
jnanadeepa

Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Formation
Of Religious Leaders

Volume 3 No. 2

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Jnanadeepa:
Pune Journal of Religious Studies

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Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies

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Editorial

It is undeniable that religions exert a lot of influence on the life of people today. Whether they will continue to influence people in future depends to a large extent on the kind of leaders they are able to train. Hence, the selection and formation of religious leaders should be a matter of concern for all religions.

This is particularly true of the Church. For centuries the Church has invested a lot of resources, both personal and material, on the training of priests and religious. To what extent have her efforts been successful? It is difficult to say. What is, however, quite clear today is that there is a growing dissatisfaction with the way candidates for priesthood and religious life are recruited and formed. Hence, there is need for a rethinking of our recruitment and formation policy. The Church has to make sure that the right kind of young people are selected and that an adequate and meaningful formation is imparted to them.

It is against this background that this issue of *Jnanadeepa* has chosen to discuss the formation of future priests and religious.

The issue opens with two articles by two social scientists. The first one deals with the vocation and formation of clergy and religious from a social science perspective. It is based on an empirical study conducted by some students of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth under the guidance of two social scientists. This study has collected a large amount of data on the family background of candidates to priesthood and religious life, the history of their vocation, their goals in life and motivations for joining, the effectiveness of formation and the competence of the formators. The article analyses and critically reflects on this data. It sheds light on the problems we face in the recruitment and formation of Christian leaders.

Equally informative is the second article which deals with the formation imparted to future priests in our seminaries. Basing himself on three scientific studies on different aspects of priestly formation, the author examines the kind of culture that presently exists in seminaries and the kind of priests it is likely to nurture. He finds that the culture that is now prevalent in the seminaries is deficient in pastoral dimension; that it emphasizes a theoretical rather than a practical orientation; that it lacks the horizontal dimension of spirituality; and that it exhibits some elements of rule consciousness, conformity and fear. Hence, the author makes a plea for the creation of a culture and structures that are more conducive to the formation of the kind of priests the Church and the people of India need today.

As Sacred Scripture and the Church's tradition offer important insights for the renewal of the formation of priests and religious, there are two articles in this issue which deal with them. The first one develops the New Testament Perspectives on the formation of Christian leaders. It focuses on the values and priorities in Jesus' life, the formation he imparted to the apostles, and the main

main qualities he expected them to have. By way of conclusion the author points out the significance of all this for the formation of Christian leaders in India today. The second deals with the historical development of priestly formation in the Church. He discusses the pre-Tridentine practice, the establishment of seminaries by a decree of Trent and the advantages and disadvantages of the seminary system of priestly formation. He also highlights the new understanding of priestly ministry and the new orientation in priestly formation which were brought about by Vatican II and post-Conciliar developments. He concludes by making some constructive suggestions for the improvement of priestly formation in our day.

It is clear that the Church can learn a lot from the way different religions recruit and form their leaders. Hence, the plan was to include in this issue three articles, dealing with the selection and training of religious leaders in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Unfortunately, because of developments beyond our control, two of these had to be dropped. Hence, only one article is included here. It deals with the recruitment and training of religious leaders in Hinduism. The author stresses the importance of the Guru in the training of religious leaders in Hinduism. She also points out that the goal of this training is God-realization.

There are three articles which are future-oriented and suggest ways and means of improving the quality of formation imparted to candidates for priesthood and religious life. The first one which deals with the formation of women religious in the 21st century advocates a contextualised formation in and for mission. It also stresses the need for retrieving the strength and beauty of Indian women religious. The second article discusses the training of priests in the 21st century. After a critical review of priestly formation in pre-Vatican II times, the author puts forward some concrete suggestions for a contextualized and more relevant training of future priests. The third article looks at formation from intercultural perspectives. It makes a clear distinction between formation, which has to do with vision, and training, which is concerned about strategies. While formation demands creativity, training imitates procedures and copies methods. The author insists on the need to adopt an intercultural approach to formation so that priests and religious are enabled to respond interculturally to the challenges of our time.

There is a special feature in this issue – an article by Raimon Panikkar: The Encounter of Religions: The Unavoidable Dialogue. This is a short summary of the author's ideas or rather his life experience. It begins by pointing out that interreligious dialogue is a vital necessity today. For our current problems of justice, ecology and peace-keeping require a mutual understanding of the peoples of the world that is impossible without dialogue. He goes on to describe the kind of dialogue we require today – open, interior, political, mythical, holistic, etc.

It is our hope that a radical reorientation of the formation of priests and religious will enable the Church to creatively respond to the manifold challenges of the new century.

Kurien Kunnumparam, SJ
Editor

Vocation and Formation of Priests and Religious in India

An Empirical Study

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In his recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Pope John Paul II highlighted the importance of priestly formation in these words: "The formation of future priests, both diocesan and religious, and life-long assiduous care for their personal sanctification in the ministry and for the constant updating of their pastoral commitment are considered by the Church one of the most demanding and important tasks for the future of the evangelization of humanity" (No. 2). Perhaps no other organization invests so much in terms of human and financial resources in the formation of its personnel as the Church does. Few other professions require so many long years of formation as the Catholic priesthood. Today a candidate to the priesthood spends, in addition to regular school and college education, anywhere between 10 to 15 years in formation before he is ordained.

However, data from several studies suggest that, in spite of the enormous investment of time, money and personnel, priestly formation in India today fails to deliver the goods, at least quality goods. For example, a nation-wide survey on the Catholic Priesthood commissioned by the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, in which more than 6000 lay people were interviewed, revealed that the Catholic clergy in India is facing a serious crisis of credibility (Parathazham 1988 & 1994). A more recent study, which investigated why large numbers of Catholics nowadays are leaving the Church to join the Pentecostal sects, found that the Catholic laity attributed this phenomenon mainly to the lack of pastoral care in the Church and the unedifying life of the clergy (Parathazham 1996).

Why do the priests and religious of today seem to lack the ability to provide the kind of spiritual and moral leadership that is expected of them? To what extent are the recruitment policies and formation structures responsible for this state of affairs? The present study¹ attempts to explore these and related questions.

1. This was originally a field-study project of 18 philosophy students (1998-99 batch) of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, India. I gratefully acknowledge the contribution of these students as well as the assistance of my colleague, Dr. Anthony da Silva, SJ, in designing and executing this study. This study was made possible by a research grant from MISSIO.

After a brief note on the methodology and the profile of the sample, the main findings of the study will be presented under the following headings: family background and history of vocation, goals and motivations, perspectives on formation, and present feelings about vocational decision. This will be followed by a discussion of some of the questions the study raises about the formation of the clergy and religious in India.

I. Methodology and Profile of the Sample

1. Methodology

The data for this study was collected through a structured questionnaire, which was designed to elicit information on the following: (1) family background of the seminarians and the sisters; (2) history of vocation; (3) goals in life and motivation for joining; (4) perspectives on formation; (5) perceptions of oneself vis-a-vis one's peers in the world outside; (5) comparison of home and the formation house; (6) evaluation of formators; and (7) present feelings about the decision to become a priest or religious. The questionnaire contained nearly 150 closed-ended questions.

The primary sample, consisting of 2824 respondents, was drawn from seminarians doing philosophical or theological studies and from sisters who are still in formation or have recently completed their formation. In addition, a secondary sample of 330 lay people of the same age-group was selected in order to make a comparative study of the clergy and the laity on certain personality traits.

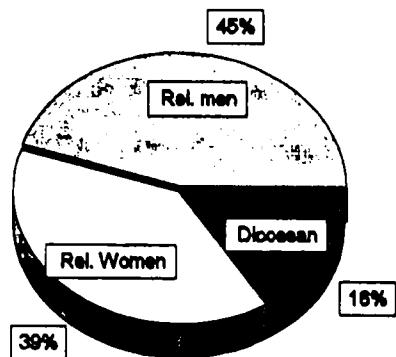
The samples were drawn from the following locations: Shillong, Calcutta, Bhopal, Indore, Pune, Goa, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Bangalore, Chennai, Alwaye and Kottayam. The questionnaires were hand-delivered to the respondents and collected in sealed envelopes to ensure anonymity.

2. Profile of the Sample

Gender and Status: Of the 2824 respondents in the primary sample, 61% were male and 39% female. As Chart 1 shows, 45% were seminarians affiliated to religious congregations, 16% were seminarians incardinated to dioceses, and the rest (39%) were religious women.

In the seminarians' sample, there was almost equal number of philosophy students (51%) and theology students (49%).

Chart 1: Composition of Sample by Affiliation



About three-fourth of the religious women in the sample were Junior Sisters; the rest had made their final profession in the recent past. Larger numbers of Junior Sisters were included in the sample because, since they are still in formation, their views would be more relevant to our investigation..

Age: The median age of sample is 25 years. The sisters were older than the seminarians, with a median age of 26. As Chart 2 reveals, 32% of the respondents were between 18 and 22 years of age, 38% between 23 and 27 years, and 30% were 28 years of age or older.

Region: The sample for the study, as indicated above, was drawn from seminaries and formation houses in nine States of India, namely, Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad and Vijayawada), Goa, Madhya Pradesh (Indore and Bhopal), Maharashtra (Pune), Meghalaya (Shillong), Karnataka (Bangalore), Kerala (Alwaye and Kottayam), Tamil Nadu (Chennai) and West Bengal (Calcutta). Since many of these are common formation houses with candidates from different parts of India, the sample was representative of the whole country. As Chart 3 indicates, the largest number of respondents were born in Kerala, followed by Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. This skewed distribution is indicative of the fact that by far the largest number of vocations to priesthood and religious life in India come from the South, particularly Kerala.

