

Formation of Christian Leaders A New Testament Perspective

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In Christianity there is only one leader, only one teacher,¹ and that leader and teacher is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is the Saviour of humans and the Lord of all.² All others whether poor or rich, black or white, female or male are his followers. Yet Jesus, the leader, has ensured, although in a vague and rudimentary manner, the continuity of his mission through his ambassadors or delegates – the Christian leaders.³ Because Christian leaders are ambassadors or delegates of Jesus, the leader's option should be their option, his values should be their values, his priorities should be their priorities and his path should be their path too.

The New Testament does not offer a blueprint concerning the formation of Christian leaders. Yet a perceptive reading of the New Testament does indicate some relevant insights into this theme. This is precisely what I attempt to do in this article. Conditioned by time and space I limit myself to some key, challenging aspects.

What were Jesus' values and priorities as they can be deciphered from the New Testament? What option did he make at the beginning of his ministry and steadily adhered to it in the course of his ministry that led him fi-

nally to a shameful death on the cross (1 Cor 1:23)? Answers to these questions constitute the first part of the present study. In the second part the attention is focused on the formation of the apostles, the first Christian leaders. The third part will highlight the main qualities Jesus expected from his apostles. And, finally, by way of conclusion, the significance of these aspects for the formation of Christian leaders in the present Indian, ecclesial context.

I. Jesus' Basic Option and His Values and Priorities

Jesus lived in Palestine in a situation and in an ethos that were very similar to ours in many respects: ever-widening economic disparity between the rich and the poor, radical religious fundamentalism of the Zealots and Essenes/Qumran, political threat from foreign nations, and systematic oppression and segregation of certain sections of the Jewish society (for instance, the subordinate role and subjugation of women, racial purity, 'despised' trades, etc.).⁴ All the main Jewish groups (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes/Qumran and Zealots) – though differing from each other in certain religio-political viewpoints – held on to the Law, approved and observed racial purity, ostracized those

who practised 'despised' trades, and women were subjugated to a very subordinate role, especially in the socio-economic and religio-cultural spheres. In such a situation one person had a very different stance. That was John the Baptist, a prophetic figure, who demanded radical conversion of the heart (cf. Mk 1:4-8 and par.) and strongly advocated authentic socio-economic transformation as a genuine expression of radical conversion (cf. Lk 3:4-17).

Josephus Flavius, who distinguished himself for his knowledge of the Law by the age of fourteen, had a lived experience of the schools of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes one after another at the age of sixteen, and later withdrew into the desert to a hermit named Bannus, and finally decided to join the Pharisees at the age of nineteen (cf. *The Jewish War*, II, 119).⁵ Unlike Josephus Flavius, Jesus of Nazareth more or less at the age of 34, having existentially experienced the plight of the oppressed (so not an academic knowledge but an existential, personal experience) opted to embrace the movement of John the Baptist by undergoing baptism (Mk 1:4, 9-11).⁶ Jesus' baptism is a historical fact⁷ because it describes a person (= Jesus of Nazareth) undergoing baptism (just like other people) at a time (= when people were being baptized) by John the Baptist. The only difference is that in contrast with other people Jesus did not confess his sins, for the early Church was convinced that he was sinless (cf. Jn 8:46; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22). That is why in the Gospels, particularly in the apocryphal gospels, one notices a consistent and steady tendency to tone down the

fact of Jesus' baptism but at the same time a strenuous effort to highlight the theophany. In Mk 1:9-11 Jesus' baptism is narrated as a historical fact and in Lk 3:21 too (although before Jesus' baptism John had been already arrested and imprisoned cf. 3:20!) it is affirmed; but in Mt 3:13-17 John objects to Jesus' request to be baptized, although at the end, on Jesus' request John gives in (cf. 3:13-15). In John there is no mention of Jesus' baptism at all but only the descent of the Spirit upon him (1:32). In the gospel of Ebionites not even a hint about Jesus' baptism but the theophany is extraordinarily highlighted and in the gospel of Hebrews Jesus himself objects to his mother and his brothers when they asked him to undergo the baptism of John!⁸

Since Jesus was sinless why did he undergo John's baptism? There are mainly two reasons for it. (1) Jesus, although sinless, wanted to identify himself fully with humans, particularly with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized⁹ so that by sharing in their concrete, helpless situation he was able to love them genuinely and minister to them with immense compassion.¹⁰ (2) It was also the occasion when Jesus experienced God as *Abba*, a very loving Parent, and his loving Parent approved his Son's mission as a suffering servant.¹¹ Jesus' experience of the *Abba* is found in various strata of the Gospel traditions: synoptics (Mk 14:36 and par.), the common source of Matthew and Luke (Mt 11:25-27 // Lk 10:21-22) and John.¹² These two aspects, namely, Jesus' faith in and love for God and his love and compassion for humans are emphasized in a unique manner in the

Letter to the Hebrews where Jesus' priesthood and his unique sacrifice (both in the theological sense rather than historical) are in focus.¹³

In other words, Jesus' basic option consisted in identifying himself with sinful humans, his sisters and brothers so that he could be the source of liberation for them (cf. Heb 2:6-18). This aspect of liberation extended to all areas of life where any sort of oppression prevailed: of social, religious, sexual, economic or cultural nature. These were the values and priorities in Jesus' ministry as indicated in his table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners (Mk 2:14-17 and par.; Mt 11:18-19), in his friendship with women (Lk 7:36-50 and par.; 8:2; Jn 11:17-44; 12:1-8), in his strong rejection of the purity laws (Mk 7:1-23), in his compassionate healing of a woman with bleeding (Mk 5:25-34), in his tenderhearted act of restoring the dead to fullness of life (Lk 7:11-17), in his daring deed of reinstating lepers to full human dignity (Mk 1:40-45 and par.), in his unconditional assurance to the poor of a total reversal in their plight (Lk 4:16-19; 6:20-26), etc. He also broke the Sabbath (Mk 2:23-3:6 and par.; Jn 5:1-18; 9:1-12; etc.) and emphasized interiority, radicality and simplicity in understanding and interpreting the religious norms (Mt 5:17-7:6). He was not in the least afraid to question and even to censure Jewish authorities for their hypocrisy (Mt 23:1-36). All such ventures of compassion on the one hand and confrontation on the other created hatred in the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities that ultimately brought Jesus to death by crucifixion.¹⁴

But death by crucifixion was not the end of Jesus' life; on the contrary, it was the beginning of a qualitatively new (*kainos*) life because God, his loving Parent, raised him from the dead and installed him as the Saviour of humans. Jesus' resurrection, a transhistorical event, is indeed the source of our faith, the ground of our hope and the energizing spring of our love. Christian leaders are called, formed and commissioned to tread the path that Jesus had trodden so that through them humans and the cosmos may finally share in the power and glory of Jesus' resurrection.

