message. It is well, however, for the indigenous church to be aware of dangers in this direction.

Harmonization and accommodation must not be the motives of adaptation. This would be wrong indigenization. Yet, vital Christianity in any country can use the heritage existing there provided the impelling motive is to express the gospel in its invariable essence.<sup>3</sup> Adaptation does not mean that Christianity is to be combined with the non-Christian heritage, but that Christianity is to be expressed through these

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1. Cf. Butler, op. cit., p. 377.
2. Cf. Ante., p. 37.
3. Cf. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 421.

different heritages. This can be done without tending toward religious syncretism.

### 3. Superficiality

The best safeguard against superficiality in adaptation is a vital Christian faith. The witness of the Spirit in the hearts of even young believers whose experience is real can be trusted to sense what is inappropriate and dangerous in adaptation of art forms.

In avoiding superficiality it is suggested that adaptation be never forced. This would be psychologically poor and probably an indication of deeper problems. Missionaries should not seek adaptations merely for their own sake or because of a sentimental appreciation of older customs. It must always be the purpose of adaptation to translate Christian revelation into indigenous terms. Any other motives are superficial.

Missionaries who are alert to this phase of indigenization need great love for the people with whom they work. Love which is real and practical is necessary in order that there be that kind of self-denial needed to transpose one's self creatively into the spiritual and social reality of another cultural background. Only Christ's love is sufficient for this task.

#### C. Must Be Truly Indigenous

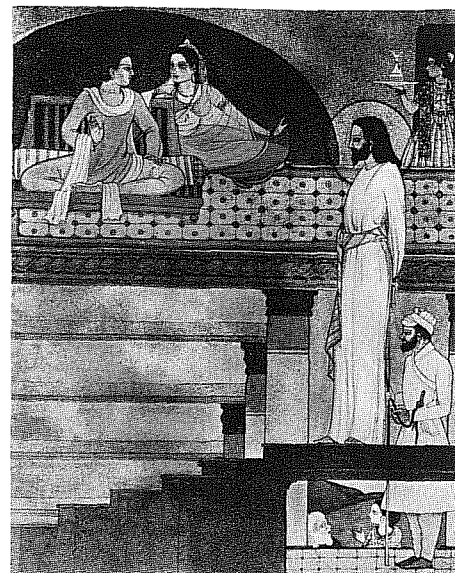
It is the aim of adaptation of art forms and motifs that there be a genuine translation of Christianity into indigenous forms. Genuine translation requires both a thorough grasp of what Christian truth is and of the material in which it is to be expressed.<sup>1</sup> Man has

1. Ibid., p. 323.

WHY NOT TAKE THE ARTIST  
OUT OF HIS STUDIO  
AND INTO OUR CHURCHES

While it is "nice" to see pretty color reproductions of religious subject matter, it would be far more effective to ask these artists to decorate our churches. A wall is more of a challenge than a small canvas!

Paintings by Angela Trindade, one of India's foremost religious artists.



"... suffered under Pontius Pilate"  
by Angelo da Fonseca.

given expression to his religious needs and aspirations in many rich and varied ways. These modes of expression have a right to exist. No Christian community should be pressed into a foreign mold. The West has starved art. It has almost divorced art from religion. This need not happen in the East. Europe must look to its past to find religion and art glorifying God together, but the Church in the Orient and Africa are just beginning to bring to the Christian faith the native genius of artist and craftsman who recognise in their skill their vocation to serve God. Their world is hostile to the gospel, but not as the West, gospel hardened. Pictures of Christ's early life, his birth, death and resurrection are vital. They are not sentimental or unrelated to life as is often the case in the West. The standard should determine whether it is a true expression of vital Christianity, not whether it reflects Western Protestantism. Kraemer says:

...the indigenous has the right to be considered seriously and sympathetically as the vehicle of life-expression before any other possible vehicle. Just as a man expresses himself best in his own language, however many other languages he may master, so communities and social groupings express their life best in forms congenial to their temperament and tradition, better than by the imposition of alien forms. The criterion for adoption or rejection lies in whether it serves to express or to frustrate, and this criterion applies alike to indigenous forms and methods and to alien.<sup>1</sup>

In encouraging a truly indigenous expression in Christian art the psychological barriers must be dealt with wisely, and on the positive side much use can be made of the creative force of nationalism.

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 421.

## 1. Overcome Psychological Barriers

### a. Avoid Pagan Associations

In Protestant missions the problem of art forms with pagan associations will be found more in architecture and in certain symbols than in pictorial art. Artists whose Christian experience is real would not be inclined to use forms that savor of paganism.

In discovering appropriate ways to adapt indigenous architecture for Christian use it is seen that the problems are very complex. The best solution seems to be simplicity.

For church groups who desire more symbolism there may be a necessity in some cases to wait until new symbols grow out of the local culture, which are not associated with any non-Christian religion. Examples of these are found in Fleming's book, Christian Symbols in a World Community. In India there is a crest which pictures the banyan tree whose branches have a way of dropping roots to the ground so that the branches extend widely in all directions--a symbol of the missionary expansion of the church. In China the steep ascent of a mountain path is used to portray the Christian life.<sup>1</sup> A vital Christianity can be trusted to find ways to express its faith visually.

### b. Avoid a Meaningless Preference for Western Forms

The majority of Christians throughout Asia and Africa are satisfied in complacently using Western forms. Nationalism is doing more than anything else recently to awaken the churches in Africa and Asia to a desire for art forms more in keeping with their national

. . . . .

1. Cf. Fleming, Christian Symbols in a World Community, p. 6.

heritage. Further solution is that missionaries from the West be careful not to identify their own culture with the eternal validity of the gospel. Kraemer is very emphatic in his statements about this matter:

It is a truly remarkable and pathetic fact that those who are the champions of the eternal and absolute validity of the Gospel perpetrate so easily the fatal mistake of raising the relative historical expression, the earthen vessel, to the status of the absolute divine act and gift. It is one of the most subtle forms of idolatry.<sup>1</sup>

Great self-denial is needed to give up one's own modes of expression and think in conformity to another cultural background. Kraemer remarks in all fairness that such faculty is very rare all over the world.<sup>2</sup> Christian missionaries need to present the truth of the gospel in such a way that it need not be linked with Western forms. To do this, in addition to self-denial, they must possess a real humility. From the standpoint of culture this is possible when one views Western history realistically. From the standpoint of the individual it is possible in view of the gospel which gives the believer the status of a forgiven sinner.<sup>3</sup>

The missionary enterprise has recognized more and more in recent years that no great service is done to the gospel by limiting its expression to Western forms. Western missionaries by their approach can help the indigenous church overcome its tendency to prefer Western art forms and motifs. This is increasingly important in a time when hatred of the West is growing in many countries of the world.

. . . . .

1. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 315.
2. Ibid., p. 316.
3. Ibid., p. 286.



## 2. Make Use of the Creative Force of Nationalism

Nationalism is one of the most powerful forces in the world today. It has been seen that it is hastening the indigenization of the church in many parts of the world. A thought-provoking suggestion was made by Ruth Paxson four years ago, shortly before she went to be with the Lord. She said: "Be on the lookout for a rise in intense nationalism all over the world. We must harness this force and use it for God's glory."<sup>1</sup>

The church should not allow the emphasis on national heritage to hinder its growth, but rather must find ways to use it in establishing Christianity as indigenous. It is clear that indigenous expression through art forms and motifs is central in this attempt.

Kraemer states that the church is always in a state of crisis and that its greatest shortcoming is that it is only occasionally aware of it.<sup>2</sup> The church must not be blind to the present crisis.

### D. Must Be Practical

#### 1. Adapted to the Function of Christian Art Forms

Whatever indigenous styles are found to be appropriate models for Christian architecture, they must be suitable for corporate worship. It may take a long time to develop an architecture which is suitable for Christian purposes and at the same time truly national. A successful beginning has been made in many places. In Ceylon there have been some

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1. Joseph Kenny: Ruth Paxson's Advice, His, March 1954, p. 32.

2. Cf. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 24.

remarkable experiments in using the building type borrowed from the audience hall of the Kandyan kings.<sup>1</sup> Using styles of secular origin rather than temple architecture has much to recommend it in some places where the religious architecture involves problems both of pagan associations and non-adaptability to corporate worship. Fleming in his book, Christian Symbols in a World Community, gives examples from India, China, Japan, and Africa of successful adaptation in Christian architecture.

At the present time there is a movement toward simplicity as a means of using basic indigenous patterns yet allowing freedom, Christian function and expression. Even Roman Catholic missionaries are calling for minimum of decoration but a basic design allowing for a variety of national motifs.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Adapted to Local Materials

If the church is to become self supporting, architectural styles must use materials that are available locally if possible and that are within the economic possibilities of the church.