Chart 2: Age Distribution (%)

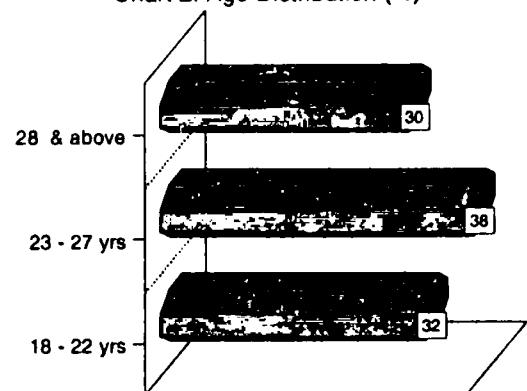
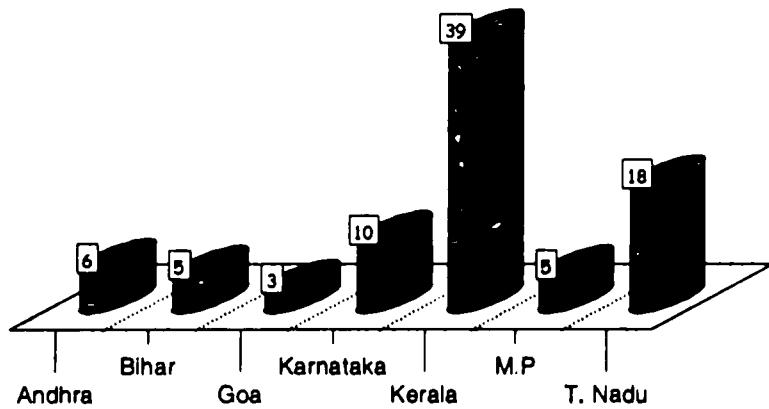


Chart 3: Respondents by State of Origin



II. Family Background and History of Vocation

1. Family Background

Number of Children: The vast majority of the candidates to priesthood and religious life come from fairly large families. The average number of children in the families of the respondents is 5.4 (median = 5). Three-fourths of the candidates are from families which have four or more children. Less than a fifth of vocations come from smaller families with two to three children. Only 2.8% are from families where the candidate is the only child (see Chart 4). Among single child vocations, the vast

majority (79%) are from the families where the child is a son; only 21% are from families where the only child is a daughter. In other words, there is greater probability of a boy who is an only child becoming a priest than a girl who is an only child becoming a religious sister.

Parents' Education: As Chart 5 reveals, among the fathers of the respondents, 12% had never been to school, while 22% had attended only primary school. One-fourth were educated up to middle school and another one-fourth had completed SSC. Only 15% had studied beyond SSC. In fact, less than 7% of the respondents' fathers had a college degree.

Chart 4: Number of Children in Family (%)

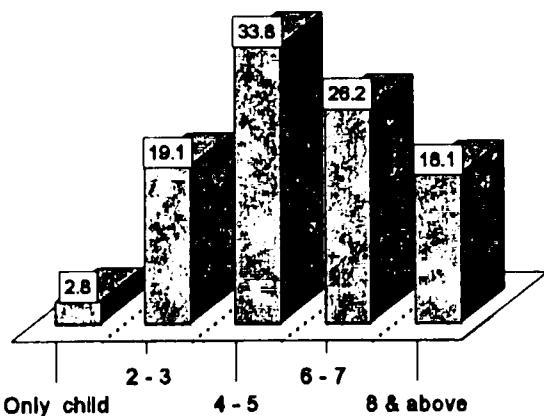
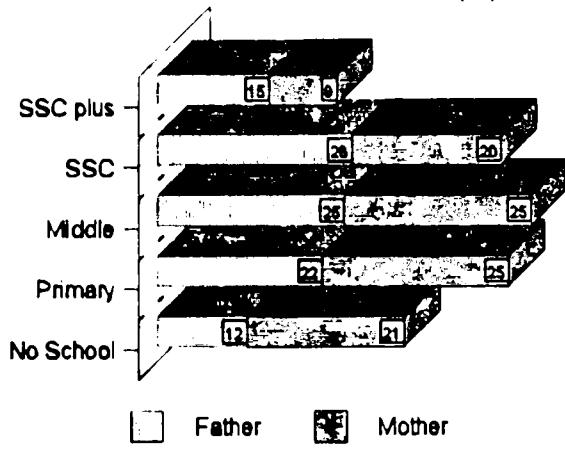


Chart 5. Parents' Education Level (%)



The education level of the mothers of the respondents was considerably lower than that of the fathers. More than one-fifth of them had never been to school. Half of them had primary or middle school level education. While one-fifth had completed SSC, less than ten percent had gone beyond SSC. Only 2.5% of the mothers of the respondents were college graduates.

Siblings' Education: The average respondent of the survey has four siblings (median). Of the four siblings, typically only one has graduated from college. In other words, three-fourths of the siblings of the respondents have not had the benefit of college education. Among the respondents themselves, however, 60% are college graduates.

Parents' Occupation: The fathers of the majority of candidates to priesthood and/or religious life are farmers or small peasants. Skilled labourer is next most frequently mentioned occupation of the father. Nearly 12% belong to this category. About 8% are lower level professionals like school teachers, police or armed forces, while 6% are self-employed. Less than 5% of the candidates' fathers belong to high income occupational categories like upper division white-collar workers or higher level professionals like doctors or engineers. As for the mothers, the overwhelming majority (84%) are house-wives.

Perception of Parents:

Relationship with one's parents is generally believed to be a significant factor influencing one's choice of vocation (see, for example, Rulla, Imoda & Riddick 1978, 111-116). In order to understand the kind of relationship the candidates had with their parents, the survey listed six character traits, and the respondents were asked to indicate whether or not each of these would describe their father and/or mother. As Chart

6 indicates, the vast majority evaluate their parents positively. For example, more than 70% of the respondents characterized their parents as *affectionate*, *gentle* and *supportive*. On the other hand, negative descriptors like *authoritarian*, *critical* and *strict* were applied to the parents far less frequently. There is some difference in the respondents' perception of the father vis-a-vis the mother. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the mother emerges as the favourite. In comparison to the father, the mother is more likely to be characterized as *affectionate*, *gentle* and *supportive*, and less likely to be thought of as *authoritarian*, *critical* and *strict*. More than half of the respondents felt that their father was a *strict* disciplinarian; nearly 40% found him to be *authoritarian* and about one-third remember him as being *critical*.

There was some difference in the way the sons and the daughters perceived their parents. The daughters were more likely than the sons to characterize their father as *affectionate* (78% vs 69%) and the mother as *strict* (41% vs 32%). The sons, on the other hand, were somewhat more likely to perceive their father as *critical* (36% vs 28%).

Economic Status of the Family:

The survey asked the respondents to rate the economic status of their family on a five-point scale ranging from *very well off* to *very poor*. As Chart 7 indicates, the majority (59%) characterized their family's economic status as *average*. While nearly one-third described their family as economically *well off* (26%) or *very well off* (6%), only ten percent reported that their

Chart 6: Perception of Parents (%)

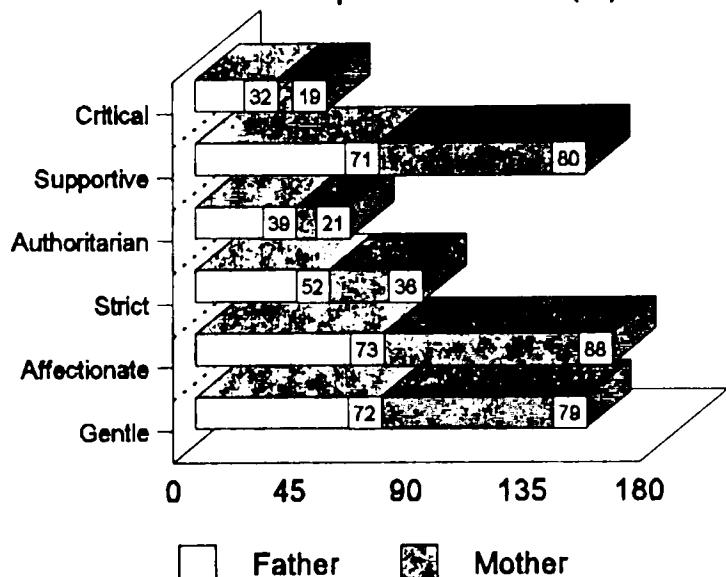
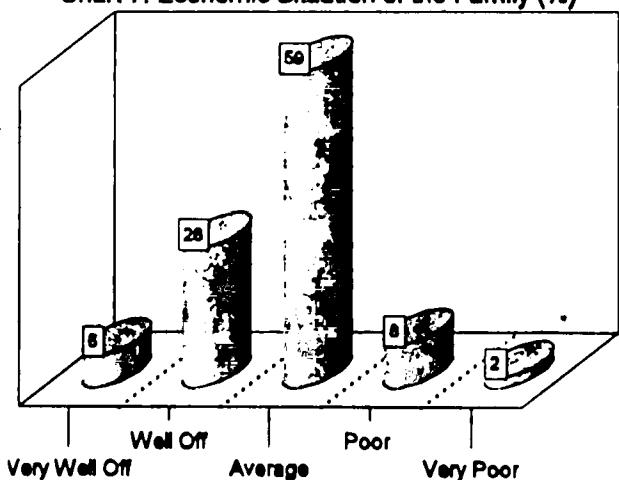


Chart 7: Economic Situation of the Family (%)



families were *poor* (8%) or *very poor* (2%). The Economic situation of the family is correlated to father's occupation. As expected, the families of those who are in higher level professions or white-collar occupations are better off than those of the unskilled workers and farmers. Those who are unemployed or unable to work are the poorest. There is also a positive correlation between the education level of the father and the economic situation of the family. For example, nearly 60% of the respondents whose fathers have a college degree say that their families are *well off* or *very well off*.

2. History of Vocation

Vocation: A Childhood Dream:

When does a boy or a girl first start thinking about becoming a priest or a religious? We asked our respondents to indicate at what age the thought of becoming a priest or religious occurred to them for the first time. The median age at which they started thinking about their vocation is 12 years (mean=12.67). As Chart 8 indicates, more than a quarter of them had thought of becoming a priest or a religious already by the time they were ten years old. Half the respondents had felt the desire to become a priest or a religious before they entered the teens. By age 14, two-thirds had thought of pursuing a religious vocation. Becoming a priest or a religious was a childhood dream for a large number of our respondents.

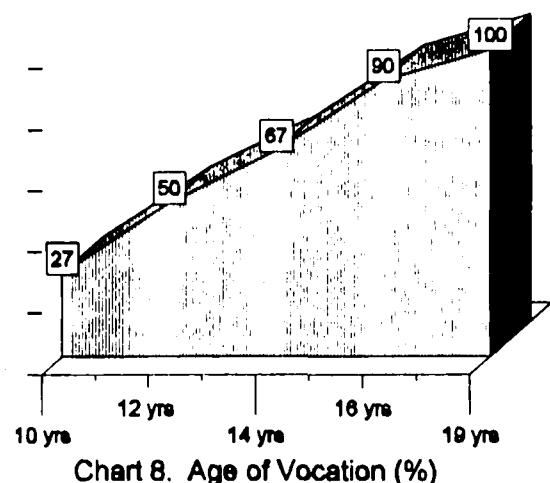
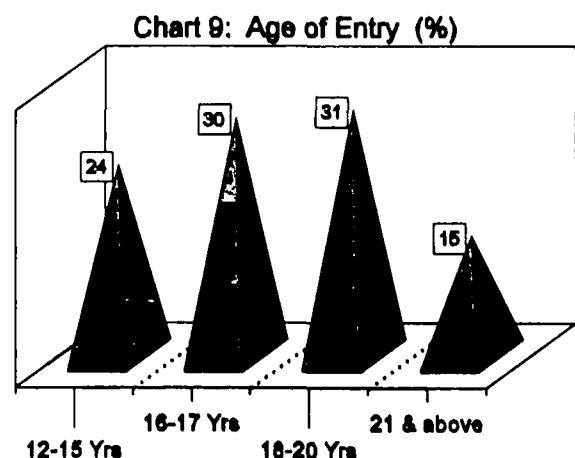


Chart 8. Age of Vocation (%)

Age of Entry: Substantial numbers of the candidates to priesthood and religious life entered the formation house at a fairly early age (see Chart 9). A quarter of the respondents reported that they were in the formation house already by the time they were 15 years of age. Another 30% joined when they were 16 or 17. Only 15% of the candidates joined after they were 21 years of age.