II. The Vocation and Formation of the Apostles

A glimpse of the call-narratives in the New Testament is indispensable before delving into the specific theme of formation because formation begins with and presupposes the call to discipleship. The call to discipleship is indeed an integral part of the formation of the apostles.

A. The Call-Narratives

The New Testament does not offer merely one, stereotyped pattern of the vocation of the disciples but at least three models: the synoptic pattern, the Johannine type and the Lucan presentation of Paul's vocation.

1. The Synoptic Pattern

In the synoptic call-narratives Matthew follows Mark almost literally whereas Luke who compiles a more orderly account of the deeds and words of Jesus (cf. Lk 1:1-4) has a slightly variant version for theological and (possibly) logical reasons. We begin with the

narrative in Mk 1:16-20 which consists of the call of two pairs of brothers: Simon and his brother Andrew (1:16-18), and James and his brother John (1:19-20). Both have a similar structure but there is a little difference in meaning and significance. We focus on the first (1:16-18) and then pinpoint the differences of the second (1:19-20). The literary structure of the text is followed by a brief theological interpretation.¹⁵

- A As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew (1:16a),
- B casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen (1:16b).
- C And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people” (1:17).
- B’ And immediately they left their nets (1:18a)
- A’ and followed him (1:18b).

In spelling out the meaning and significance of Mk 1:16-18 it should be noted that this narrative is based on the call of Elisha by Elijah in 1 Kings 19:19-21. Here just as elsewhere in the Bible the initiative for the call is from the one who calls.¹⁶ In other words, one who is called does not initiate the process at all. Secondly, one who is called is encountered in the context of real life situations: Simon and Andrew were casting their net into the Lake of Galilee whereas James and John were mending their net (1:19).¹⁷ So the distinction between the sacred and the secular (or profane) has no relevance whatsoever in the context of the call.

The call proper has two dimensions: (1) the call to follow Jesus; and (2) the call to become fish for humans.¹⁸ The futuristic aspect of the call (= to

become fish for humans) is realized in the appointment and mission of the Twelve in 3:13-19 and 6:7-13. Those who are called leave their possessions (in the second case also their father) and followed Jesus. This implies that an authentic detachment from possessions and family ties is an essential feature of discipleship.

Luke probably found the sudden intervention of Jesus in the life of the disciples in Mark rather abrupt and strange. So he performed a ‘plastic surgery’ and placed the event at a later phase in his narrative (5:1-11). Jesus had already ministered in Galilee (4:14-44) before he called his disciples. Nor was Jesus a stranger to them for he had been a guest of Simon whose mother-in-law he cured from fever (4:38-40). The existential context of the call of the three disciples (not four as in Mark and Matthew)¹⁹ is also different: a miraculous catch of fish which caused a traumatic feeling in Simon because he perceived the numinous dimension of Jesus’ personality; and so cried out, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” (Lk 5:8). Luke might have retrojected a post-resurrectional scene (cf. Jn 21:4-14) back into the earthly ministry of Jesus.²⁰ Thus, Luke has well prepared his audience to understand the call of the first three disciples.

2. *The Johannine Model*

In John the call of the disciples is drastically different from that of the synoptics. In the first place, it is John the Baptist who introduces his disciples to Jesus in a solemn yet enigmatic way, saying, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” (1:36). Secondly, unlike in the

synoptics, it is two disciples of John (Andrew and an unnamed disciple) who take the initiative to follow Jesus (1:37). At this juncture Jesus turned and saw them following him and asked them, “What are you looking for?” (1:38). Thirdly, the Christological and theological perspectives are very different too as the ensuing dialogue clearly confirms. They asked him, “‘Rabbi, where are you staying?’” (1:38). This question is obviously not an inquiry about Jesus’ postal address! For the verb ‘to stay’ or ‘to remain’ (= *menein*) is more frequent in the Johannine writings²¹ and it has a deeper, theological significance as well.²² Jesus’ response to them, “‘Come and see’” (1:39) is also theologically loaded because it is frequently used not in the physical sense but in the theological sense;²³ it is, in fact, another expression for the initial stage of believing in Jesus in a number of Johannine texts.²⁴ “They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day” (1:39).²⁵ Then Andrew went and announced his encounter of and experience with Jesus to his brother, Simon (1:40-41). He brought Simon to Jesus whom Jesus named Cephas, Peter (1:42).

In contrast with the call of Andrew and the unnamed disciple, the call of the second pair of disciples commences on Jesus’ own initiative (1:43). Jesus called Philip who in turn brought Nathanael (even though the latter had theological reservations!) about Jesus and during the encounter Nathanael acknowledges Jesus as the Son of God and the King of Israel (1:45-50).

Thus, in brief, in John the structure and the theological focus of the call

of the disciples are so dissimilar from the synoptics – obviously to suit his characteristic themes. In John a particular person stands for a group: Nicodemus for those Jewish leaders who, even though in an occult manner, were open to Jesus; the Samaritan woman for the Samaritans who welcomed Jesus and believed in him; the blind man healed on the sabbath (5:1-14) for those who were beneficiaries of Jesus’ compassionate deeds and sympathetic words yet joined the Jewish camp that maliciously persecuted Jesus (cf. 5:15-16); the blind man healed in 9:1-7 for those who in spite of opposition, persecution and calumny were committed believers in Jesus; etc. So Andrew brings his brother to Jesus to become a disciple, so also Philip brings Nathanael, his townsman. Thus, the pattern of Johannine discipleship to be emulated should be the same.