Butler makes these practical suggestions about India. Do not use Gothic technique whose logical conclusion is the stone skeleton, but rather, until a suitable national Christian style has developed, use interim styles such as neo-Byzantine, neo Lombardic and modern. These styles are more practical since they make use of wall-mass, which suits the use of concrete. These styles also blend easily with the Eastern

. . . . .

1. Cf. Butler, op. cit., p. 377.
2. Cf. Karl Malte Heinz: Religious Architecture in India, Liturgical Arts, November 1953, p. 27.

scene and lend themselves to the introduction of Indian motifs.<sup>1</sup>

In many places in Africa one will find no suitable local style to copy; but something like Western modernistic style would be both appropriate in appearance to the local scene and have possibilities as far as local materials are concerned. In its use there should be more roundness in conformity to the native homes than the usual modern style would allow.<sup>2</sup> In some parts of Africa examples of successful adaptations of the hut-form can be found.

### 3. Adapted to the Various Needs of the Indigenous Church

#### a. In Christian Education

Pictorial art, symbols, and other visual aids should be appropriate to the educational needs of the indigenous church. The art should use that mode of expression which will convey the message most effectively to the national mind. A foreign realism in art would not be effective in speaking to those who understand through symbolic implication. The experience of missionaries in some parts of Africa has shown that very good art might be completely ineffective because its mode of expression is entirely foreign. Missionaries working among villages where there has been little contact with the outside world have often reported experiences of using Western pictures which people have attentively stared at for a long time and then suddenly recognized a tree or a man and have thereupon become frightened thinking the picture to be magic. Photographic realism in pictorial art is outside

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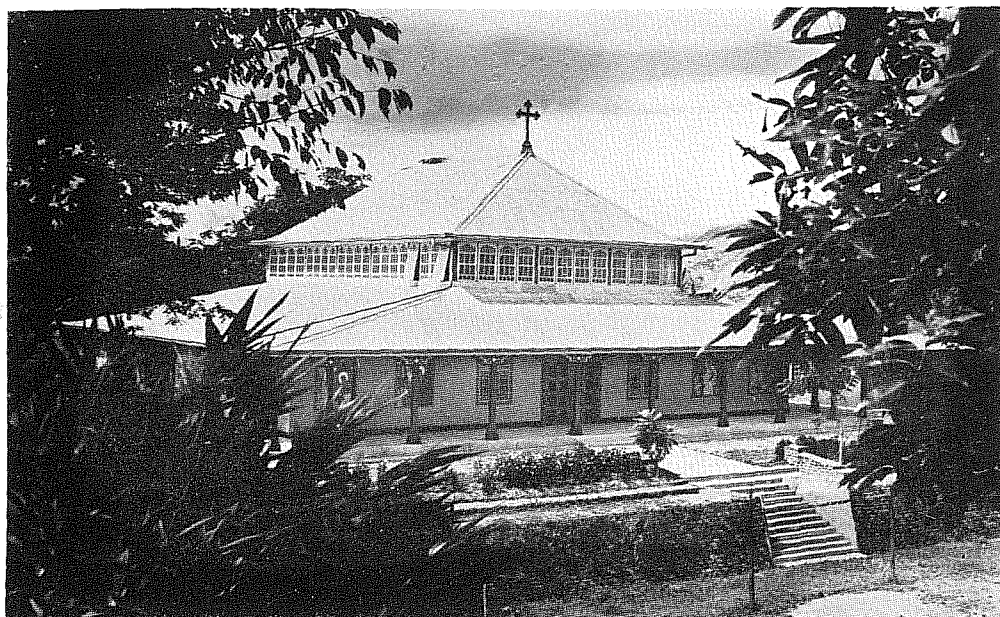
1. Ibid., p. 388.

2. Ibid., p. 378.

the comprehension of some people. Generally speaking, in adapting pictures to be used with primitive people the pictures should be very simple, with few figures. Pictures with many figures are confusing and the message of the picture is lost.

Pictures should involve experiences within the comprehension of nationals. It is also important for the educational use of illustrations of Bible stories that they be true to important details. Few Western painters for example have painted "The Last Supper" showing the disciples reclining at the table. It is suggested that adaptation to indigenous dress and custom not overbalance a healthy recognition of Biblical detail. Western art almost always gives wings to angels although this is not Biblical. This has been copied by the Christian art of the East as is seen in Plates III and VIII. Visual art should have a positive message that it may be used effectively in teaching. Pictures which portray an ideal to be emulated are effective in influencing conduct.

The indigenous church should strive to provide inexpensive reproductions of national Christian art where it exists in order that it may be available for teachers. In India there is a growing effort in this direction. In the Philippines the National Christian Council has recently sponsored a series of posters on stewardship which are done in indigenous style and are to be made available to the churches. In Africa there will be a real problem in developing an indigenous pictorial art for educational purposes. African art is largely carving of figures or painting of designs. In Japan a few Christian artists have produced work which may be used very effectively in education.



CHURCH OF  
SAINT TERESA  
KALIMPONG IN  
THE FOOTHILLS OF  
THE HIMALAYAS

b. In the Home

Christian pictures have a real ministry in the home. They can build an atmosphere, stimulate interest and devotion, furnish incentives for right conduct, and make vivid and lasting impressions on the children growing up. Lois E. LeBar illustrates the effectiveness of a picture in a home.

In a certain family there were five sons, all of whom became sailors. As one after another of the growing boys showed a decided preference for the life of the sea, the mother was perplexed and somewhat disappointed. One day a visitor in the home pointed at a picture on the wall and exclaimed, "What a beautiful picture you have there!" The painting showed a sailing vessel riding the waves, the sun's rays reflected on her silver sheets. Then came the realization of the truth that the picture had been responsible for her sons' decisions.<sup>1</sup>

Very little has been done so far in making inexpensive prints available for home use. This is an important area which needs attention. Color-loving people should not have to resort to pagan motifs to decorate their homes. One way the West might help materially is to provide a market for reproductions of good indigenous art, thereby encouraging both artist and publisher.

c. As Illustrations for Christian Literature

As Christian literature increases in Africa and in the East there will be a greater demand for appropriate illustrations. This will in turn help develop a growing appreciation for indigenous Christian art. Art can be very effective in reinforcing the message in words to newly literate people.

. . . . .

1. Lois E. LeBar: Children in the Bible School, p. 267.

### E. Summary

Suggestions have been made as to possible standards to be used in evaluating the art forms and motifs of the indigenous Christian church. These standards were based on the study of the principles basic to adaptation of art forms and motifs and the examination of the problems that are met when adaptations are attempted.

These suggestions are first that the adaptations in art forms must express Biblical Christian truth. They cannot encourage idolatry, either the idolatry of paganism or the idolatry which in Christian worship tends to attach supernatural significance to the material object. The indigenous art forms must avoid religious syncretism. The kind of approach to the non-Christian which aims primarily to harmonize and accommodate leads easily to syncretism in theology. The impelling motive must always be to express the gospel in its invariable essence. Superficiality was seen to involve theological dangers which are avoided if those who seek to help the church in making adaptations in art have spiritual maturity and possess the love of Christ which alone makes possible the self-denial of transposing one's self creatively into another cultural background.

Secondly, the adaptations in art must be truly indigenous. The modes of expression characteristic to a race or nation are valid means of expression and should be used. The indigenous may not always be best, but has the right to be considered first. The problems of pagan associations and an already existing though superficial preference for Western forms are not easily solved, yet it is ultimately both possible

and necessary that they be solved. On the positive side it is suggested that the creative force of nationalism be used for the advancement of the indigenous church.

Finally, the adapted forms must be practical. The form must be suitable for the function. A Christian church must be indigenous in style, yet it must suit a function which is perhaps foreign to any local style, that of corporate worship. A Christian church must look at home in pagan surroundings, yet it must look Christian. Indigenous Christian architecture should use the materials at hand wherever possible. This is important in view of the economic problems of the church which is striving to become self-supporting. Indigenous art must be adapted to the various needs of the indigenous church. Pictorial art and visual symbols must be appropriate for Christian education. This involves using the familiar mode of expression. Pictures should involve experiences within the comprehension of nationals. Pictures which influence conduct are effective for educational purposes and also for use in the home. Biblical illustrations should be true as much as possible to Biblical custom, although adaptation to indigenous custom is to be expected and is good where there is no danger of clouding historical fact. It is very important to the development of indigenous art that inexpensive reproductions be made available locally for use in church school and home. There will also be a growing need in many countries for illustrations in Christian literature for newly literate people.



CHAPTER IV  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### A. Summary

It has been the purpose of this study to investigate the principles and problems of the adaptation of art forms and motifs to the indigenous Christian church under the missionary enterprise and make suggestions for standards for evaluation.