There is a significant difference between the Brothers and the Sisters with respect to the age of entry as illustrated in Chart 10. The Brothers typically join at an

earlier age than the Sisters. Nearly one-third (31%) of the Brothers joined at the age of fifteen or earlier, in contrast to only 13% of the sisters. 55% of the Sisters joined after completing 18 years of age, compared to 39% of the Brothers.

Another significant pattern that emerges from the data is that the diocesan seminarians typically join at a younger age, compared to their counterparts in the religious congregations. While 37% of the diocesan seminarians entered the seminary at the age of 15 or earlier, only 21% of the members of the religious congregations joined at this early age. Similarly, whereas nearly half of the religious brothers joined after they were 18 years of age, less than one-third of the diocesans had completed 18 at the time they entered the seminary.

Education: Nearly half of the respondents joined the seminary or convent after their SSC, if not before. In fact, about 4% had joined even before they had completed their SSC. Another 40% had completed the 12th standard when they joined. Only 13% of our respondents were college graduates when they entered the seminary or formation house (Chart 11).

Chart 10: Age of Entry by Gender (%)

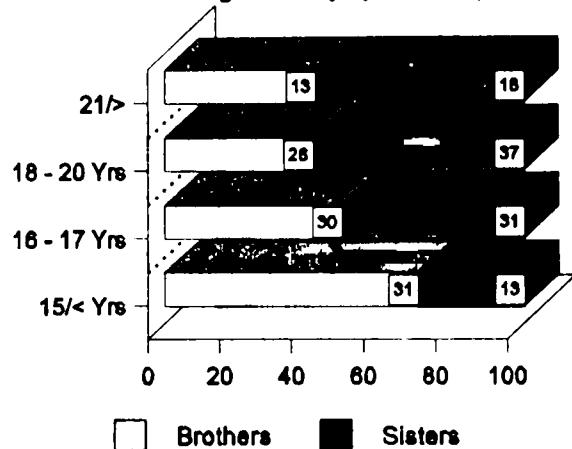


Chart 11. Education at the Time of Joining (%)

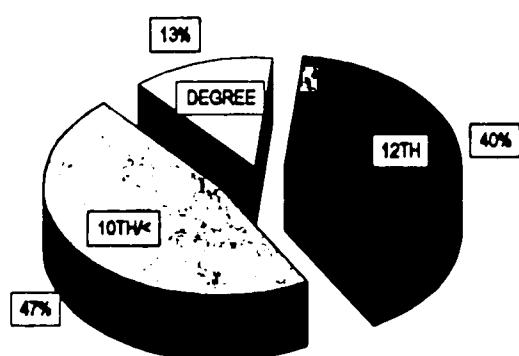
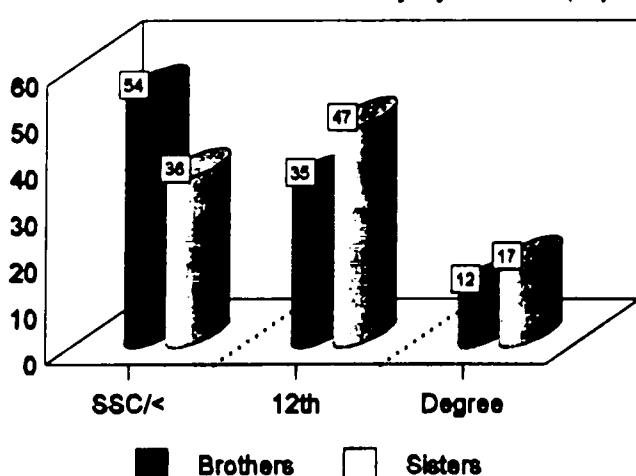


Chart 12: Education at Entry by Gender (%)



As in the case of age, there is a significant difference in the education level of the Brothers and the Sisters at the time of their entry into the formation house. The Sisters generally had a higher education level than the Brothers at the time of joining. As Chart 12 shows, while the majority of the Brothers joined with only SSC education, the majority of the Sisters entered after having completed the 12th. Similarly, more Sisters than Brothers had a college degree at time of their admission.

Further, among the seminarians themselves, the religious are somewhat more likely to have a higher education level than the diocesans when they enter the seminary. For example, whereas 62% of the diocesans joined with SSC or less, only 51% of the religious joined at this level.

As Chart 13 makes clear, the bulk of those who opt to become priests and religious today do not appear to be particularly gifted intellectually. Two-thirds of them have obtained only second class or pass class marks in the SSC examination. Less than a third of them were placed in the first division. Only a meagre 5% secured a distinction.

Chart 13. Performance in SSC (%)

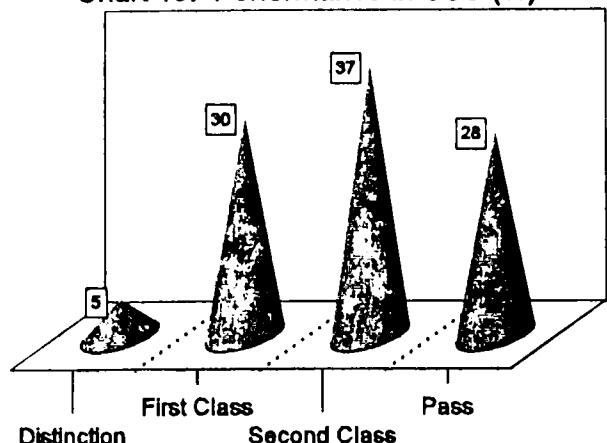
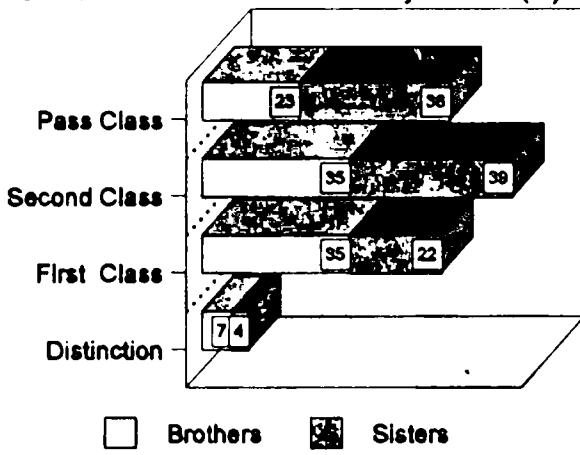


Chart 14. Performance in SSC by Gender (%)

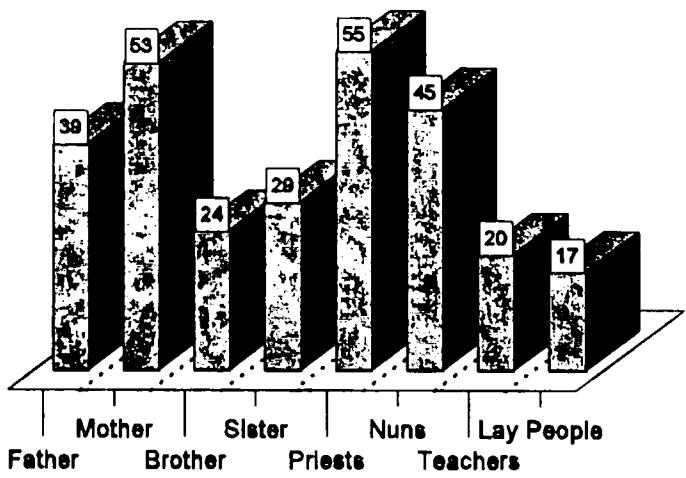


There is a significant difference between the Brothers and the Sisters in terms of academic performance. As Chart 14 reveals, the Brothers in general have performed better than the Sisters in the SSC examination. 42% of the Brothers have secured a first class or a distinction in SSC, in contrast to only 26% of the Sisters. Similarly, whereas 75% of the Sisters passed SSC in the Second class or Pass class, only 58% of the Brothers belonged to this category.

People Who Influenced:

Chart 15 reveals the role played by different people in the respondents' choice of priestly or religious vocation. Priest and mother are the two figures who are most likely to influence the decision to become a priest or a religious. More than 50% of the respondents reported that they were influenced by them. Nuns are the next most important agents in the

Chart 15. Persons Who Influenced Vocation (%)



promotion of religious vocations; a sizable 45% of the respondents said that they were inspired by nuns. The father's influence in nurturing vocation in the children is also considerable, but certainly not as strong as that of the mother. Quite a few also reported that they were influenced by their siblings and teachers. Overall, family appears to be the most important agency in the promotion of religious vocations. Two-thirds of our respondents were positively influenced by one or more members of their family in their choice of a religious vocation.

The relative influence of different persons on the vocational choice of the Brothers and the Sisters is shown in Chart 16. For the Brothers the single most important influence is the priest; more than two-thirds of the Brothers indicated that they were influenced by one or more priests as opposed to one-third of the Sisters. For the Sisters, on the other hand, the key figure is the nun, with more than 60% reporting that they were influenced by one or more nuns. The influence of parents and siblings on the choice of vocation seems to be more pronounced on the Brothers than on the Sisters.

5. Family's Response

The majority of the respondents were encouraged by their families to pursue their vocation to priesthood and/or religious life (Chart 17). While 16% were discouraged by their families, 22% were neither encouraged nor discouraged. These findings indicate that the vocation to priesthood and religious life is still highly valued by the vast majority of the Catholic population.