Again, according to John there were not four but five disciples who followed Jesus: Andrew, Simon, the unnamed disciple, Philip and Nathanael. Furthermore, according to John the call seems to have taken place at Bethany in the Transjordan (not on the shore of the Lake of Galilee!). Finally, in Jn 1:35-51 and 2:1-11 John presents a perspective of discipleship: on each day “there is a gradual deepening of insight and a profounder realization of who it is that the disciples are following.”²⁶ In 1:35-42 Jesus is addressed as Teacher (1:38) and Messiah (1:41). In 1:43-50 Jesus is viewed as the one “about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote” (1:45), the Son of God and the King of Israel (1:49). Finally, Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man (1:51). So

John's focus is not historical but theological, namely, the gradual insight of the disciples into the identity of Jesus. There is a steady growth in their understanding of the person of Jesus and the nature of their following him.

3. *The Lucan Portrayal of Paul's Call*

The Acts of the Apostles narrates Paul's vocation thrice: (a) 9:1-19; (b) 22:6-16; and (c) 26:12-18. A comparative analysis of these three narratives based on the circumstances of the encounter (place, time, occasion), the nature of the encounter (the vision, the audition), the effects of the encounter (on Paul, on Paul's companions) and the Ananias episode (well developed in the first, abbreviated in the second and absent in the third) clearly shows that it is not a narration of the historical events but a Lucan attempt to communicate the vocation of a persecuting Saul to be a zealous Paul, the apostle of the risen Lord to the Gentiles.

A structural comparison of the three narratives makes it clear that each of the three has a stereotyped pattern: double address, followed by a question by Saul, and, finally, the response of Jesus. Delving deeper into the issue one notices that Luke is not the originator of this pattern but he has taken it over from the OT narratives (the angelophany to Abraham not to sacrifice his son, Isaac, in Gen 22:11-14; the theophany to Jacob to go down to Egypt in Gen 46:2-4; the call of Moses in Ex 3:4-10).

Acts 9:1-19

A Saul, Saul,

B Who are you Lord?

C I am Jesus whom you
are persecuting.

When the three narrations in Acts 9, 22 and 26 are compared one notices a gradual shift from conversion (ch. 9) to call (ch. 26). This is what Paul in his own Letters (cf. Gal 1:15; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; 2 Cor 4:6 and Phil 3:7) also emphasizes: the profound impact that Paul had in his encounter with Jesus and its significance. His apostleship is directly from the risen Jesus, the call to be an apostle to the Gentiles originates from the risen Lord and the nature of the gospel he preaches is also based on this encounter.²⁷

Thus, the New Testament presents three different patterns and perspectives of the call of the disciples and of the apostle, Paul; each has its own orientation and significance. No one type is a super-model to another, nor one's theological significance profounder than the other two.

B. **The Appointment and Mission of the Apostles**

For the appointment of the apostles and their mission we shall follow the Marcan text: 3:13-19 and 6:7-13 respectively. When required salient features from Matthew and Luke will be integrated. John does not deal with the appointment of the Twelve but he does treat the mission of the apostles – as is to be expected – in his own unique way.

1. *The Appointment of the Apostles*

The setting for the appointment of the Twelve in Mark is on a mountain (3:13). This setting, as in other biblical contexts (cf. Ex 19:3,12; 24:15,18; Mt 5:2; Mk 9:2), certainly highlights that a significant event is going to take place. Just as in the call of the disciples in 1:16-

20, here too the initiative for the appointment is solely from Jesus. He called only those whom he wanted (*thelein*). He did want them to come very close (*proskalein*) to him. From their part they merely obeyed what he commanded. Then he does the most sovereign act by appointing the Twelve to be his apostles, his ambassadors.

The purpose of appointing the Twelve is twofold: (1) to be with him and (2) to be sent out to preach and to have authority over evil forces.²⁸ The interrelation between these two aims is very significant. Thus, to the extent an apostle or a Christian leader is *with Jesus* – in the sense of genuine personal relation of faith and trust in him and opting for his values and priorities in life and ministry – to that extent will his or her mission be genuine.²⁹ The mission of the apostles is to continue Jesus' own mission (cf. 1:39). The authority (*exousia*) to cast out demons should be understood in the sense of struggle against evil forces as such.³⁰ It will necessarily entail on the one hand identification with humans in every respect except sin (cf. Heb 2:17; 4:15) – especially working for and sharing in the struggles and problems of our suffering sisters and brothers – and on the other relentlessly fighting against structural evil.

The number 'twelve' should be understood in the symbolic sense to represent the twelve tribes of Israel and in the New Testament, particularly in the synoptics, it has a universal dimension.³¹ In view of the function Simon will be performing later he is given a new name, Peter. In the course of the

Gospel of Mark, from 3:16 onwards he is consistently called Peter (19 times) except in the Gethsemane scene where Jesus asks Peter, "'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour?'" (14:37). This could have been an original saying from Jesus which the early Church preserved as a reminiscence. John and James were also given the name, 'Sons of Thunder' but they are never again addressed or called so later in Mark.³²

The Matthean version of the appointment of the twelve apostles (10:1-4) adds no new theological insight. Luke, however, has a modified setting for this event: "Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God" (6:12) before appointing the twelve apostles. Luke depicts Jesus as a person who is frequently immersed in dialoguing with his *Abba* in prayer.³³ This is evident from two perspectives: (1) Jesus prays at decisive moments of his life and ministry; and (2) the first (3:21) and the last act (23:46) Jesus does in his public life is prayer.³⁴

2. *The Mission of the Apostles*

With regard to the mission of the apostles the synoptic Gospels have similar as well as dissimilar features. John, of course, has his own viewpoint.

a. *The Synoptic Perspective*

The mission of the apostles in Mark (6:7-13) and its parallels in Matthew (10:5-15) and in Luke (9:1-6) have the following similar features. Just like Jesus, their leader and teacher, they too were commissioned to be itinerant, charismatic preachers, effective exorcists and compassionate healers.³⁵ They were

authorized to proclaim the kingdom of God³⁶ and the urgency to be genuinely converted, to have authority over evil spirits (= to drive them away) and to heal all kinds of sicknesses and diseases. They were forbidden to take provisions (slight variations on this point among the synoptics) as an itinerant of that time would have done. This prohibition is grounded on Jesus' conviction that his apostles were to rely on God and on the generosity of those to whom they ministered. The apostles gladly accomplished the mandate given to them.