In chapter one a study was made of the principles involved in the use of art in the Christian cultus. It was found that art has a different relationship to Christianity than it has had to pagan religions. Art in Christianity can never be permitted to be an end in itself. Christianity is a spiritual religion and the function of the material object can only be to direct attention and awaken response to the spiritual. Art is important to the Christian church because it is a human characteristic that the concrete is needed to enable us to comprehend the abstract. The material object has the function of conditioning consciousness. Christian art is symbolic, in the broad sense of the word, because it necessarily must point beyond itself to the spiritual. When art becomes decoration or surrounded with superstitious significance it is a danger to the Christian church. Because of the extreme measures that were necessary during the Reformation to bring the church back to a Biblical view regarding worship, the Protestant church has retained a great deal of caution in using visual

symbols. This caution has a positive contribution on the mission field. It also has a negative result when prejudice rather than discrimination is used in determining the role of visual arts in the indigenous churches. It was seen that adaptation of art forms and motifs is necessary if the indigenous church is to make a valid use of art. It is basic to art and symbolism that it must speak in familiar terms or not be understood. Art which is used but not understood is a danger point to the church. From an individual standpoint young Christian communities need the freedom of using their own art as a means of expressing their new-found faith. From a national standpoint the church must escape the label "foreign religion". Communism and Nationalism are two worldwide forces which make indigenization of the Christian church imperative in every phase including art forms and motifs.

When adaptations are attempted problems are encountered which are of such importance that they must be thought through carefully by all who would help the church find indigenous means of expression. Problems with serious theological implications are the danger of idolatry, religious syncretism, and the danger of a superficial approach to adaptation. Other problems are the psychological barriers such as pagan associations that surround the familiar art forms and the superficial preference that new Christians often have for Western art forms. On the practical level there are problems in architecture such as making the form fit the function of a Christian church. In pictorial art a great hindrance is the fact that the Christian art of Africa and the East is still immature. There is an economic obstacle faced by

young artists who wish to devote their talents to the Lord. Also, there is a financial problem in establishing facilities to publish prints of good Christian art and illustrations for Christian literature. Mixed cultural backgrounds in a Christian community make additional problems, especially in India where Christians of Hindu and of Moslem backgrounds must work together. Each group has its own problems in adaptation of art forms.

In suggesting standards for evaluating the art forms and motifs of the indigenous church both the problems involved and the principles basic to adaptation of art forms were taken into account. It was suggested that indigenous art must first of all express Biblical Christian truth. Therefore any tendencies toward idolatry, syncretism or superficiality must be avoided. Leaders dealing with these problems must be motivated by the compulsion to express the gospel in its invariable essence. Harmonization and accommodation lead only to wrong indigenization.

Secondly, adaptation should result in art forms that are truly indigenous. It was suggested that although indigenous forms are not always best they have the right to be considered first. The psychological barriers of pagan associations surrounding indigenous forms and the prevailing prejudice for Western art forms are problems which must be overcome. They must not be allowed to be excuses for failing to attempt indigenization of art forms.

Finally, the art forms of the indigenous church must be practical. They must be adapted to the necessary functions of Christian art. The Christian church buildings must use indigenous models yet

suit the function of Christian corporate worship. Local materials should be used wherever possible. Pictorial arts and visual symbols must be adapted to the various needs of the Christian church. They must be appropriate for Christian education. It is necessary that they use a mode of expression familiar to nationals. They must picture incidents within the experience of the national Christians. Since pictures are very instrumental in forming the concepts of people who do not read it is important that illustrations of Bible stories be true to details. This calls for a discriminating balance between using indigenous dress and custom and using Biblical details of custom where it is important in forming right concepts. In order that pictorial art may be practical it must be available to teachers and for use in homes. This calls for a program of publishing inexpensive reproductions that can be made available to all classes of people. That national Christian art be widely used is very important in developing appreciation for art and discovering latent talent which in turn will help the church create a mature Christian art.

#### B. Conclusion

The emphasis increasingly given to adaptation of art forms and motifs for use in the indigenous church is a very important phase of indigenization. It is urged that much thoughtful attention and prayer be given in seeking solution to the problems presented. Those leaders of greatest insight who attempt to deal with this problem do not offer confident solutions. The problem is extremely complicated and involves national psychology. It is necessary to conclude that missionaries will

never be able to solve the problem. It can only be solved eventually from within the nation itself. Butler suggests that the solution will not come in our time. The present generation of nationals are too much involved in the tension to heal it.<sup>1</sup> The creation of good adaptations in indigenous Christian art will take either a great deal of time, as it did in the beginning of Western history, or the work of an exceptional genius. In the meantime an interim policy must strive to fulfill the practical needs of the indigenous church, decrease political suspicion and psychological disintegration.<sup>2</sup>

The real problem is not in using art forms that have heretofore expressed the philosophies of non-Christian cultures but the problem is how to use them. Kraemer says in this respect:

To avoid expressing the Christian message courageously (as the New Testament did) in the terminology developed in the different religious heritages of the concrete world in which one lives, is to despise the natural medium. It also ignores the fundamental rule in spiritual life, that if the Christians are really converted their minds will bend these inadequate and often uncongenial terminologies into tolerable tools, for all terminologies in the world need conversion and filling with new content if they are really to serve as an expression for the revelation of Biblical realism. This conversion and filling with new content, however, can only issue from the converted mind of the indigenous employers of the terminology.<sup>3</sup>

Anyone who would aid the "indigenous employers" of the terminology of art must count the privilege of interpreting the gospel in a new environment most precious and, according to Kraemer, must have an attitude like Ruth's towards Naomi, which says, "Your problems are my problems."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Cf. Butler, op. cit., p. 385.

2. Ibid., p. 387.

3. Kraemer, op. cit., p. 326.

4. Ibid., p. 335.

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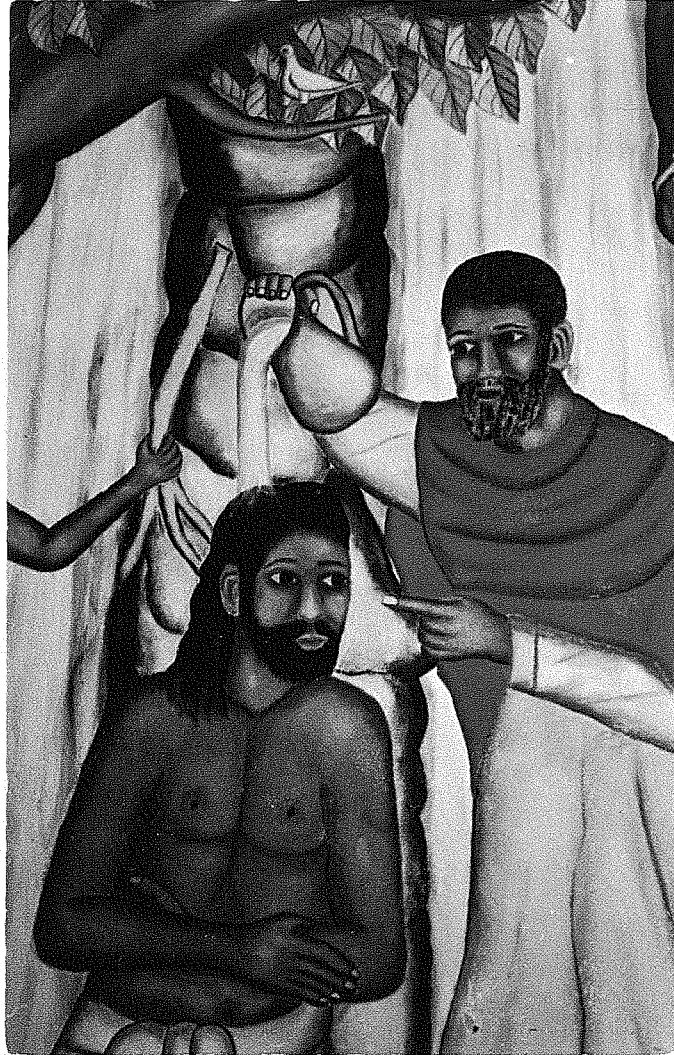
----- "Intermittent Lighting," Time, March 17, 1952.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

MURALS AT PORT-AU PRINCE  
AN EXAMPLE OF PROBLEMS IN  
ADAPTATIONS



## Intermittent Lightning

For centuries, Haiti has been all but barren of art, but today it burgeons with earnest and wonderfully original painters. Their greatest accomplishment: the embellishing of the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral at Port-au-Prince with murals, some of which are reproduced on the opposite page.

The murals are painted in the artists' own terms—those of a Negro people with a hungry, vine-choked, voodoo-ridden way of life. Their work is not purely religious because no art ever is. The radiance of God and the saints can be pictured only through the dark windows of human experience.

Highbrow tourists have praised the murals to the skies; many local churchgoers are bewildered by them. Some of the artists say they are satisfied with their work; a troubled few say, "*C'e pas faute moi* [It's not my fault]."