Family's response to vocation is correlated to its economic status. As Chart 18 reveals, the poor families are more

Chart 16. Persons Influencing Vocation by Gender (%)

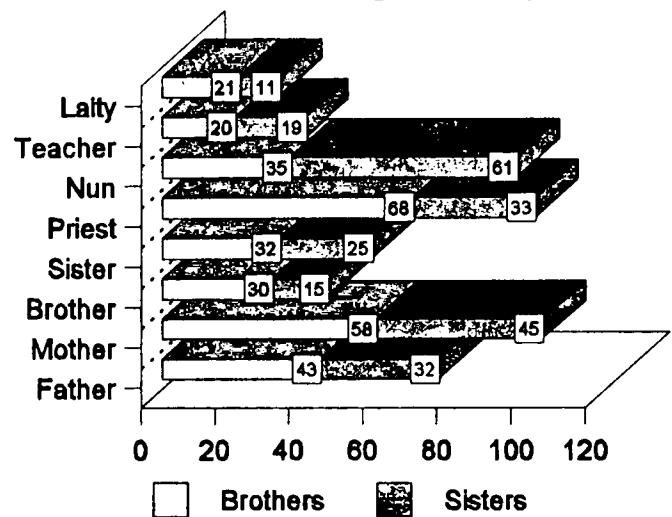
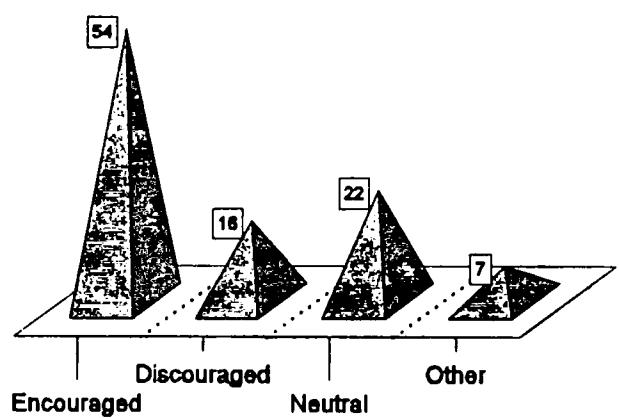


Chart 17. Family's Response to Vocation (%)



likely to encourage vocations than the average and well-to-do families. For example, while almost two-thirds of the poor families encouraged the vocation in their family, less than one-half (48%) of the well-to-do families did so. Similarly, in contrast to only 11% of the economically weaker families, 21% of the economically well off families discouraged the vocation in their family. In other words, the lower the economic status of the family, the greater the enthusiasm for vocations in the family.

Chart 18. Family Response by Economic Status (%)

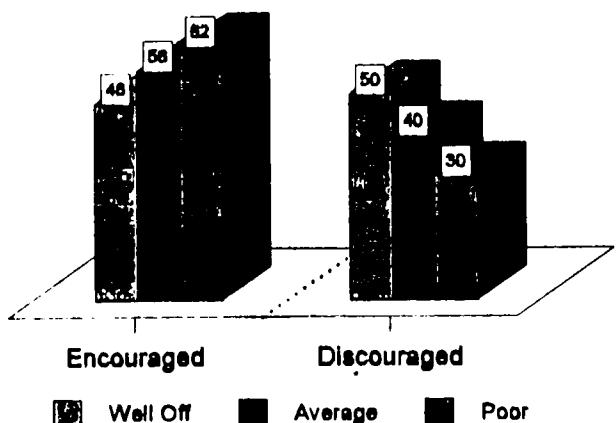
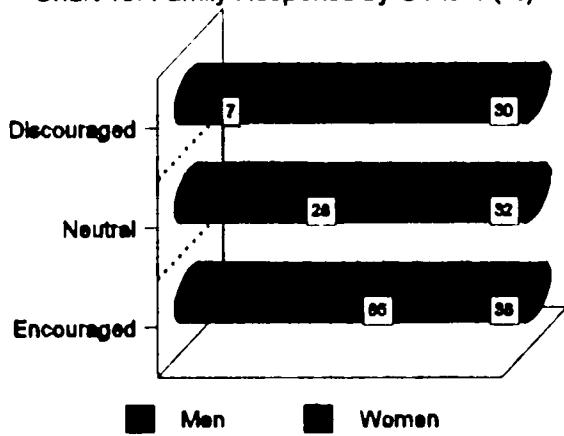


Chart 19. Family Response by Gender (%)



Data also suggests that families are more likely to encourage the male members to become priests than the female members to become nuns. As Chart 19 makes clear, while 65 % male respondents stated that their families encouraged them to pursue their vocation, only 38% of the female respondents said that they were encouraged by their families. Conversely, while only 7% of the families discouraged the vocations of the sons, nearly one-third discouraged the vocations of the daughters.

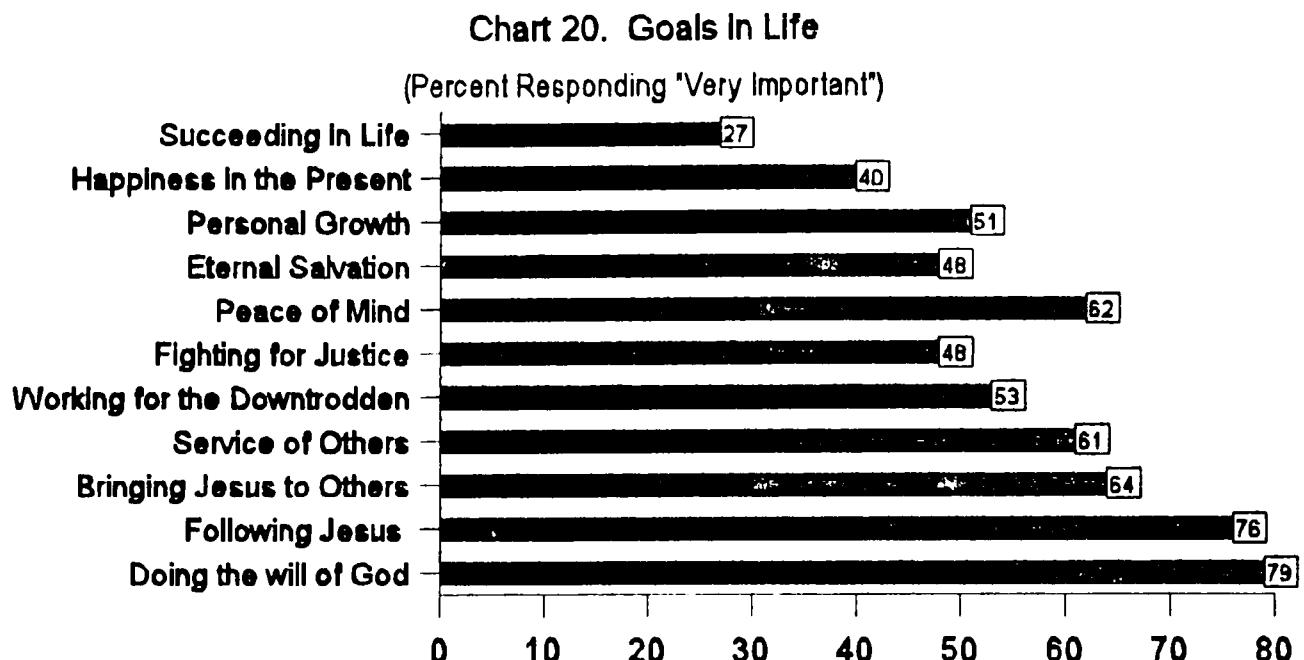
III. Goals and Motivations

1. Goals in Life

What are the goals of those who aspire to become priests and religious today? In an effort to find out, the respondents were presented with a set of eleven possible goals in life; they were then asked to rate each of these goals on a four-point scale of importance, ranging from "very important" to "not at all important". Chart 20 below illustrates the relative importance of each of these goals in the respondents' perspective.

As the Chart makes clear, our respondents attached the greatest importance to God/Jesus oriented goals. The highest number of respondents (79%) chose "doing the will of God," as a very important goal in their life; the second highest number of

respondents (76%) considered “following Jesus” a very important goal of their life, followed by “bringing Jesus to others,” which was rated very important by 64% of the respondents.



Comparatively fewer respondents have considered social or other-centred goals as very important. While “service to others” in general is endorsed as very important by as many as 61%, social goals that entail a preferential option for the poor like “working for the downtrodden” and “fighting for justice” are rated as very important by considerably fewer number of respondents.

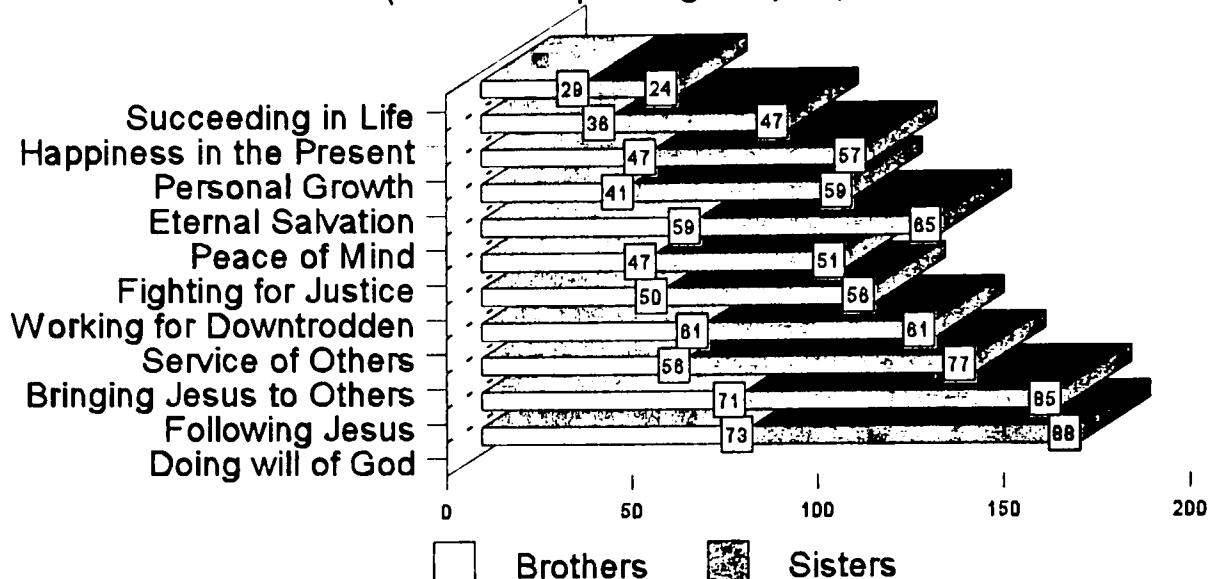
Personal or self-oriented goals have the lowest priority. Except for “peace of mind,” which is rated as very important by 62%, relatively fewer respondents think the other self-oriented goals like “personal growth,” “eternal salvation,” and “happiness in the present” to be very important. “Succeeding in life” receives the lowest rating; only 27% of the respondents see it as a very important goal in their life..

When we break up the data by gender (Chart 21), that is, Brothers versus Sisters, we see that in general the Sisters are more inclined than the Brothers to rate the listed goals as very important. The difference between the Brothers and the Sisters is largest with regard to the God-centred goals. For example, “doing the will of God” is very important to 88% of Sisters in contrast to 73% of the Brothers. Similarly, while 77% of the Sisters consider “bringing Jesus to others” a very important goal in their lives, only 56% of the Brothers feel so.