According to Mark the apostles were sent two by two probably to confirm the authenticity of what they communicate³⁷ and also to underline the fact that the good news necessarily has a communitarian dimension. The Matthean injunction that they should not go to the Gentiles or Samaritans but only to the lost sheep of Israel (10:5-6) may be an attempt to appease the Jewish Christians to whom the author is writing on the one hand and to underscore that there is a progression in the Matthean understanding of mission (cf. 28:16-20) on the other. The mission of the seventy³⁸ in Lk 10:1-12 could be understood in terms of the author's emphasis on universalism.³⁹

b. The Johannine Viewpoint

The fourth Gospel, unlike the synoptics, uses neither the verb 'to proclaim' (= *kērussein*), nor the verb 'to evangelize' (= *euaggelizein*); the noun 'good news' (= *euangelion*) is also absent. John has his own favourite vocabulary for mission: 'to bear witness' (= *martyrein*) and 'testimony' (= *martyria*). The Johannine characteristic vo-

cabulary⁴⁰ already indicates his theological perspective, namely, it is not so much by proclamation of the kingdom of God and the expulsion of the evil spirits⁴¹ that the disciples live out their mission but by bearing witness to Jesus who is sent by the Father.

According to John Jesus was sent⁴² by the Father to share with humans his exclusive, intimate, personal and mutual relation with the Father and his unique experience of it.⁴³ This disclosure he makes in union with the Father and in his ministry the Father is actively involved.⁴⁴ The disciples are enabled to share in this experience and relation; and then they should share it with others (cf. 13:20; 20:21).

C. The Failure of the Apostles and Their Empowerment

With regard to the theme, the failure of the apostles and their empowerment, both the synoptics and John are congruent.

1. The Failure of the Apostles

Because Matthew and Luke follow Mark we shall limit ourselves to the latter. Jesus had called them to follow him, appointed them to be his apostles and sent them on mission. They were also the privileged ones who 'witnessed' the miracles of symbolic and theological import (4:35-41; 5:36-43; 6:34-44; 6:45-52). Yet they did not understand his person and so he reprimanded them repeatedly for their hardheartedness (6:52; 8:14-21). The confession of Peter, their supremo, was not adequate enough (8:29-31). After the confession of Jesus' Messiahship by Peter the apostles failed to understand the nature

of Jesus' Messiahship and its consequences and implications for them (8:32-33; 9:32; 10:35, 41). So Jesus, just like the understanding and ever loving father of the prodigal son, instructs them on the necessary conditions for being his apostles and its consequences for them (8:34-38; 9:33-37; 10:36-45).

In spite of all this Jesus foresees that one would betray him, another would deny him and the rest would flee at the decisive hour when their presence and support were absolutely required (cf. 14:20-21, 26-31). And Jesus' prediction that Judas would betray him and Peter would deny him is literally fulfilled (cf. 14:43-50, 54, 66-72).

In John also one notices the same features: some of them left Jesus in the middle of his ministry (6:60-65) and later Judas betrayed him (13:21-30; 18:2-3) and Peter denied him (18:15-18, 25). The rest would have, as in the synoptics, fled from the scene of Jesus' crucifixion.⁴⁵

In brief, if one were to assess Jesus' capability and success as a formator from the perspective of social sciences, he should be rated as a thorough failure! But he is not a social scientist! He has his own measuring-rod, very different from human criteria, generally unknown to humans.

2. *The Empowerment of the Apostles*

The ever loving Parent's assessment of Jesus' life and ministry was holistic, life-assuring and faith-evoking. The disciples were given the gratuitous gift to believe that Jesus who was put to death by crucifixion is alive and active – no more subject to the power of death! The encounter of the apostles with the

risen Lord was a shocking event too, never was it part of their thought pattern nor in the horizon of their imagination. This is evident from the story of the 'empty tomb' and the various self-disclosures of the risen Jesus to his apostles.

The gratuitous gift to look back on Jesus' life, his ministry and his death was gradually unfolded through the abiding presence of the risen Jesus (Mt 28:20) and the energizing and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49; Jn 20:22). The apostles were commissioned to launch into the task of making Jesus' values and priorities realistic by making those open to the gospel his disciples (Mt 28:19), by summoning humans to be authentically converted to God through the forgiveness of sins (Lk 24:47; Jn 20:23). Thus in brief, as the loving Parent sent Jesus on his mission, so Jesus also sends his apostles to carry on his mission (Jn 20:21). Once the apostles were empowered by the risen Lord and the Spirit, they never again falter or vacillate: Peter who disowned Jesus in the passion-narratives becomes a zealous and committed ambassador of the risen Jesus as the first part of Acts clearly confirms. Saul, a fanatic persecutor of Christians, once gripped by the risen Jesus becomes Paul and leads a totally reversed path of life and ministry – he is indeed the champion of the gospel to the Gentiles. Thus, the pivotal point, the cornerstone in the formation of the apostles was their empowerment by the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit.