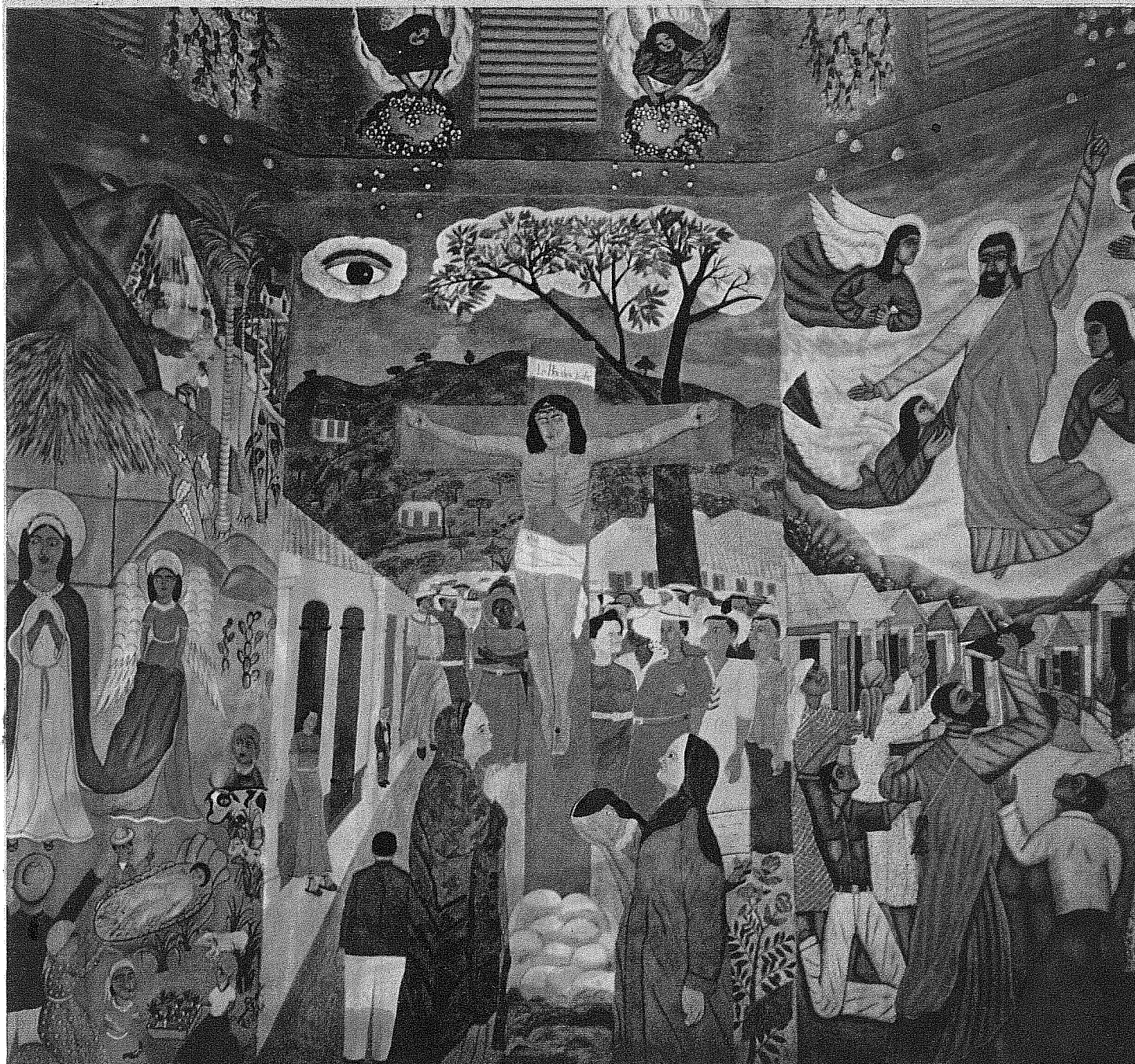
**Sugary Chromos.** Resident Bishop Alfred Voegeli picked the subjects to be painted. Two American directors of Haiti's Centre d'Art, DeWitt Peters and Selden Rodman, assigned and supervised the work. The artists were bound to be influenced by the sugary religious chromos imported from Europe and tacked up in thousands of Haitian homes. Rodman kept insisting that they also incorporate Haitian scenes of the sort they generally paint. The result is an arresting but badly integrated mixture of "pious" and "native" art, made vital by rich colors and the intermittent lightning of individual inspiration.

Rigaud Benoit made the Christ child in his *Nativity* a mulatto out of deference to Rodman, though his personal opinion is that "God is white, and the Devil is black, or else dark red, like Damballa [a voodoo deity]." Philomé Obin prayed every day before going to work on the center panel above the altar, stuck a chromo cliché "Eye of God" in one corner and painted a strangely feminine, death-rigid Christ crucified in a Haitian street. Castera Bazile, the only one of the Haitian muralists with a monumental sense of figure composition, used a similar street scene for his *Ascension*, made his angels look like flower petals in a whirlwind.

**Living Roots.** Some critics call Préfet DuFaut's *Temptation* unconsciously Byzantine; others can see no sign of Christian elements in it. Wilson Bigaud, who attends voodoo rites more often than church, made his *Wedding at Oma* a lively Haitian party dominated by a Christ with a weak, drained face and a mighty hand ("He is praying that the miracle will be a success," Bigaud says). Leontus' *Annunciation*, boldly composed to fill a difficult, wedge-shaped corner, has a full measure of the urgency that marks the cathedral's best murals.

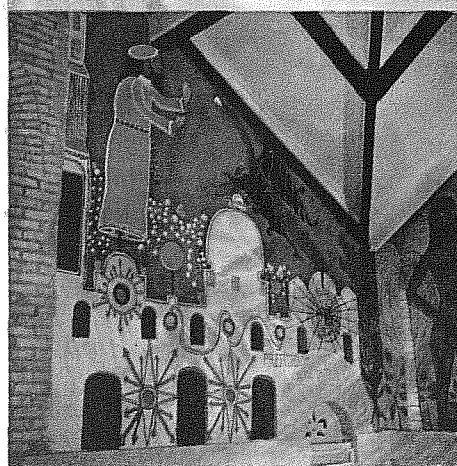
Religious art, like religion itself, has its roots in urgency and its blossoms in serenity. Small serenity may be found in these murals, but the living roots are there. Considering the sorry state of modern religious art, that is a good deal.



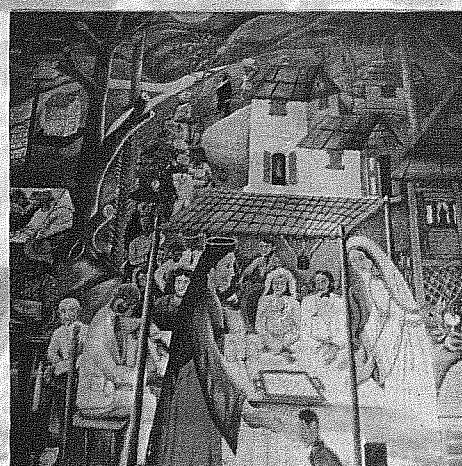


Byron Coroneos

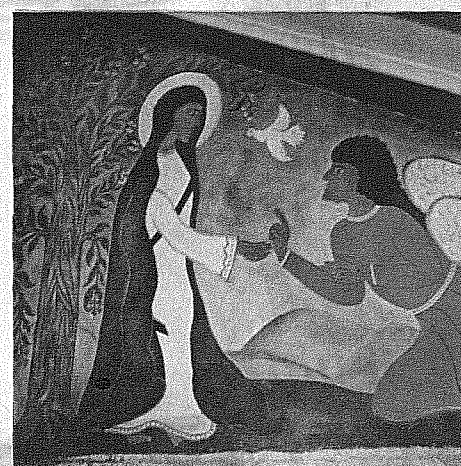
BENOIT'S "NATIVITY," OBIN'S "CRUCIFIXION" & BAZILE'S "ASCENSION" IN HAITI'S PORT-AU-PRINCE EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL



DUFAUT'S "TEMPTATION"



BIGAUD'S "WEDDING AT CANA"



LEONTUS' "ANNUNCIATION"