With regard to the “other-centred” goals, however, the difference between the Brothers and the Sisters is hardly significant. “Service to others” is equally

Chart 21. Goals in Life: Brothers Versus Sisters

(Percent responding 'very important')



important to both the groups. As for “working for the downtrodden” and “fighting for justice,” the Sisters rate these only marginally higher than the Brothers.

Personal goals like “eternal salvation,” “personal growth,” “happiness in the present,” and “peace of mind” also received fewer endorsements from the Brothers compared to the Sisters. An exception to this pattern is “succeeding in life,” which was rated somewhat higher in importance by the Brothers.

Taken together, these data suggest that the candidates to priesthood and religious life today are more focussed on God-centred goals, and relatively less concerned about self-oriented and other-oriented goals. The traditional spirituality, which emphasizes one’s relationship with God – the vertical dimension – without laying adequate stress on one’s relationship to self and others – the horizontal dimension –, appears to dominate the consciousness of the Sisters and the Brothers. The disjunction between God-orientation and other/self-orientation raises the question whether formation is still geared to an “otherworldly” spirituality.

2. Motivations for Joining

The reasons why people choose to become priests or religious are many and varied. Lack of proper motivation in vocation is often cited as one of the reasons for the sagging credibility of the priests and religious today. Ascertaining the real motivations of those who opt for priesthood or religious life is an extremely complex and difficult task. For one thing, such motivations are often unconscious. And even when the candidates are conscious of their real motivations, they may not divulge

them in a survey because of the strong social desirability factor. It would be difficult to admit even anonymously in a public survey that one is becoming a priest or a religious for what the society considers to be the wrong reasons.

Table 1. Motivations for Joining (%)

	Very Important	Important	Not so/ Not at all Important
To respond to God's call	55	32	13
To bring the message of Jesus to others	50	38	12
To serve others	50	39	11
To grow closer to Jesus	53	33	14
To liberate the poor and the oppressed	40	41	19
To ensure eternal salvation	27	39	34
The status of priests and religious	20	33	47
To have a better future	18	26	56
To escape difficulties at home	7	14	79
Not to be a burden to the family	6	14	80
To fulfill the expectations of others	7	25	72
To avoid the challenges of the world	6	14	80
To help support the family	5	11	84

The motivations for opting to become a priest or a religious conform to the pattern observed with regard to the respondents' goals in life (Table 1). The four most important motivations are: responding to God's call, growing closer to Jesus, bringing the message of Jesus to others, and service to others. Fifty percent or more respondents rated these as "very important" motivations in their choice of vocation. These correspond to the respondents' pre-eminent goals in life (see Chart 20). The motivation next in order of importance is the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, which is a "very important" motivating factor to 40% of the respondents.

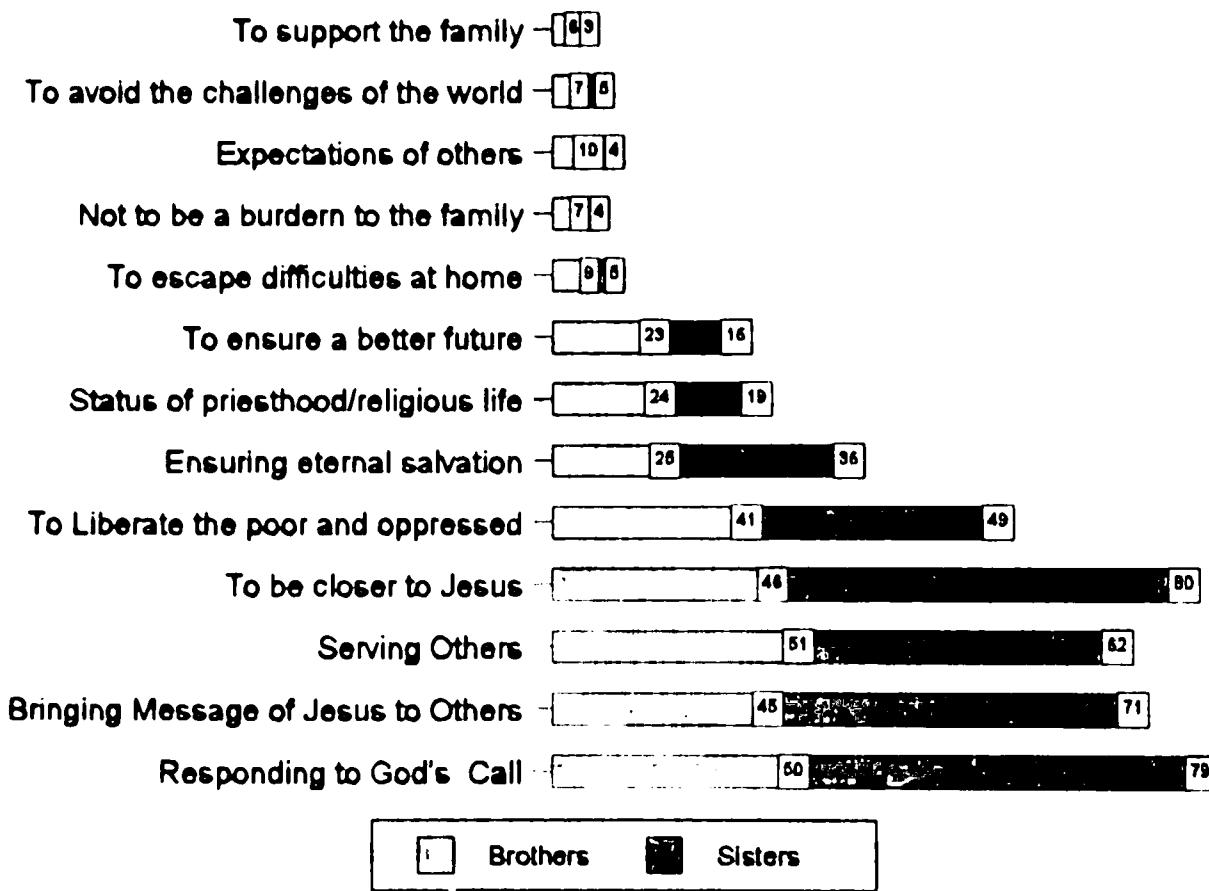
More mundane reasons like the status and the security of priesthood and religious life were "very important" motivations according to about a fifth of the

respondents. Family problems, economic difficulties and expectations of others were reported as "very important" considerations by less than 10% of those surveyed.

As Chart 21 indicates, there are significant differences in the way the Brothers and the Sisters assess the motivations of their companions. God/Jesus-centred motivations are more important for the Sisters than for the Brothers. For example, while as many as 79% of the Sisters feel that "responding to God's call" is a very important motivation, only 50% of the Brothers are inclined to think so. Similarly, "growing closer to Jesus" is a very important motivation according to 80% of the Sisters in contrast to only 46% of the Brothers. The difference in the perceptions of the Brothers and the Sisters narrows considerably with regard to the relative importance of the other-oriented motivations such as "service" and "liberation of the poor and the oppressed." And the trend is reversed for the self/family related motivations. For instance, more Brothers than Sisters consider the "status of priests and religious," "a better future," and the "expectations of others" as very important motivations.

Chart 22. Motivations: Brothers versus Sisters

(Percent saying "very important")



Another significant factor that influences the perception of the relative importance of different motivations is the intellectual calibre of the respondents. Candidates who performed poorly in the SSC examination accorded greater

importance to God/Jesus-related motivations in comparison to those who performed well in the SSC. For example, “responding to God’s call” was marked as a very important motivation by 70% of the respondents who passed SSC in the pass class, in contrast to only 45% of those who passed SSC with a distinction. Again, whereas 67% of the respondents with pass class felt that “growing closer to Jesus” is a very important motivating factor, only 41% of those with a distinction agreed with this assessment. The trend was reversed with regard to self/family centred motivations. Double the number of distinction respondents, compared to pass class respondents, rated as very important motivations like “escaping the difficulties at home,” “not being a burden to the family,” “expectations of others,” and “supporting one’s family”.

It should be noted that this difference persisted even after controlling for the effects of gender. Therefore, it does not appear to be a reflection of the difference between the Brothers and the Sisters noted earlier (Chart 21).

IV. Perspectives on Formation

1. Perspectives on Formation

In order to understand how the candidates to priesthood and religious life view their formation, fourteen statements touching upon various aspects of formation were included in the survey questionnaire. The respondents were asked to indicate if each of these statements would be true or false in their case.

As Table 2 makes clear, the respondents in general are of the view that the formation they have received has helped them to develop several positive qualities and to become better persons. An overwhelming majority of 80% or more claim that their formation has made them better persons with greater self-awareness and sense of responsibility. Similarly, about three-fourths of the respondents believe that their formation has increased their self-confidence and emotional maturity, endowed them with relevant knowledge and interpersonal skills, changed their outlook on life, and deepened their faith. Formation received relatively lower ratings on increasing self-reliance.

While the evaluation of the specific aspects of formation was very favourable, responses to the general questions about the overall effectiveness of formation were not as positive. A substantial 36% of the respondents, for example, indicated that their formation was not worth the time and money invested in it. On the negative side, nearly one-third of the respondents indicated that formation has created doubts about their vocation, and more than a quarter of them stated that it has, in fact, decreased their enthusiasm for vocation.

Table 2: Evaluation of Formation by Gender
 (% Responding “True”)

The Formation I have received:	ALL	Brothers	Sisters
Has made me a better person	83	79	90
Has deepened my faith	70	60	85
Has made emotionally more mature	76	72	83
Has made me more self-reliant	63	58	70
Has made me more self-confident	77	75	80
Has helped me to know myself better	90	88	93
Has made me more responsible	80	77	86
Has helped me in interpersonal relations	73	72	76
Has changed the way I look at life	74	74	75
Has decreased enthusiasm for my vocation	27	29	23
Has created doubts about my vocation	31	34	27
Has helped to acquire relevant knowledge	75	72	79
Has prepared me for the ministry	69	61	82
Was worth the time and energy invested in it	64	57	76

A comparison of the responses of the Brothers and the Sisters reveals that the Sisters are far more positive about the formation they receive than the Brothers. While this pattern is consistent throughout the table, the difference is particularly striking with regard to the last two items, which deal with the overall effectiveness of formation. Whereas 82% of the Sisters say that formation has prepared them for their ministry, only 61% of the Brothers agree with this. And while 76% of the Sisters feel that the time and money invested in their formation was well worth it, only 57% of the Brothers endorse this view.

Among the Brothers, there was no significant difference between the philosophy students and the theology students in the way they evaluated the formation, except on the question of deepening the faith and preparing for ministry.

The theology students tend to evaluate their formation somewhat more favourably in these respects.