III. The Main Qualities of Christian Leaders

The chief qualities required of Christian leaders are indubitably those lived out by Jesus in his life and in his ministry. It is noteworthy that the New Testament has taken over words current in the socio-religious life of the people and gave them a totally new content, a Christian content: for example, 'to arrest' or 'to hand over' (= *paradidonai*), 'to proclaim' (= *kērussein*), 'gospel' (= *euaggelion*), etc.⁴⁶ Likewise, to sum up the basic qualities required of Christian leaders the New Testament has taken over a verb from the current socio-cultural practice of the time whether of Jews, Romans, or Greeks. And that verb is 'to serve' (= *diakonein*), not a word that commanded respect and importance but shame and humiliation because only the servants and the slaves really served their masters and lords whereas the rich, the elite, the dignitaries, the national and religious leaders (the kings and high priests, in particular) were served by their servants.⁴⁷ This verb is given a Christological connotation to sum up Jesus' life and ministry, notably his self-giving act of death on the cross. This is found in various books of the New Testament in different contexts: to state concisely Jesus' self-giving act in Mk 10:45 and par.; to demonstrate it in a lively way through his symbolic act of washing the feet of his disciples (Jn 13:1-11) and expounding its significance in the following discourse (13:12-20); to focus on the main commandment Jesus entrusted to his disciples as their leitmotiv (Jn 15:12-17); to celebrate and to commemorate the self-emptying act of Jesus in an early Christian hymn (Phil

2:5-8); to theologize Jesus' death and resurrection in the categories of sacrifice (Heb 9:1-10:10); and to appeal to Christians to be generous to others based on Jesus' example of self-gift (2 Cor 8:9).

This poses the question: Whom should Christian leaders serve? This, in turn, inevitably leads us to the fundamental option that Jesus made during his baptism, consistently adhered to it during his temptations (Mt 4:1-11 and par.), explicitly lived out during his public ministry and finally gone through in his shameful death on the cross. Thus, in brief, it is a movement from the centre to the periphery, from the upper level of the pyramidal, hierarchical structure to the lowest level, from the 'respectable' to the 'disreputable', from the 'honourable' to the 'dishonourable'.

In socio-economic and religio-cultural terms it is a two-dimensional option. (1) It is a fundamental option for the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized and standing by them and supporting them in every situation, even to the point of giving up one's own life. (2) It is at the same time an option against the oppressors in their systematically devised and steadily sustained ways of oppressing and exploiting humans, against their greed and hunger to lord over others and thereby causing environmental destruction and cosmic annihilation.

Thus, it is at the same time an option for as well as an option against. In biblical parlance, one cannot serve both God and Mammon (Mt 6:24): one has to choose between the treasures in heaven and the treasures on earth (Mt 6:19-21 and par.), between spiritual wis-

dom and unspiritual wisdom (Jas 3:13-18) for which a correct vision of life is absolutely necessary (Mt 6:22-23 and par.). It is clearly illustrated in various books of the New Testament that undue attachment to and craze for wealth is an insurmountable hindrance to enter the Kingdom of God (cf. Mk10:17-27 and par.; Lk 4:18-19; 6:20-26; 16:19-31; 19:1-10; Jas 1:9-11; 5:1-6). Why? Because by accumulating wealth for oneself one deprives the poor of their just needs and due demands; and thereby one becomes *heartless* to one's sisters and brothers of the human family with whom Jesus, the Son of God, by assuming the human nature (*sarx*) has established a perennial bond of solidarity (cf. Jn 1:14). And precisely because of the solidarity of Jesus, the Son of God, with humans he or she becomes *godless* too (cf. Mt 25:31-46; 1 Jn 2:15-17; 4:20-21).

This leads us to the second quality (in fact, an interrelated point) demanded of Christian leaders, namely, suffering for Jesus (= the gospel). Option for the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized will inevitably cause suffering, opposition, alienation, victimization, unjust treatment and even death. They are called to (*proskalein*) understand clearly that suffering is an inevitable consequence of being a disciple of Jesus (Mk 8:34-38 and par.). Ruptures in family-relations, betrayal by dear ones, persecutions and executions by the secular and/or religious authorities are inevitable consequences of one's commitment to Christ (cf. Mt 10:16-25). Paul is a supreme example who underwent sufferings of various kinds and of different intensities in his extensive min-

istry: imprisonments, countless floggings, stoning; natural calamities such as shipwreck; false accusations from Gentiles as well as Jews; spending many sleepless nights with a hungry stomach and a thirsty mouth (cf. 2 Cor 11:16-33).

Thirdly, a Christian leader must be able to form human and spiritual communities rather than build edifices. A human community is formed when understanding and interpersonal forgiveness become the yardstick of one's life and activity as stressed in Mt 18:15-22 and beautifully explained in the challenging parable that follows (18:23-35). When a community is animated by the Spirit of God, the members will recognize and respect the hierarchy of values and functions, and be united in fellowship and love (1 Cor 12:1-31). Another necessary dimension in forming genuine communities is the charism to be ministers of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor 5:11-21), particularly in our country where hatred and bitterness do play havoc in the lives of many.

Fourthly, a Christian leader should have a wide horizon in thinking and broadmindedness in praxis. This would necessarily entail a mature, seasoned spirituality and respect for different religions and cultures, recognition of the dignity of women and fostering peace and harmony in various communities (both Christian and human). In the Indian Christian scenario where communalism thrives, one should prescind from making unfounded remarks about people of other faiths, particularly abstaining from the use of labels against them.⁴⁸ Pettiness in liturgical practices

and discrimination of women from positions they rightly deserve should be avoided. The following areas call for special attention of Christian leaders: rendering listening ears to people, opening hearts wide to the oppressed and persecuted when they narrate and expose their woes and plight, feeling one with those who unjustly suffer and are even persecuted, extending helping hands to the underprivileged and the exploited with the assistance of governmental and non-governmental agencies, and, above all, energetically fighting (an energy that comes from genuine spiritual convictions and from the power of the Holy Spirit) against systematic corruption and unjust social structures. This is what the true leader (= Jesus Christ, the Son of God) and his faithful apostle, Paul, did. In this context, the systematic practice and fostering of caste system by priests and bishops in some States of our country is undoubtedly not only a counterwitness but also a monstrous scandal.