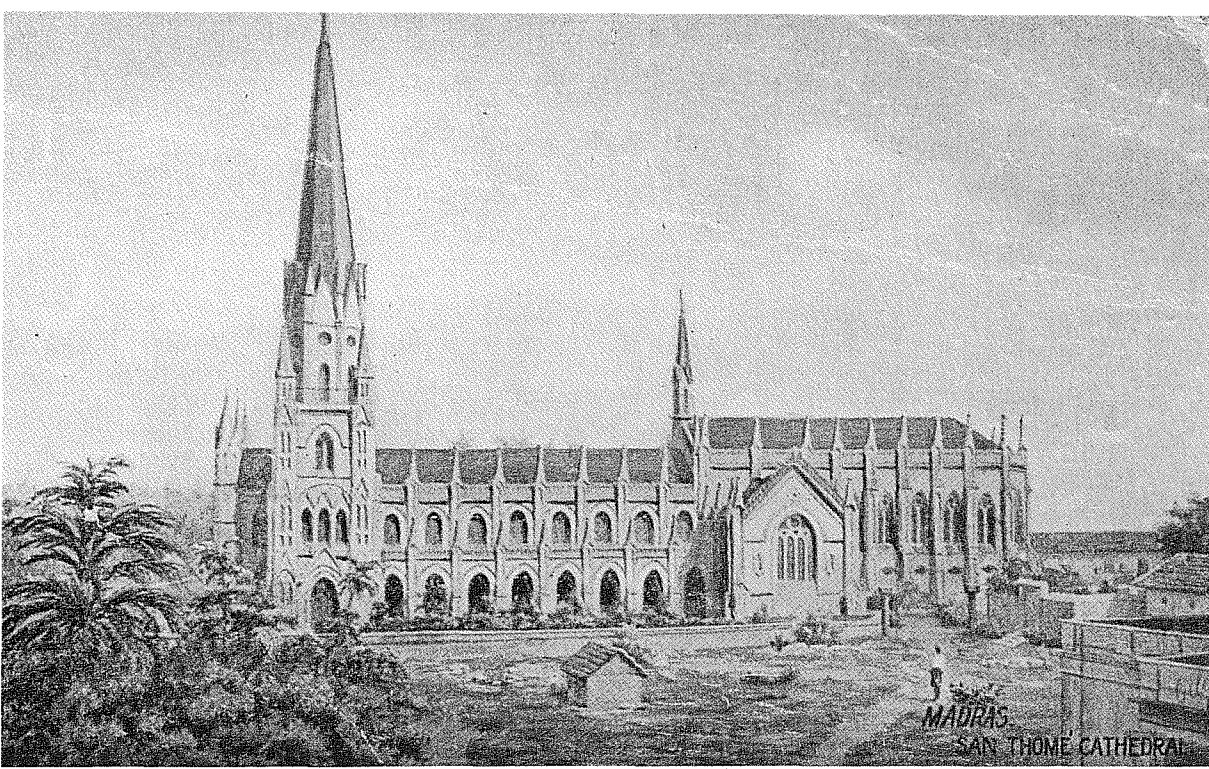
## APPENDIX II

POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE SEEN  
IN ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHITECTURE IN  
INDIA AND PAKISTAN



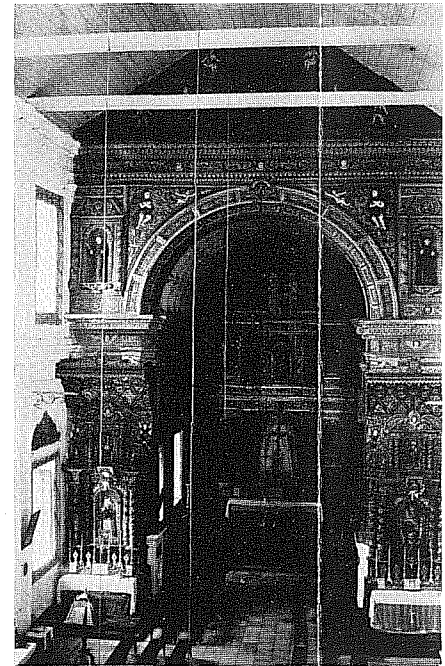
## THE PAST

Hindsight is an easy way out of any argument but it does seem difficult to realize how picture-book gothic was ever thought fitting for India and its climate.

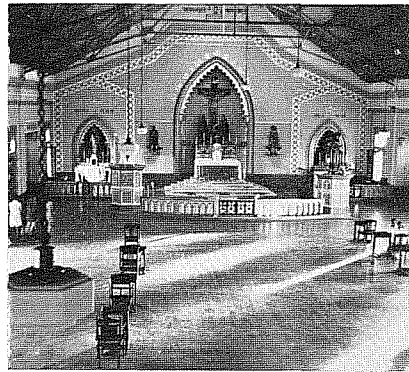


Thomé Cathedral, Madras. The town of San Thomé, now part of Madras, was named by the Portuguese pioneers in honor of Saint Thomas the Apostle to India. A series of memorials of these pioneers will be found in this cathedral which now stands over the tomb of the saint, martyred here, according to tradition, on the twenty-first of December, A.D. 68.

(Below) A Goa-Portuguese church interior. Here the richness of the decoration might have been a foil for the richness and elaborate detail of Indian temples.



(Below) A church at Bettiah, north of Patna, in which adaptation of Indian forms was attempted.

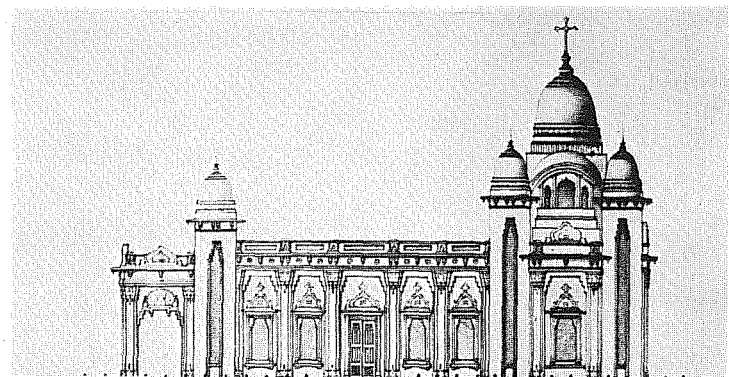
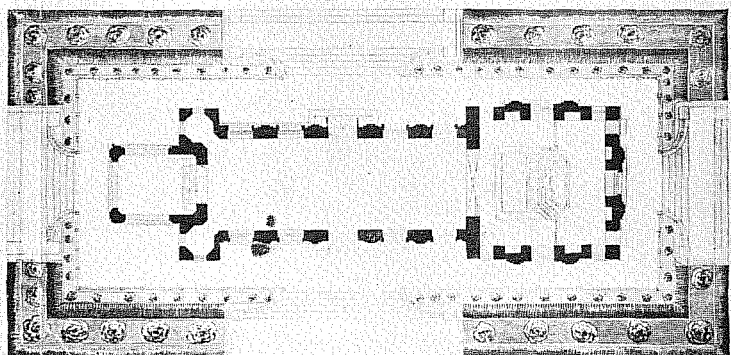


(Above) Interior of the Bettiah church. No comment needed.

The simple charm of these two buildings—(left) Sisters' Convent at Poreya Hat, Patna and (below) the church at Gokhla, Patna district—merge with the Indian landscape. (Photos courtesy of "Jesuit Missions.")

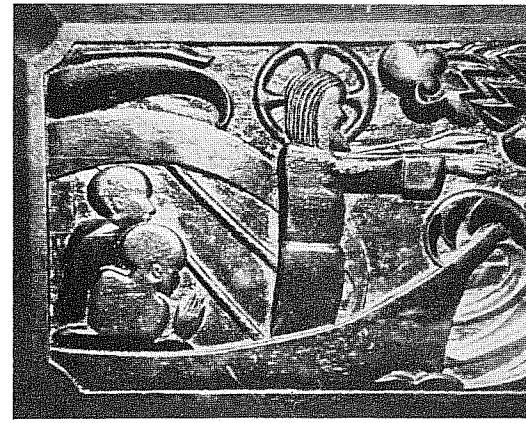




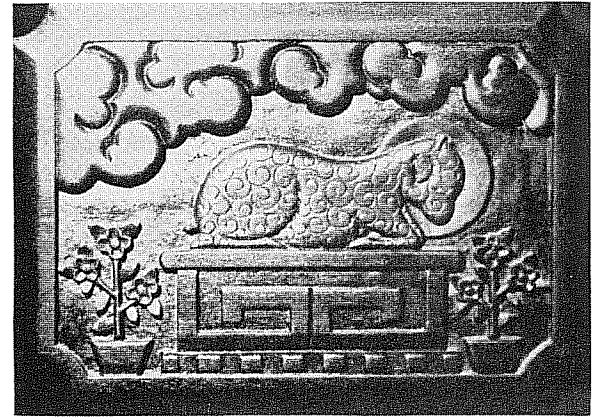




The church of Saint Teresa at Kalimpong was designed by Monsignor Aurelio Gianora, Prefect Apostolic of Sikkim, and executed under his direction. Built in 1951, this church is a fine example of what can be done in a remote part of the world by one who sees in the art of any locality an occasion to develop and encourage native talent. All the sculpture was executed by local artisans. Though many of the figures are inspired by Tibetan sources, as the illustrations on this page indicate, other elements were based on European prototypes.