Another noticeable trend in the data is that, among the Brothers, the brighter students – in terms of their SSC record -- evaluated their formation less favourably than the weaker ones. For example, less than half (49%) of the distinction students said that their formation deepened their faith in contrast to about two-thirds (65%) of the pass class students. Similarly, while 64% of the pass class students felt that their formation prepared them for their ministry, only 42% of the distinction students shared this feeling. And whereas 59% of the pass class students thought that the time and money invested in formation was well worth it, only 41% of the distinction students concurred with this assessment. This trend was not observed among the Sisters.

In sum, the majority of the respondents are of the view that their formation has helped them in different ways. The Sisters are generally more positive about their formation than the Brothers. And among the Brothers, the weak students have greater appreciation for the formation they receive than the bright ones.

2. Formation House Versus the World Outside

One hypothesis that is often advanced in discussions about priestly and religious formation is that the artificial environment of the formation houses, sheltered as they are from the mainstream of life and its challenges, in fact prevent rather than promote the growth of the candidates into mature and responsible adults (see, for example, D'Lima 1994).

We have seen that our respondents generally feel that their formation has helped them to grow in several respects. But what would have been the situation if they had not entered a convent or a seminary? Had they continued their life out there in the real world like every body else, would they have perhaps been better equipped to face life and its challenges?

In an attempt to answer this question, we asked our respondents to compare themselves with their peers in the world outside on the following personality traits: self-reliance, emotional maturity, self-confidence, ability to relate to others, adaptability to different life-situations, realistic approach to life, initiative, and hard work. The findings are presented in Table 3.

There is a clear and consistent trend in the data. The vast majority of the respondents rated the people of their age in the world outside significantly higher on

all the qualities. Not even on a single quality did they feel that they were equal, let alone superior, to their peers in the world.

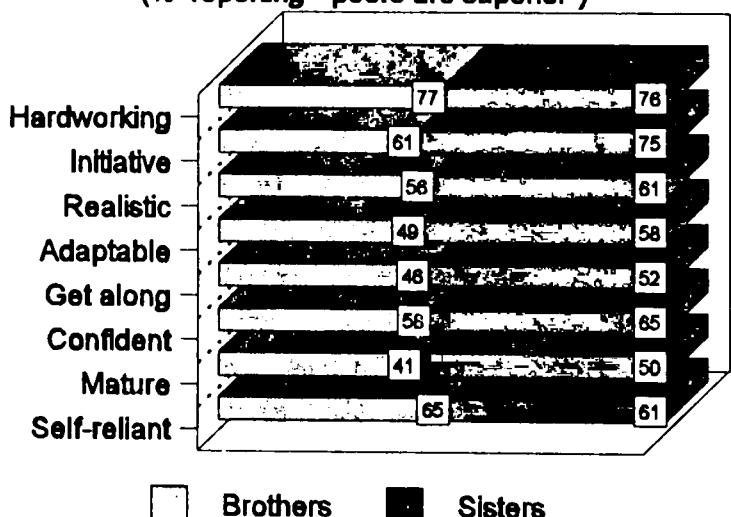
Table 3. Comparison of Self with Peers in the World Outside (%)

People of my age in the world outside:	True	False	Not Sure
Are more self-reliant	62	17	21
Have greater emotional maturity	43	33	24
Face difficulties with greater confidence	59	20	21
Are able to get along better with people	47	27	26
Adapt more easily to different situations	51	27	22
Are more realistic in their approach to life	57	20	23
Take more initiative in life	64	18	18
Are more hardworking	74	13	13

Almost three-fourths of the respondents had no doubts that their peers are more hardworking than themselves. 60% or more were of the view that their peers outside take more initiative in life, are more self-reliant and face difficulties with greater confidence. There is greater variation in the perceptions regarding emotional maturity, ability to get along with people and adaptability to different situations. But even on these, the majority clearly rate their peers outside higher than themselves.

Are there any differences in the way the Brothers and the Sisters rate themselves vis-a-vis the people of their age in the world outside? Chart 23 compares the responses of the Brothers and the Sisters on this question. Although the Sisters evaluated their formation more positively than the Brothers, they too, like the Brothers, rated their peers in the world outside superior to

**Chart 23. Perception of Peers Vis-a-vis Self
(% reporting "peers are superior")**



themselves on all the eight qualities. In fact, more Sisters than Brothers rated their peers in the world as superior to themselves on all the listed qualities except for self-reliance and hard work. The difference was most pronounced with regard to taking initiative in life, emotional maturity and adaptability.

Table 4 reveals another significant trend in the data. Throughout the table, the percentages in the left column (4 Years or less) are the lowest, and those in the right column (10 Years or above) are the highest. This means that those who spent longer years in a seminary or formation house are more likely to perceive their peers outside as superior to themselves. In other words, the longer the formation, the greater the sense of inadequacy vis-a-vis one's peers. For example, while 73% of those who have been in formation ten years or longer feel that their peers in the world outside are more self-reliant than themselves, only 57% of those who have been in formation for 4 years or less feel so. Again, in contrast to 67% of those who have been in formation for ten years or more, only 48% of those who spent four years or less in a formation house find their peers outside more realistic in their approach to life.. This trend is consistent throughout the table.

Table 4. Comparison of Self with Peers by Number of Years in Formation
(Percent saying "Peers are Superior")

People of my age in the world outside:	1-4 Years	5-9 Years	10 Yrs & Above
Are more self-reliant	57	61	73
Have greater emotional maturity	38	43	52
Face difficulties with greater confidence	53	60	68
Are able to get along better with people	46	49	48
Adapt more easily to different situations	46	54	56
Are more realistic in their approach to life	48	57	67
Take more initiative in life	62	65	71
Are more hardworking	73	75	82

It is important to note here that the inverse relationship observed between the duration of formation and the sense of adequacy vis-a-vis peers persisted even after

controlling the effects of age. So, it is not the age of the respondents that determines the way they compare themselves with their peers, but rather the number of years they have actually spent in a formation house. In other words, the above data cannot be interpreted to mean that the older Brothers and Sisters, compared to the younger ones, are more likely to consider their peers superior to themselves. The operative factor here is not age, but the duration of formation.

3. Clergy Versus Laity: A Comparative Study

Are the laity really better equipped to face the challenges of life than the clergy, who have had the benefit of long years of structured formation, as the majority of our respondents seem to suggest? Could it be that the real life-experience in the world outside is more conducive to developmental maturity than the life in a formation house, which is largely insulated from mainstream of life? Or, is it simply a case of the grass looking greener on the other side?

Extensive and well-designed research would be required to answer this question with any measure of confidence. A very limited attempt was made in this study to explore this question by comparing the clergy and the laity on two attributes, namely, achievement orientation² and self-abasement.³ An independent sample of 350 lay people of different walks of life was selected for the purpose of comparison. Care was taken to ensure that the laity sample was comparable to the clerical respondents (Brothers and Sisters) in age, education, and cultural background.

An achievement orientation scale and a self-abasement scale were constructed using items adapted from the *Modified Activities Index* developed by Rulla, Riddick and Imoda (1976: 337).⁴ Each scale consisted of six items and could have a maximum score of 12 and a minimum of 0.

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2. *Achievement orientation* implies the need "to accomplish something difficult ... To overcome obstacles and attain a high standard. To excel oneself. To rival and surpass others. To increase self-regard by successful exercise of talent" (Rullah, Imoda and Ridick, 1978:202).
 3. *Self-abasement* means "to accept injury, blame, criticism, punishment. To become resigned to fate. To admit inferiority, error, wrongdoing, or defeat... To blame, belittle or mutilate the self. To seek and enjoy pain, punishment, illness or misfortune" (Rullah, Imoda and Ridick, 1978:202).
 4. The items that were used to construct these scales as well as the responses of the clergy and the laity to each item are given in Table A and Table B in the Appendix.

On the achievement orientation scale, the laity scored higher than the clergy (Brothers and Sisters). The laity had a mean score of 8.39, in contrast to the clergy's mean score of 6.93. A t-test comparing the mean scores of the laity and the clergy showed the difference between the two groups on achievement orientation to be statistically significant.⁵ Among the clergy, the Sisters' score on achievement orientation was significantly lower than that of the Brothers.

On the self-abasement scale, the clergy scored higher than the laity. The mean scores on this scale were 5.11 for the clergy and 4.22 for the laity. The t-test procedure comparing the means showed that these two groups are significantly different from each other in self-abasement.⁶ The clergy are thus more prone to self-abasement, compared to their lay peers in the world outside. And within the clergy, the Sisters scored higher on self-abasement than the Brothers.

These findings on achievement orientation and self-abasement seem to support the hypothesis that, compared to the clergy, their peers in the world outside have greater developmental maturity. However, this does not necessarily mean that formation is responsible for the low achievement orientation and high self-abasement observed among the clergy. It could also be that priesthood and religious life tend to attract those who are by nature low on achievement and high on self-abasement.

4. Home Versus Formation House

The Charter of Priestly Formation in India states: "Taking into consideration both the Indian concept of the man totally dedicated to God and the situation in this country where so many lack even the necessities of life, the Seminary in its life and environment should help the seminarians to be not only poor in spirit but also living examples of simplicity and detachment" (3.2.2.f). It has been observed by some that the seminaries and formation houses introduce the candidates to a culture and life-style that is different from their own and thus alienate them from their people and their way of life. Is this observation valid? How different is the life-style of the seminaries and formation institutes from that of the candidates' home? We asked our respondents to compare their life in the formation house with their life at home in several respects. The findings are presented in Table 5.

5. An Independent Samples t-test yielded a t of -10.65, with a significance level of .000 (2-tailed).

6. Independent Samples t-test resulted in a t value of 6.55, which had significance level of .000 (2-tailed).

Table 5. Comparison of Home with Formation House (%)

WHEN I WAS AT HOME, I HAD:	TRUE	FALSE	NOT SURE
A more simple life-style	67	23	10
Better food to eat	43	43	14
To face more difficulties	34	52	14
More money to spend	22	66	12
To follow stricter discipline	26	63	11
More independence	56	33	11
To do more manual work	39	52	9
A stronger faith	60	19	21
A better opinion of priests and nuns	78	13	9

The vast majority of the candidates agree that, compared to the formation house, they had more a simple life-style at home. Only 22% had more money to spend when they were at home. Opinion is divided with regard to food. 43% said that they had better food to eat at home, and as many disagreed.⁷

The majority of the respondents felt that they had more independence and less strict discipline at home. It is noteworthy, however, that more than a quarter of the respondents came from homes which enjoined a stricter discipline than the formation house. A substantial 39% of the candidates indicated that they did more manual work at home than in the formation house.

On the spiritual front, 60% said that their faith was stronger when they were at home. This might seem to be inconsistent what the majority of the respondents (70%) said in another part of the survey that the formation they have received has helped them to deepen their faith (see Table 2). Perhaps, what they imply is that at

7. It may be noted here that several respondents who said that they had better food at home offered a clarification that by “better” they mean tastier, and not richer.

home their faith was stronger in terms of certainty, whereas now it is deeper in the sense of being more enlightened and mature.