Finally, one should be willing to accept and respect differences (cf. Mk 9:38-41). Regarding dialogue with people of different faiths and Christians of various denominations and rites within the Catholic Church the following holds good.

In essentials, unity;
in non-essentials liberty;
in all things, charity.⁴⁹

IV. Significant Concerns

Based on the preceding three parts of our study in the fourth and concluding part we shall focus mainly on some significant and practical aspects of the

formation of Christian leaders. From the outset it should be obvious that a clear demarcation is drawn between the era before Constantine (= the era of the suffering Messiah and of the suffering and persecuted Church) and the era beginning with Constantine's conversion upto the present (= an era of the royal messianism and of the royal and occasionally persecuting Church). Secondly, there is a basic distinction between the Old Testament and the New, for the New Testament has interpreted the Old in the light and on the basis of the Christ-event.⁵⁰

1) We have pointed out that Jesus moved from the centre to the periphery. But from the time Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire and ecclesiastical dignitaries were granted princely status and privileges, the Church underwent a reversal, namely, the movement from the periphery to the centre. Many Christian leaders accepted the values and priorities of the Roman empire in their life, status and function rather than those found in the New Testament.⁵¹ A return to the New Testament and ultimately to Jesus is the crying need of the hour. A thorough rethinking and a genuine conversion of hearts are indubitably required. If we do not do this, some of the gigantic and almost scandalizing structures that already exist or are being constructed in various parts of our country where a good percentage of our people are poor will turn out to be archaeological pieces for tourist attraction (as in many parts of Europe and U.S.A.) rather than places of community-gathering and worship.

2) It is true that in the growth of any religion there is not only a distinction but also a difference between the originary experience of its founder and the immediately following era when charism prevails and the later stage (= institutional stage) of a religion when structural features and ramifications begin to take shape.⁵² Yet what is absolutely essential is to keep a healthy tension between the age of origin and charism on the one hand and the age of the institutionalization on the other. For instance, as explained in part II, one finds various patterns of the call to discipleship and apostleship in the New Testament. This should be accepted and respected. The imposition of a uniform pattern in the formation of Christian leaders does violence to the diversity permitted (and, therefore demanded) by the New Testament.

3) In the process of the formation of the Christian leaders the theological pattern of the Old Testament priesthood was also integrated.⁵³ With that the Old Testament view of the separation between the sacred and the secular also came to prominence. The present formation of Christian leaders obviously takes for granted such a separation. But the New Testament does not allow it. The secular is, in fact, the external manifestation of the sacred and the sacred is the basis of the secular. So the formation of Christian leaders 'within' the walls of seminaries is not in tune with the mind and heart of Jesus (cf. Jn 1:14).⁵⁴ The only New Testament text that describes Christian priesthood, as far as I know, is Heb 5:1-4 where it is crystal clear that a priest is chosen from the people and for the people.

The formation of priests, particularly of the religious priests, is the longest (10-15 years) compared with any other profession in the secular field. But in terms of maturity and efficiency do they generally match with those in the secular field? Why not? One of the key reasons, I feel, is the isolation of the formees from the day-to-day life situations of common people, hence the inability to share in their struggles, anxieties, sufferings and pains.

4) The main hindrance in following Jesus is the 'worship' of Mammon (wealth, prestige, and the craze to lord over). The religious who have professionally committed to follow Jesus in his poverty do possess an abundance of financial resources because the religious congregations to which they belong are rich. Is there any religious in India who died because of malnutrition and starvation during the last five years? Are there not thousands of our sisters and brothers who did die of starvation during these years? So there is basic dichotomy between our professional commitment and our actual way of life.

5) Many lay persons would strongly affirm that the service of a sizeable number of ecclesiastical leaders is often lip-service in contrast with the heart-service (*diakonia*) that Jesus demanded from his apostles. A perusal of the Letters of Paul would enlighten us on this matter and a thorough soul-search would confirm this point.

6) One often gets the impression that in the hierarchical circles diplomacy and manipulation do play a greater role than faith-formation and commitment for the cause of the oppressed. In fact,

just as in the case of Paul, a Christian leader's heart should be filled with love and it should vibrate with compassion and concern – in one word, self-giving.

The strict hierarchical model of the Church and the 'official' style of functioning of Christian leaders are rooted in following Constantine rather than Jesus Christ.

7) It is noteworthy that in the communal violence against Christians during the last three years, as far as my knowledge goes, no bishop or major superior (both of women and of men) was assaulted or killed. Their houses (in some cases palaces) are well guarded and adequately protected. It will continue to be so. In fact, it is those in the lower steps of the hierarchical ladder and those working in the periphery, namely, lay persons, sisters, brothers and priests who were maltreated and martyred. In the early Church, however, the leaders of the Church, bishops in particular, were victims of persecution and martyrdom.⁵⁵ This offers an accurate, empirically verifiable assess-

ment of the situation of the Church in India.

8) The main objective of the exodus, undoubtedly the key event in the Old Testament, was the formation of an alternative community where the Lordship of God and the brotherhood and sisterhood of humans would become the foundation of their religio-social relationship (cf. Ex 6:2-8). This was certainly in contrast with the way of life and government of the neighbouring nations where exploitation and oppression thrived.

The key event of the New Testament is the ministry of Jesus, particularly his Passion, Death and Resurrection. By these saving events Jesus also foresaw an alternative community where based on faith in the loving Parent, God, unconditional love would be the measuring-rod of authentic relationship, where fellowship would be fostered and where justice would prevail. Christian leaders are called, appointed and commissioned to this noble and liberating task.