1



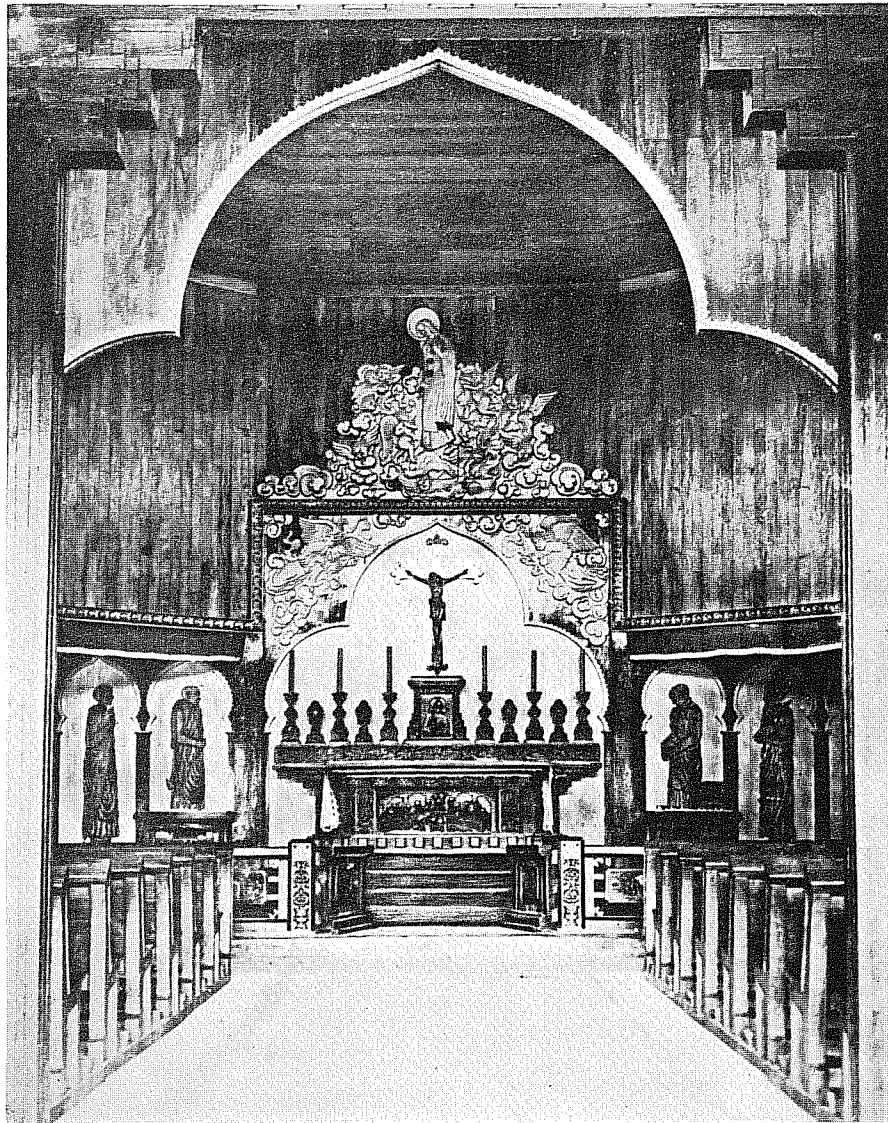
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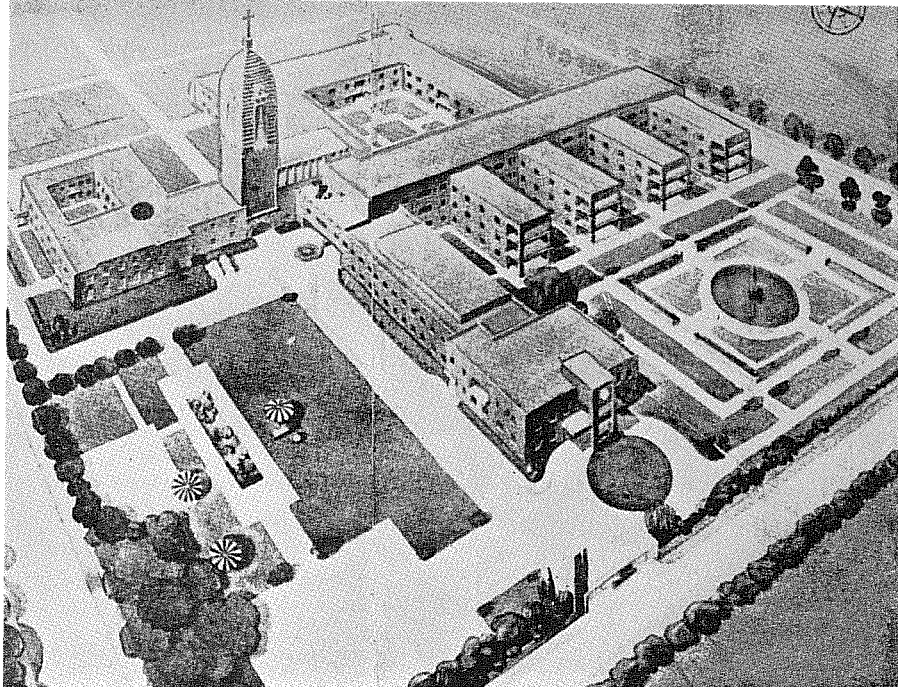
4



View of altar and sanctuary, with panel of the Little Flower above. The "Tibetan" Last Supper forms the altar frontal.



1 Christ quiets the waters. 2 Lamb of God. 3 Christ cures the beggar. 4 Bread of Life.

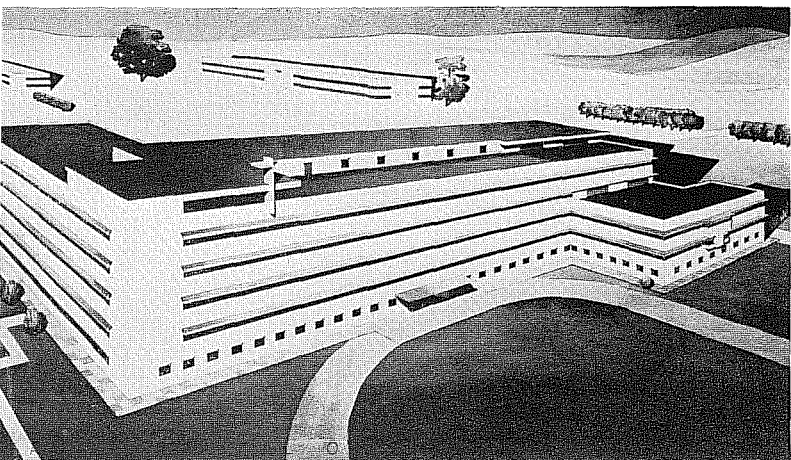


## HOSPITALS IN INDIA & PAKISTAN

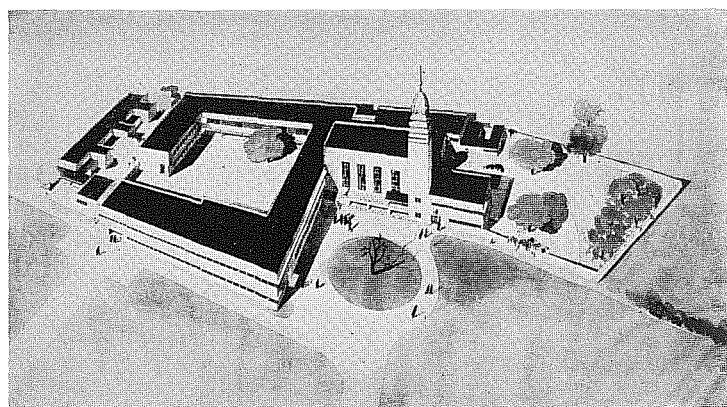
for the Medical Mission Sisters

Under the rigorous initiative of Mother Anna Dengel, M.D., foundress and superior-general—with headquarters in Philadelphia—this Society of Medical Missionaries is making architectural history.

Holy Family Hospital, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Karl Malte Heinz, architect. The stirring story of the building of this hospital is told by Sister Alma Julia in her illustrated article "We Built a Hospital During the Terror," "Saturday Evening Post," November 4, 1950.