The vast majority of the respondents also admitted that their perception of priests and nuns has changed since their days at home. 78% of them said that they had a better opinion of the priests and the nuns when they were at home. Possibly, a case of familiarity breeding contempt!

Predictably, the economic situation of the respondent's family has an effect on the way he or she perceives the formation house as Table 6 reveals. Those who come from economically weaker sections of society are likely to say that, compared to the formation house, at home they had to face more hardships, do more manual labour and lead a more simple life. They are also less likely to state that they had better food to eat and more money to spend when they were at home.

Table 6 . Home versus Formation House by Economic Status of Family (%)

<i>WHEN I WAS AT HOME, I HAD:</i>	<i>Well Off</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Poor/ Very Poor</i>
A more simple life-style	60	71	76
Better food to eat	56	40	20
To face more difficulties	24	37	53
More money to spend	34	18	11
To follow stricter discipline	26	26	29
More independence	61	55	50
To do more manual work	28	42	55
A stronger faith	65	59	59
A better opinion of priests and nuns	80	79	74

There is not much difference in the way the Brothers and the Sisters compared their home with the formation house, except for manual work. 45% of the Brothers, as opposed to only 29% of the Sisters, said that they had to do more manual work when they were at home. This is probably a reflection of the fact that in many regions it is the boys, not so much the girls, who are expected to engage in manual

labour. It is also possible that the Sisters in training are required to do more manual work than the Brothers.

5. Evaluation of Formators

The effectiveness of priestly and religious formation depends to a large extent on the formators. How effective are the formators in the seminaries and religious houses of formation in India today? The survey sought to elicit the views of the respondents on this question. The questionnaire listed ten character traits, and the respondents were asked to indicate whether each of these traits would be applicable to “most”, “many”, “some” or “a few” of their formators. The findings are presented in Table 7. To simplify presentation, the last two categories “some” and “a few” have been collapsed into a single category.

Table 7. Evaluation of Formators (%)

My Formators are/were:	Most	Many	Some/ A Few
Committed	33	28	39
Prayerful	30	28	41
Supportive	24	34	42
Honest	24	32	44
Authoritarian	24	30	46
Open-minded	19	27	54
Exemplary	21	26	53
Just and Impartial	14	26	60
Competent	19	28	53
Overly Strict	13	24	63

Formators will find the data in Table 7 discouraging, to say the least. According to the *Charter of Priestly Formation for India*, formators “should be exemplary priests capable of communicating priestly ideals to the seminarians not only by word but also by their life and pastoral experiences” (No. 4.5.1). However, only about one-fifth of our respondents characterize most of their formators as exemplary; more than half feel that the term exemplary can be applied only to some

or a few of their formators. As for the competence of the formators, only a few or some of them are competent according to more than half of the respondents. Indeed, only 19% consider most of them competent. The question about the open-mindedness of formators drew a similar response.

The formators received the lowest marks for justice and impartiality. As many as 60% were of the opinion that only some or a few of the formators were just and impartial. A meagre 14% considered most of them just and impartial. The formators fared marginally better on honesty. Most of them were seen as honest by about a quarter of the respondents, as opposed to 44% who said that only some or a few are honest. We find a very similar distribution of responses on the question on whether or not they find the formators supportive.

Formators are seen in a comparatively better light with regard to commitment and prayerfulness, with about one-third of the respondents indicating that most of the formators are committed and prayerful. On the negative side, about one-fourth of the respondents feel that most of the formators are authoritarian. Only 13%, however, felt that most of them are overly strict.

**Table 8. Evaluation of Formators by Gender
(% Responding “Most”)**

Most of My Formators Are/Were:	Brothers	Sisters	All
Committed	20	55	33
Prayerful	16	53	30
Supportive	16	37	24
Honest	16	38	24
Authoritarian	25	21	24
Open-minded	12	31	19
Exemplary	13	33	20
Just and Impartial	11	18	14
Competent	15	25	19
Overly Strict	14	11	13

It may be recalled that the Sisters evaluated their formation more favourably than the Brothers. This is true also with regard to the formators. The Sisters tend to perceive their formators a lot more positively than the Brothers (see Table 8).

Whereas more than half of the Sisters perceived most of the formators as committed and prayerful, only 20% or less of the Brothers would say so about most of their formators. Nearly 40% of the Sisters found most of their formators supportive and honest; only 16% of the Brothers applied these descriptors to most of their formators. Again, while about a third of the Sisters characterized most of their formators as exemplary and open-minded, the proportion of the Brothers who thought so was only a little over 10%. Similar differences exist with regard to the other items in the table as well. Clearly, the Sisters see their formators in a much better light than the Brothers.

V. Feelings about Vocational Decision

Finally, we asked the respondents some questions in order to elicit their present feelings about the decision to become a priest or religious.

As Table 9 indicates, close to 40% of the respondents feel that, when they joined, they were not old enough to make a mature choice. Naturally, those who had joined at a younger age are more likely to feel this way than those who joined when they were older. In fact, close to 60% of those who joined when they were 15 or younger – about one-fourth of all those who have joined belong to this category – said they were too young to make a mature choice. In contrast, less than 10% of those who joined when they were 21 or older said that theirs was not a mature decision. Compared to the Brothers, the Sisters were less likely to feel that, when they joined, they were too young to make a mature decision (Table 10). This is to be expected because, as we have seen, the Sisters normally join when they are older.

One-third of the respondents said that they found it hard to adjust to the life-style of the formation house. There was hardly any difference between the Brothers and the Sisters in this respect. Nor was there any correlation between the age of joining and adjustment problems.

About one-fourth of the respondents felt that they could not be their real selves in the formation house. The Brothers are somewhat more likely to own up to going through formation hiding their real selves (Table 10). Age of joining, too, was a significant factor. Those who joined earlier were more likely to say that formation made them hide their real selves.

Table 9. Feelings about Choice of Vocation (%)

	True	False	Not Sure
When I joined, I was too young to make a mature decision	38	53	10
It was hard to adjust to the life-style of the formation house	33	59	8
Formation has made me hide my real self	25	60	15
There have been times when I have seriously thought about leaving this way of life	55	34	10
If one of my close relatives or friends shows interest in becoming a priest or religious, I would encourage him/her	65	19	16
If I had a chance to decide all over again, I would not opt for this way of life.	16	67	17

More than half the respondents have at one time or other seriously thought of leaving the way of life they had chosen. And the Brothers are more likely to have entertained thoughts about leaving than the Sisters. As might be expected, those who joined at a younger age are more prone to have second thoughts about their decision. For example, about two-thirds of those who had entered formation when they were 15 years of age or younger had seriously thought about leaving, in contrast to less than half of those who joined when they were 21 or older.

A good test of whether one is happy about the choice one has made is whether or not one would encourage one's friends and relatives to make the same choice. Would our respondents encourage their close relatives and friends if they show interest in becoming a priest or religious? One out every five respondents indicated that he or she would not encourage close relatives or friends to become priests or religious, even if they are interested. And one out every six was unsure. In other words, more than one-third of the Brothers and Sisters, 35% to be precise, are either unwilling or unsure of encouraging their friends and relatives who want to become priests or religious. This seems to be an indication that quite a few of the Brothers and Sisters now feel unhappy or unsure about the choice they have made.

Table 10. Feelings about Vocational Decision by Gender
(% Responding ‘True’)

	Brothers	Sisters
When I joined, I was too young to make a mature decision	42	32
It was hard for me to adjust to the life-style of the formation house	33	35
Formation has made me hide my real self	30	19
There have been times when I have seriously thought about leaving this way of life	62	47
If one of my close relatives or friends shows interest in becoming a priest or religious, I would encourage him/her	62	73
If I had a chance to decide all over again, I would not opt for this way of life.	18	13

The response pattern to the last item (Table 10) appears to reinforce this conclusion. One out of every six respondents agreed with the statement: “If I had a chance to decide all over again, I would not opt for this way of life.” If we add to this those who were unsure, we get one-third of all the respondents who either regret the decision to join or have doubts about the choice they have made.

Fewer Sisters than Brothers seem to be disillusioned about the way of life they have chosen. In addition to the 18% of the Brothers who said that they will not choose this way of life again, there were another 20% who were unsure, taking the total of regretting or doubting candidates to the priesthood to 38%. In contrast, only about 25% of the Sisters fall into this category.

Among the Brothers themselves, there was not much difference between the philosophers and the theologians on this question; 21% of the philosophers said they would not opt again for this way of life as opposed to 16.5% of the theologians. As for the Sisters, there was little difference between the Juniors and the Finally Professed on this count.

The age of joining has some influence on the way they now feel about their decision to join priesthood or religious life. About 20% of those who joined at the age of 15 or earlier said that they will not opt again to become priests or nuns, while only 13% of those who joined after they were 20 felt this way.

VI. Some Issues the Study Raises

We shall now look at some of the issues the findings of this study raise and their implications for the recruitment and formation of the candidates to priesthood and religious life.

1. Vocation: A Free Decision?

In his recent Apostolic Exhortation on the formation of Priests, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, of Pope John Paul II recalls the words of his predecessor, Paul VI, in order to emphasize how essential freedom is to vocation: “There cannot be vocations, unless they be free; that is, unless they be spontaneous offerings of oneself, conscious, generous, total... Oblations, we call them: herein lies in practice the heart of the matter... ” (No. 36, para 7).

When a candidate applies to become a priest or religious, it is usually presumed that he or she has made a spontaneous, conscious and free decision to respond to God’s call. However, some of the data reviewed above seem to suggest that this presumption might be unwarranted in a number of cases.

The Charter of Priestly Formation for India emphasizes: “All forms of premature selection of candidates should be discouraged. Selecting candidates at an early age may have several harmful psychological effects. At this stage of their life the candidates are too young to discern their vocation” (2. 4).

The admonition of the Charter notwithstanding, the data show that a large proportion of the candidates, especially the candidates to priesthood, are still being recruited in the early teens, when they are unlikely to be able to discern their vocation (see Chart 9).

Early recruitment is often defended as a way of nurturing vocations, which would otherwise be lost, if they remain exposed to the fleeting attractions of the world. The question, however, is whether a desire one feels in childhood or in the early teens can be realistically considered a vocation, because at that tender age one lacks the psychological and physical maturity to take an informed decision about one’s future. For, as Pope Paul VI said “There cannot be vocations unless they be free.”