Notes

1. Cf. Mt 23:8-12; Mk 1:22, 27; Jn 7:15-16; 10:11, 14-18; 13:12-14; 14:6; 17:3; Heb 2:10; 12:2.
2. Cf. Lk 24:26, 46; Acts 2:36; 3:13-15; 17:3; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:10-11; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 5:9-10; 9:11-12, 26-28; 10:11-14.
3. The designation 'Christian leader' is used in this study in a wide sense. It includes the apostles (Mk 3:14; Lk 6:13; Acts 6:6; Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1, 5; 15:7; etc.), the Twelve (Mt 10:1, 5; Mk 6:7; Lk 9:1; Jn 6:67, 70-71; Acts 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5; etc.), the eleven (Mt 28:16), the seventy or seventy-two (Lk 10:1), bishop or overseer (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-2; Tit 1:7; etc.), elder (1 Tim 3:1-2; Tit 1:5-6; 1 Pet 5:1-11; etc.), deacon (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-10; etc.) and deaconess (Rom 16:1).
4. Cf. J. JEREMIAS, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (translated by F. H. & C.H. Cave), London: SCM, 1969, pp. 87-144, 270-344, 359-376; B. WITHERINGTON, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, Cambridge: University Press, 1984.

5. For details, see E. SCHÜRER, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (translated and edited by G. Vermes & others), vol. I, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973, pp. 43-63; E. LOHSE, *The New Testament Environment* (translated by J.E. Steely), London: SCM, 1976, pp. 140-145.
6. Cf. *The Holy Bible: the New Revised Standard Version*, Bangalore: TPI, 1997, (the section on Biblical Chronology).
7. Based on the criterion of 'embarrassment', a nomenclature, found in the recent works of authors on Historical Jesus. For instance, J.P. MEIER, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, New York: Doubleday, 1991, pp. 167-195, extensively deals with the criteria to decide the historicity of the words and deeds of Jesus.
8. For the texts of apocryphal gospels, see K. ALAND, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1967, p. 27.
9. The word 'poor' in the Bible does not necessarily denote the economically poor exclusively but stands for all those who are oppressed in one way or another. Cf. G.M. SOARES-PRABHU, "Class in the Bible: The Biblical Poor a Social Class?", in: R.S. SUJIRTHARAJAH (ed.), *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, 147-171.
10. A. NOLAN, *Jesus before Christianity*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978, pp. 27-51.
11. The proclamation from heaven in Mk 1:11 and par. is a combination of Ps 2:7 and Is 42:1. The first (Ps 2:7) is a psalm sung on the occasion of the enthronement of king whereas the second (Is 42:1) is taken from the first of the four songs of the servant. By means of this combined citation the first (Ps 2:7) is interpreted in the light of the second (Is 42:1). In other words, Jesus is the son or 'messianic king' (popular expectation) precisely as the suffering servant (interpretation in the light of the Paschal Mystery: Jesus' Death and Resurrection). A similar interpretation one finds in Heb 5:5-6 wherein the first citation (Ps 2:7) on Jesus' sonship is interpreted in terms of his High Priesthood (Ps 110:4).
12. Based on the criterion of 'multiple attestation' Jesus' experience of *Abba* could be considered historical. For the texts and necessary details on Johannine perspective, see my, "Symbols and Sacraments in the Fourth Gospel", in: F.X. D'SA *et al.*, (eds.), *The World as Sacrament*, Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 1998, pp. 103-106.
13. See my "The Radicality of Jesus' Priesthood", *Bible Bhashyam* 25 (1999), pp. 85-103, 200-243.
14. For details cf. G.M. SOARES-PRABHU, "The Spirituality of Jesus as a Spirituality of Solidarity and Struggle", in: J. Vattamattom (ed.), *Liberative Struggles in a Violent Society*, Hyderabad: Forum Publications, 1991, pp. 136-161.
15. For details, see S. KUTHIRAKKATTEL, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry According to Mark's Gospel (1:14-3:6): A Redaction Critical Study* (AnaBib 123), Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1990, pp. 105-115.
16. In the case of Moses and Gideon an angel of the Lord appeared (Ex 3:2; Judg 6:11). The Lord came to Jeremiah (1:4) and Elijah passed by Elisha (1 Kings 19:19), etc.
17. Moses was keeping watch over the flock of his father-in-law (Ex 3:1). Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress (Judg 6:11) and Elisha was ploughing (1 Kings 19:19), etc.
18. Note the future tense: "I will make you become fish for humans" (1:17).
19. The omission of the name of Andrew (but not of Simon, James or John) in the Lucan narration is significant. In the Marcan narrative Andrew belongs to the first pair of

disciples whom Jesus called, but in the list of the Twelve (3:16-19) and in the scene of the eschatological discourse (13:3) he is placed fourth! Among the four disciples whom Jesus had called all except Andrew are given a new name (3:16-17). Moreover, in some of the significant scenes where Peter, James and John are present Andrew is 'missing' (cf. 5:37; 9:2; 14:33). It is possible that his importance 'faded away' in the process of the transmission of the synoptic tradition.

