REV. FR. D.S. AMALORPAVADASS
1932-1990

A Tribute by J. Russell Chandran

In the untimely death of Fr. Amalorpadass, on 25 May 1990, following a car accident, not only the Church in India but the whole ecumenical world has suffered an irreparable loss. Fr. Amalor, as we used to call him, was a devout Catholic priest, an outstanding scholar and theologian, a committed missionary and evangelist and a warm-hearted friend. Many throughout the world mourn his loss, and at the same time praise and thank God for the life and ministry of this great servant of God.

Fr. Amalor was born on 15 June 1932 in Kallery, a small village in Tamilnadu. He had his university education at St. Joseph’s College, Tiruchirappally, and theological education at St. Peter’s Major Seminary in Bangalore. He did his advanced theological studies at the Institut Catholique de Paris where he obtained both the Master’s and Doctorate degrees. After his return from Europe he served as parish priest for a large parish in Tamilnadu which covered 63 village. In 1967 he was appointed Secretary of the CBCI Commission for Liturgy and Catechetics of which his brother, Archbishop Lourdusamy (now Cardinal), was the chairman. It was under the auspices of this Commission the National Biblical and Catechetical Center was established in Bangalore and Fr. Amalor became its Founder Director.

My closest association with him was through our common involvement in the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EAT-WOT). He was one of the three persons, the other two being Sergio Torres of Chile and Njindu Mushete of Zaire, appointed by the Vatican, to advise about the request of African theologians for developing independent approaches to theology in the Third World. It was Fr. Amalor who suggested that the problem faced by the African theologians was not peculiar to Africa but applied to all Third World regions, not peculiar to the Roman Catholics but to all Churches. This led to the preliminary meeting at Nairobi in January, 1975, taking advantage of the 5th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Fr. Amalor took an active role in the planning of the first Ecumenical Meeting of Third World Theologians at Dar es Salaam in August 1976 and also participated in several of the later meetings. At the Dar es Salaam meeting he gave one of the major addresses choos-
ing as his topic "The Indian Universe of a New Theology." This address contains some of his basic theological concerns, namely, inter-faith dialogue, Indian spirituality, liberation and development, conscientization and evangelization. Some of his concluding affirmations are worth recalling:

All Christians, especially church leaders, should change their life-style so that, without being any more identified with the privileged and elite, they can be more one with the poor and the oppressed.

A healthy secularity must purify our piety, religious practices, and the liturgy ...

He served as Director of the NBCLC for 15 years and during this period he gave creative and prophetic leadership. The present Director of NBCLC, Fr. Paul Puthenangady, rightly describes Fr. Amalor as the prophet of the post-conciliar Church in India. The programs he developed in NBCLC were oriented to help the participants both to be rooted in the Bible and the Christian heritage and to be open to truth in other faiths. It was his conviction that the Church in India should be rooted in the Indian culture. The chapel at the NBCLC was named Sachidananda. The chapel walls were decorated with symbols of the Christian faith as well as of other faiths. The programs of the center included consultations and institutes on inter-religious dialogue, Indian spirituality, ecumenism, liberation of society from oppressive structures etc. He also organized in 1974 a well-prepared Research Seminar at the Center on Non-Biblical Scriptures. In the Foreword to the Report of the Seminar he wrote, "It seems that the Church in India is destined by Divine Providence to contribute as its specific share, to the theology of the religious traditions of mankind, more specially to the theology of non-Biblical scriptures." He had wanted the Church hierarchy to consider the possibility of the use of non-biblical scriptures in the Christian liturgy. He was also the founder-editor of the NBCLC magazine called Word and Worship.

In 1982 he moved to Mysore where he combined academic scholarship and research with spiritual pursuit. He was largely instrumental for the establishment of the Department of Christianity and a Chair on Christianity at the University of Mysore. He was appointed as the first Professor of Christianity and Head of the Department on Christianity. He regarded this appointment as an opportunity for a meaningful