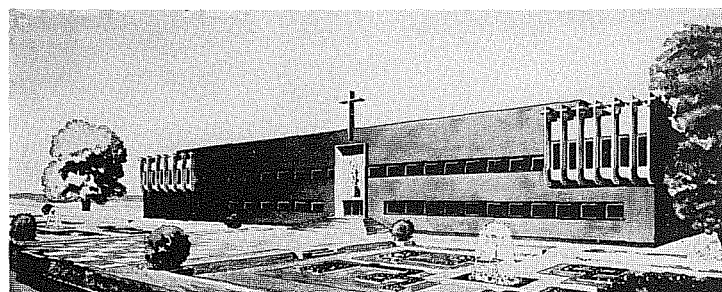
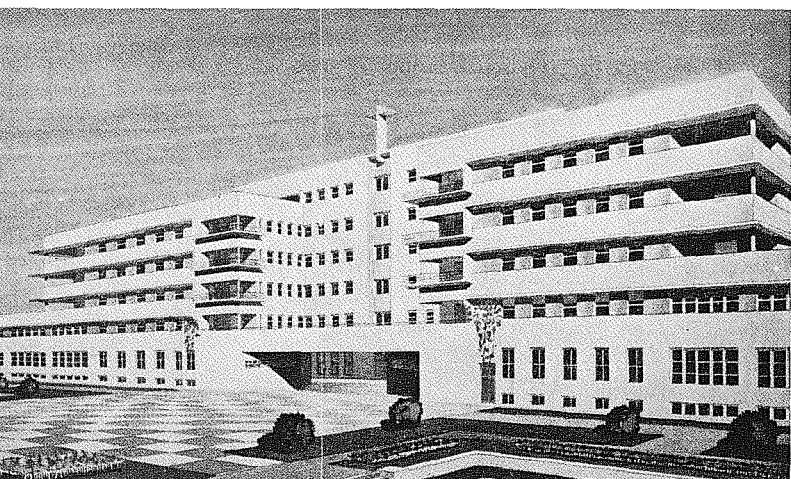


The two illustrations below are of two other buildings designed by Mr Heinz and indicate the possibilities inherent in an adaptation of what has been termed the "international" style.



(Above) Mission at Khera Kurd.

(Below) Saint Paul's College, Indore.

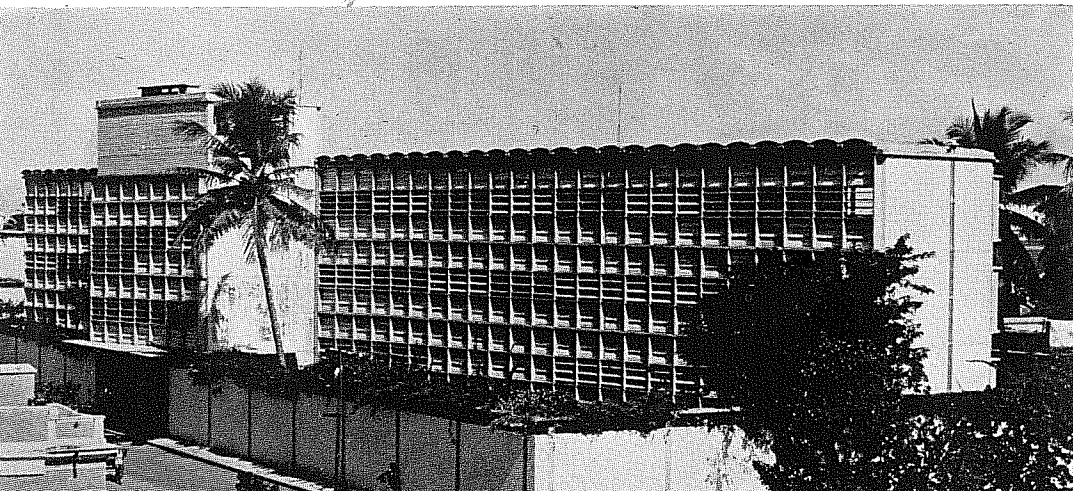
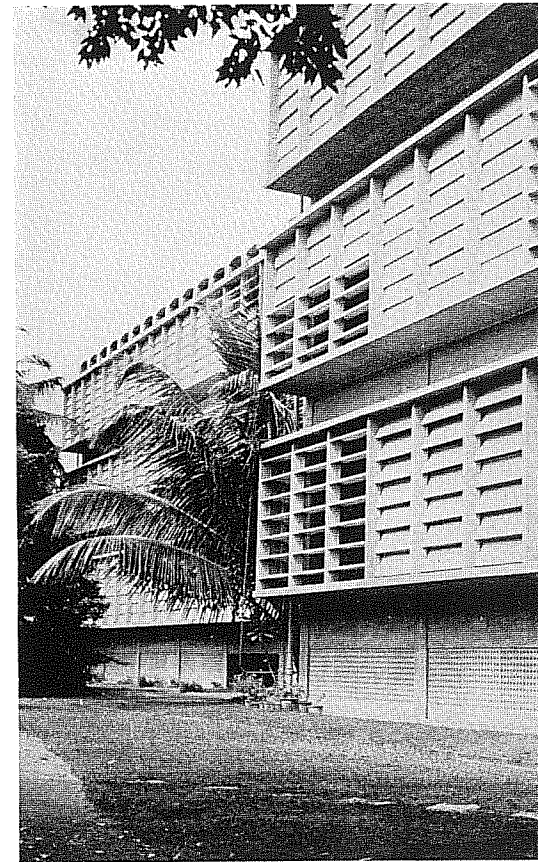
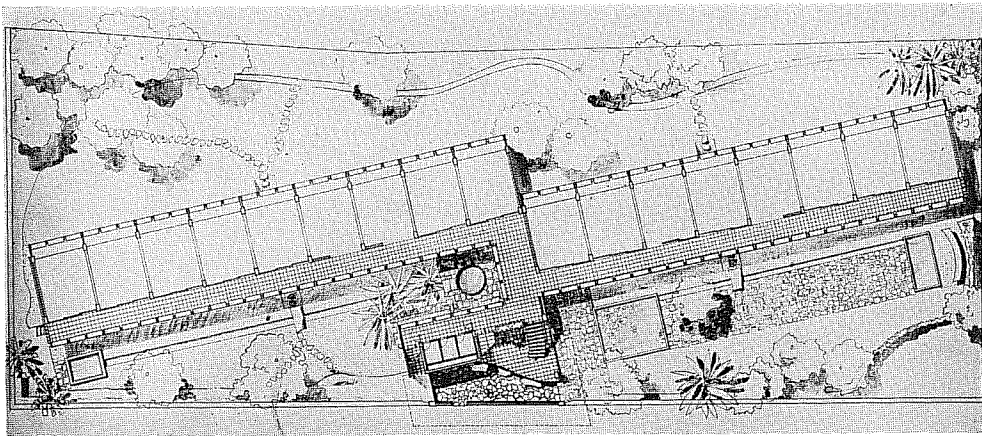
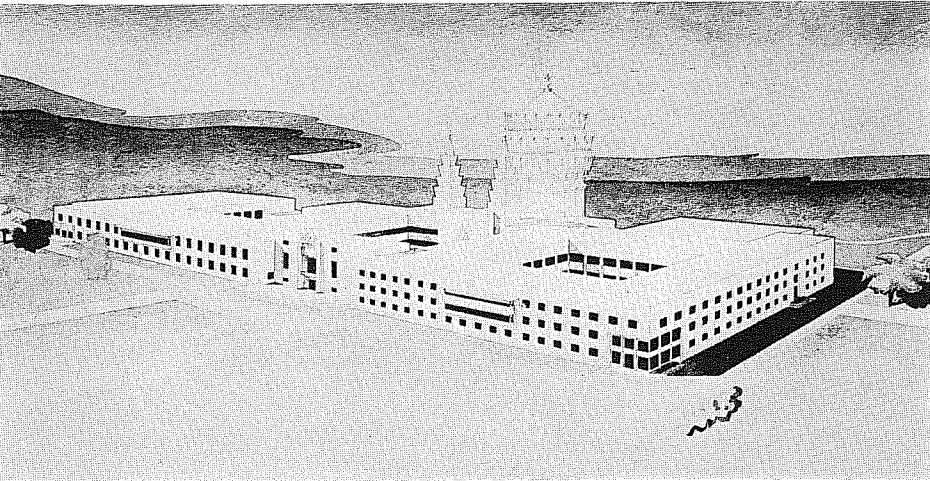
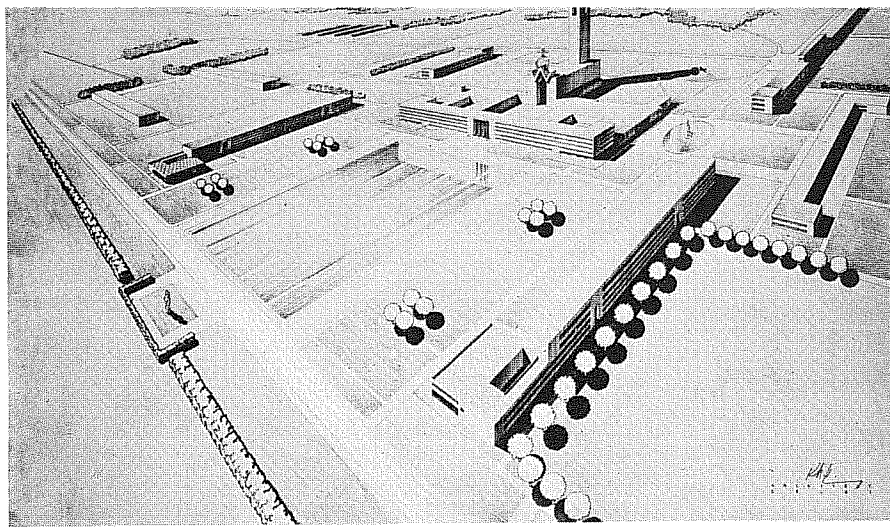


proposed Holy Family Hospital and nurses' training school to be erected on the banks of the Ganges at Jigha Ghat, near Patna. It will be a general hospital with special facilities for child and maternity care work.