20. The transfiguration scene in the synoptic Gospels could have been such a retrojection.
21. Mt 3; Mk 2; Lk 7; Jn 40; Acts 13; Paul 17; Heb 6; Jn (Letters) 27; rest 3 (= total 118).
22. Cf. W. BAUER, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (translated by W.F. Arndt & F.W. Gingrich), Chicago: University Press, 1973, pp. 504-505. See also the following important texts from Johannine writings: 3:36; 5:38; 6:27, 56; 8:31; 9:41; 12:34, 46; 14:10, 16; 1Jn 2:6, 10, 14, 17, 19, 24, 27 (bis), 28; 3:6, 9, 14-15, 17, 24 (bis); 4:12-13, 15, 16 (bis).
23. For instance, *erchesthai* is employed for Jesus' coming from above, from the Father, for the coming of the 'hour', etc. Cf. W.F. MOULTON & A.S. GEDEN, (eds.), *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1970, pp.381-387. The verb *erchesthai* is used in the sense of believing (the initial step to believing in Jesus) in the following texts in John: 3:20-21; 5:24; 6:35, 37, 44-45, 65; 7:36-37; 8:21-22; 10:41-42; 11:27, 45; 12:47; 16:6.
24. The verb to see, *horan*, is also used in the sense of believing, although not necessarily in the sense of final and definitive faith in Jesus. See Jn 3:36; 6:36, 46; 9:36-37; 11:40; 14:7, 9; 19:35; 20:29.
25. Just as the verbs *erchesthai*, *horan* and *menein* are used in the theological sense so also the chronology. Cf. S. KUTHIRAKKATTEL, "The Beginning of the Symbols: The Meaning and Function of Jn 2:1-11", *Bible Bhashyam* 24 (1998), pp. 82-83.
26. R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. I, New York: Doubleday, 1966, p. 77.
27. For details see X. LÉON-DUFOUR, *Resurrection and the Message of Easter*, New York: Chapman, 1971, pp. 63-79.
28. Note the twin purpose in Greek expressed by *hina ... kai hina ...*
29. For details cf. K. STOCK, *Boten aus dem Mit-Ihm Sein* (AnaBib 70), Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1975, pp. 15-27.
30. Cf. KUTHIRAKKATTEL, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry*, pp. 132-137, 248-249.
31. Cf. STOCK, pp. 34-41.
32. For details see, KUTHIRAKKATTEL, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry*, pp. 244-246.
33. Cf. W. MARCHEL, *Abba, Père! La prière du Christ et des Chrétiens* (AnaBib 19A), Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971.
34. For details, see. S. KUTHIRAKKATTEL, "Jesus' Prayer and Christian Prayer", *Bible Bhashyam* 7 (1981), pp. 160-161.
35. Cf. M. HENGEL, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (translated by J.C.G. Greig), Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981.
36. Explicit in Matthew (10:9) and in Luke (9:2) but implicit in Mark (cf. 3:14).
37. If two persons agreed on a particular cause (for instance, testimony in the court) it was valid (cf. Mk 14:56; Mt 26:60-61).
38. Other ancient authorities read seventy-two.

39. In the New Testament times it was thought that there were seventy nations in the world. So the designation LXX for the Greek translation of the Old Testament.
40. *Martyrein*: Mt 1; Mk 0; Lk 1; Jn 33; Acts 11; Paul 8; Jn (Letters) 10; rest 12 ; (= total 76).
Martyria: Mt 0; Mk 3; Lk 1; Jn 14; Acts 1; Paul 2; Jn (Letters) 7; rest 9; (= total 37).
41. It is noteworthy that, even though dualism is more pronounced in John than in the synoptics, the fourth gospel narrates no exorcism stories at all.
42. That the Father has sent Jesus is an important theme in John: used with the verb *apostellein* 17 times and *pempein* 25 times.
43. Cf. KUTHRAKKATTEL, "Symbols and Sacraments", pp. 103-106.
44. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 75-77.
45. According to most scholars the presence of John and Mary standing near the cross of Jesus (20:25-27) is a theological construct of the evangelist rather than a historical fact.
46. Cf. KUTHIRAKKATTEL, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry*, pp. 88-92.
47. For details see, H.W. BEYER, "*diakonein ktl.*", *ThDNT*, II, 81-93.
48. Compare the two leading articles in *Vidyajyoti* 64 (May 2000), pp. 328-341; 343-352. Both by eminent dignitaries of the Catholic Church. The first, according to me, is like a political speech, very aggressive in language and fails to substantiate adequate evidence for some of the key accusations. The second is very sober, yet, thought-provoking, touching the heart and enabling one to think and evaluate.
49. Quoted by J.D.G. DUNN , *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, London: SCM, 1990, p. 377.
50. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 81-102.
51. Cf. H. JEDIN (ed.), *History of the Church* (abridged edition, vol. I), New York: Crossroad, 1992, pp. 164-181; 197-204.
52. Cf. T.F. O'DEA, *Sociology and the Study of Religion: Theory, Research, Interpretation*, New York: Basic Books, 1970, pp. 240-255; M. WEBER, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, New York: Free Press, 1964, pp. 365-373.
53. JEREMIAS, pp. 147-221; SCHÜRER, vol. II, pp. 227-313.
54. Cf. KUTHIURAKKATTEL, "Symbols and Sacraments", pp. 103-106.
55. Cf. JEDIN, pp. 35-39; 49-53; 79-83; 146-149.

Priestly Formation: Historical Perspectives

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Introduction

As the title indicates, the aim of this essay is to study “priestly formation” from a historical perspective in the context of the seminary system as it exists in the Church today. The theme of this issue of the journal, however, is broader, namely, vocation and formation in general, which includes the whole spectrum of “religious life” as well. Here, too, the question of formation is crucial. However, it will not be possible for me to deal with religious life within this short space, although much of what will be said is applicable to religious life as well.

The essay is divided into three parts. One of the most important influences in the history of priestly formation in the Church was the seminary legislation of the Council of Trent. The first part deals with an examination of the situation before the Council of Trent; it then discusses the Tridentine legislation and its implementation in the Church. The second part deals with the history of priestly formation in India, both in the Thomas Christian community and in the Latin Church. The third part discusses the contribution of Vatican II toward a new vision of priestly training and ministry in the Church. The essay ends with an analytical conclusion.

1. *The Institution of Seminaries in the West*

In today’s usage the term seminary designates a special type of school dedicated to the spiritual, moral, and intellectual formation of the clergy. It is derived from the Latin word *seminarium*, which was commonly used to describe a place where young seedlings were prepared for eventual transplantation. Its first official usage dates back to the Council of Trent which did not invent the term but accepted it from the writings of the period, of such men as Cardinal Reginald Pole, St. John Fisher, and St. Ignatius of Loyola.¹

The Council of Trent was called in order to respond to a serious challenge to the Church, namely, the Protestant Reformation. Within the perspective of defence and restoration, it seemed necessary that the Church’s theology be made as traditional and clear, and its discipline as pragmatic and effective as possible. As far as its ministries were concerned, regarding which Protestant criticism was the most severe, the Church sought to ensure that its ministers were genuinely interested in the service of the Church, and that the “hirelings” within could no longer threaten the Church.² With the breakdown of feudalism and the rise of the universi-