# FREEDOM IN DESIGN CAN BE CONSISTENT WITH TRADITION

(Right) Proposed Nirmla College, Delhi. (Below)  
Bird's-eye view of new Papal Seminary at Poona.  
Both designs are the work of Karl Malte Heinz

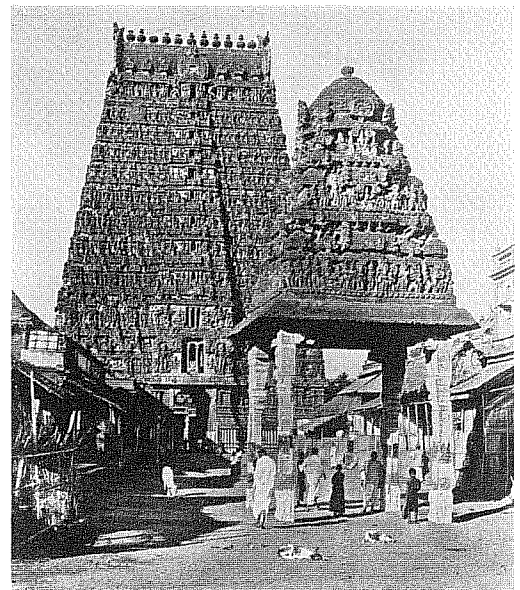
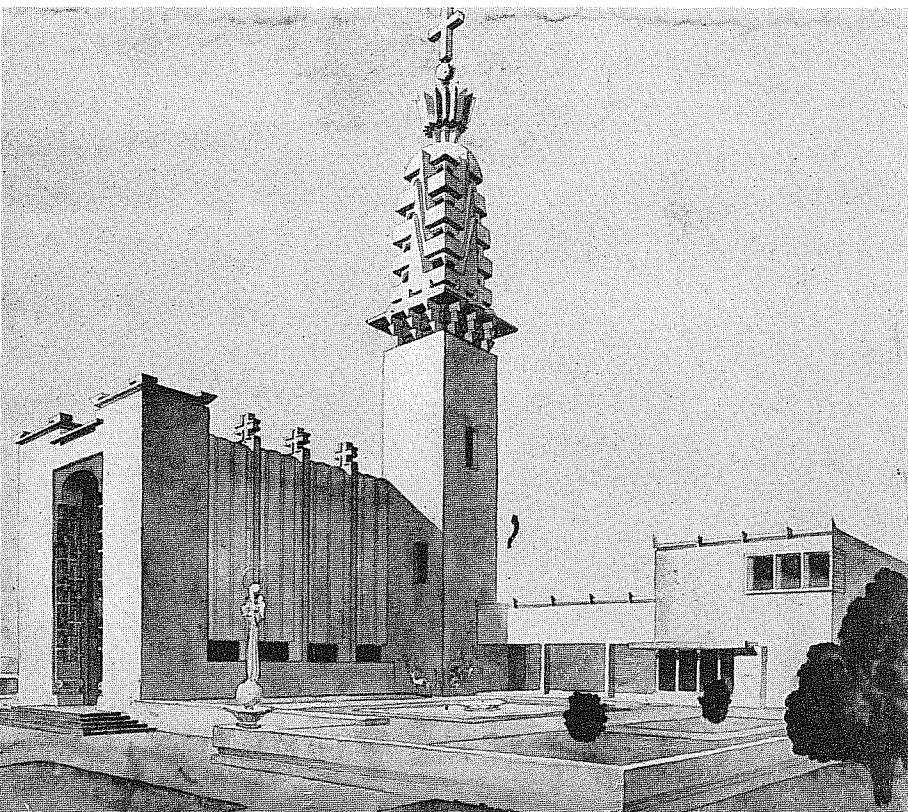
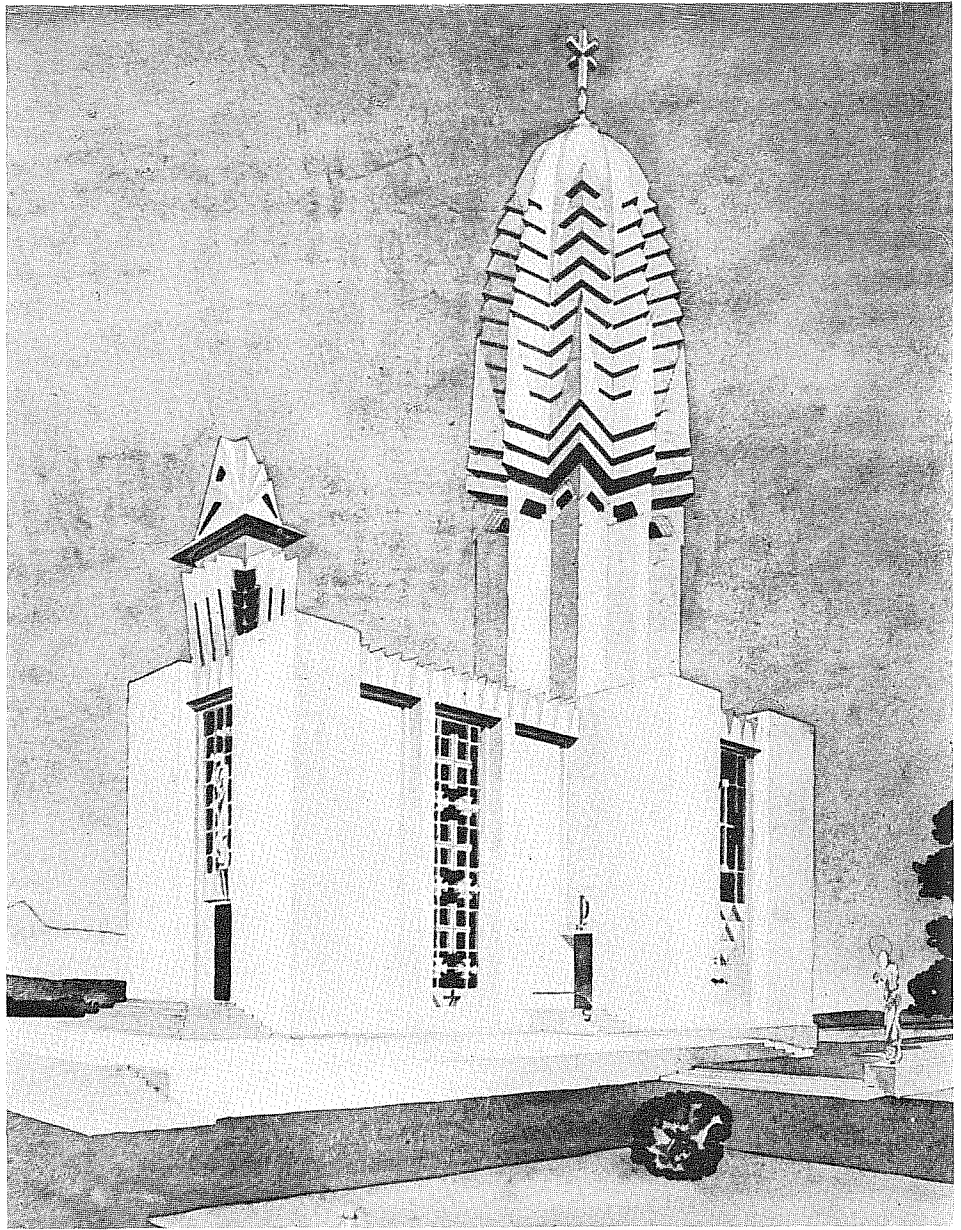


Dormitory at Pondichery, South India, designed and built in 1937-38, Antonin Raymond, architect. This dormitory was built for disciples of Sri Aurobindo Ghose, one of India's foremost spiritual teachers. The simple landscaping of the garden, as indicated on the plan, with its trees and shallow pool carries out the effect of coolness that was realized structurally in the building itself. The fundamental principles of architecture—simplicity, economy, directness, and closeness to nature—were consciously and consistently

IDEAS  
DREAMS  
POSSIBILITIES!

These designs, by Karl Malte Heinz, point the way for a solution of the problem of integration and adaptation in India. Simplicity, allied to a judicious use of color, might well produce the type of church we can hope for in the India of the present and the future.

See Mr Heinz's article "Religious Architecture in India," page 27.



The profuse decoration of temples in India, such as this one at Madura, could only be adapted with difficulty, but the form can yield possibilities, as indicated by Mr Fernandez's design illustrated on page 26.