Obviously, the decision to enter a seminary or religious house of formation is not a final decision to become a priest or religious. Ideally, seminaries and formation houses are places where one explores and discerns one’s vocation; the candidates have the freedom to discontinue at any stage. Indeed, in principle they are

free to leave. But in reality how free are they to leave? Looking back on their decision to join, 38% of the respondents – nearly 50% if we include the “unsure category” – confessed that when they joined they were too young to make a mature decision. And 55% of the respondents – 62% of the Brothers -- have stated that there have been times when they seriously thought about leaving this way of life. Furthermore, one out of every six respondents categorically stated that, if there was a chance to decide all over again, he or she would not opt for this way of life. And another one-sixth said they were “unsure”. Taken together, we find that one-third of the respondents are either unhappy or unsure about the decision they have made. For the Brothers this figure is as high as 38%. And this is probably an undercount since not every one who feels that he or she has made a wrong decision is likely to be candid about it in a public survey, even when it is anonymous, because of the strong social desirability factor involved.

Yet, so few do in fact leave. There is, therefore, reason to believe that among the seminarians and the Sisters in India today, there are quite a few who wish to leave, but do not feel free to do so. The labelling theory in sociology has highlighted the social processes that make it difficult for someone like a seminarian or a junior sister to leave the way of life they have chosen even when they want to. Take the case of a seminarian, for example. Entering a seminary is akin to a rite of passage. He is immediately accorded a new status and a new title, that of a “Brother”. From then on, society looks upon him and treats him as a “Brother”. He is required to follow a life-style and behaviour pattern different from those of his peers. In some parts of the country, a seminarian is expected to display his special status externally by the kind of clothes he wears and in the way he wears them.

Labelling theorists have elaborated three reasons why, once a special status like that of a Brother is accorded to a person in society, it becomes difficult for him to relinquish it, even if he would like to (Becker, 1963; Sutherland and Cressey, 1974). First of all, *conformity* is easier. In general, people tend to conform to the expectations of society. For example, it has been observed that teenagers who are labelled as delinquents and treated as delinquents tend to become delinquents. If conformity is easier even in the case of a socially undesirable label like ‘delinquent’, how much more would it be true in the case of a socially desirable label like ‘Brother’. It may be recalled here that the majority of the families of the respondents encouraged them to become priests or religious. If they were to leave, their families would be disappointed.

Secondly, labelling results in *differential association*. Once one becomes a Brother, he is grouped with other people who have been similarly labelled. In the seminary, which for all practical purposes becomes his world during the crucial phase of his transition from adolescence to adulthood, he is forced to associate, for the most

part, with other Brothers and Fathers, who idealize the priestly or religious way of life. Naturally, it is the clerical ideal that will be reinforced in him. On the other hand, he does not get as much opportunity to associate with outsiders, especially girls, and be exposed to ideas and influences that might enable him to reexamine the choice he has made in life. Differential association thus works to reinforce the priestly ideal and to block exposure to countervailing tendencies.

A third factor that makes a reconsideration difficult is what labelling theorists call *changed opportunity structure*. If a seminarian leaves and re-enters the mainstream, especially in the later stages of formation, he finds himself in a changed opportunity structure. Job or career opportunities that would have been available to him if had not joined are no longer open to him. The long years he has spent studying philosophy and/or theology are unlikely to be of much help in the job market. Even those with a college degree have it in subjects like philosophy, which is hardly useful to make a living. And he finds himself too old to start from scratch all over again. For these reasons and others, it is likely that once someone enters the seminary he is inclined to continue, even when he has doubts about the choice he has made. And what is said of the Brothers applies to the Sisters as well.

2. Intellectual Formation

Underlining the need for what it calls “an extremely rigorous intellectual formation” for the candidates to priesthood, the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* states: “If we expect every Christian ... to be prepared to make a defence of the faith and to account for the hope that is in us, then all the more should candidates for the priesthood and priests have diligent care of the quality of their intellectual formation in their education and pastoral activity”. The present situation of the world, the Exhortation adds, “strongly demands a high level of intellectual formation, such as will enable the priests to proclaim ... the changeless Gospel of Christ and to make it credible to the legitimate demands of human reason” (51, para 2).

The data of an earlier national survey on the Catholic Priesthood in India showed that there is a serious erosion of the credibility of the clergy particularly among the educated laity (Parathazham 1994, 707-708). Viewed against this background, the finding on the academic background of the candidates to priesthood and religious life is a cause for serious concern. We have seen that two-thirds of the candidates to priesthood and religious life today are those who passed the SSC in second class or pass class (Chart 13). Ordinarily, they would not even be eligible for admission to a regular college. And without a college degree one cannot even become a lower division clerk in India today!

Sometimes it is tacitly assumed that seminaries and formation houses can somehow compensate for the intellectual deficiency of the candidates or, at least, act as a sieve to ensure minimum academic qualification. Perhaps, this was the case in the past, when the aptitude of the candidates to priesthood and religious life was adjudged on the basis of their ability to cope with the demands of mastering philosophy and theology. Today it seems to be the other way around: intellectual demands in formation are tailored to match the ability of the candidates. One often hears formators and teachers complaining about the declining intellectual standards of the candidates. But, curiously enough, as the years go by, fewer and fewer students in seminaries seem to fail in the examinations, and even those who fail will get through almost automatically in the second attempt. It is only an exceptionally “unrealistic” teacher, who will fail a candidate a second time! Now a days one hardly ever hears of anyone being disqualified from the priesthood because of a lack of intellectual aptitude (see also “Vianney Syndrome” in Parathazham 1994: 712). This only means that the intellectual demands in the seminaries are undergoing a continuous downward revision to match the capabilities of the candidates who come. It is not the demands of the curriculum that determine the aptitude of the candidates today; on the contrary, the standards of the candidates seem to regulate the kind of demands made on them. This certainly does not augur well for the future of the church in India.

3. Human Formation

Insisting on the necessity of adequate human formation for the future priests, Pope John Paul II writes in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: “The whole work of priestly formation should be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation ... Future priests should therefore cultivate a series of human qualities , not only out of proper concern for due growth and realization of self, but also with a view to the ministry” (No. 43). In a similar vein, the *Charter of Priestly Formation for India* says: “To be Christ-like the seminarian will strive to be fully human: a leader of people, gentle and kind, open and ready to listen, cheerful and patient, honest and true to his word; a man of self-respect, sincerity and courage, constantly concerned for truth and justice, unafraid to take decisions and persevering in carrying them out” (3.2.1.a).

If human formation, as the Church documents emphasize, is the necessary foundation of priestly – and religious – formation, the findings of this study suggest that priestly and religious formation in India rests on a rather shaky foundation. As we have seen, on all the eight human qualities listed in the survey questionnaire our respondents uniformly rated their peers in the world outside superior to themselves. It may also be recalled that this is not merely a matter of perception, but a reflection

of the actual state of affairs as indicated by the scores of the laity and the clergy on achievement and self-abasement scales.

It is paradoxical that those who have had the benefit of years of systematically planned formation under the guidance of competent formators should feel that, in terms of human qualities, they are worse off than their peers who have had no such formation. As already indicated, there are two possible explanations for this paradox. It could be the result of a process of self-selection, that is to say, those who feel attracted to the priesthood and religious life are, compared to the others, weak on human qualities to begin with. More research is required to test the validity of this hypothesis.

Alternately, it could be that the artificial atmosphere of the formation houses, insulated as they are from the problems and challenges of real life, is not conducive to the development of human qualities in the candidates. Errol D'Lima has observed in a recent article: "If the priest's task (office) is to enable a believing community to celebrate its worship of God, he must prepare for it by being part of that community, sharing its hopes and failures, its triumphs and trials. He must also be convinced that God's presence will be discovered palpably in the lives of the members of that community. Such a preparation demands continual and in-depth insertion in the life of the community and this is something the seminary and its structures do not allow. In fact, the long years spent in a seminary and away from a living community seem calculated to make the future priest dysfunctional" (1994, 698). Developing human qualities without immersion into real life would be a little bit like teaching someone to swim without ever taking him or her to a pool!

The present study offers some, if limited, evidence in support of the second hypothesis, namely, the current structures and policies of formation may indeed inhibit, rather than promote, the development of human qualities in the candidates. While comparing themselves with their peers outside, those who had spent longer years in formation were more likely than those who spent fewer years to rate their peers superior to themselves. In other words, the longer the duration of formation, the greater the sense of inadequacy vis-a-vis one's peers in the world outside. From the point of view of the candidates at least, it appears that formation has stymied their growth at the human level. However, in the absence of corroborative evidence such a conclusion can at best be only tentative.

Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that "the foundation of priestly and religious formation," the human formation, needs to be urgently reinforced.

4. Spiritual Formation: “Sacristy Spirituality” ?

The data on the goals and motivations of the Brothers and Sisters reveal a tendency towards a compartmentalized spirituality – one that places God-directed goals at the centre and relegates the other-oriented and self-oriented goals to the periphery. Most of the respondents attach great importance to doing the will of God and following Jesus. Very few of them, however, accord as much importance to serving others, liberating the oppressed, and self-actualization through personal growth. The disjunction between the vertical dimension – God-orientation – and the horizontal dimension – other/self-orientation – seems to suggest that formation is still oriented towards the traditional otherworldly spirituality. The basic thrust of the social teaching of the Church over the last one hundred years, which is best summed up in the dramatic declaration of the Third Synod of Bishops in 1971 that the work for justice and the transformation of the world is a “constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel,” appears to have had little impact on the spiritual formation in the seminaries and religious houses of formation in India.

Pope John Paul II, speaking in Assisi some years ago, emphasized that the social teaching is a clarion call for the Church to move out of the sacristy (see Meehan, 1995, 336). A spirituality that does not translate into social concern, especially for the marginalised, remains a “sacristy spirituality.” If the findings of this study are any indication, formation in India has not moved out of the sacristy yet!

5. Formators

The vital importance of having well-trained and exemplary formators is underscored in every Church document on priestly and religious formation. The Vatican II decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam Totius*, says: “Since the training of seminarians hinges, to a very large extent, on wise regulations and suitable teachers, seminary directors and professors should be chosen from among the best, and be painstakingly prepared by sound doctrine, appropriate pastoral experience and special spiritual and pedagogical training” (No. 5).

Pastores Dabo Vobis echoes the Council: “It is evident that much of the effectiveness of the training offered depends on the maturity and strength of personality of those entrusted with formation, both from the human and the Gospel points of view. And so it is especially important both to select them carefully and to encourage them to become ever more suitable for carrying out the task entrusted to them” (No. 66, para 2).

The evaluation of their formators by the respondents clearly reveal that not many of the formators today come across as exemplary and inspiring role models. As we have seen, a large number of the respondents call into question the integrity,

impartiality and competence of many, if not most, of their formators. Clearly, they have not always been chosen from among the best as the Church demands; or, if indeed they are the best, then even the best fail to measure up to the expectations of those whose formation they are entrusted with.

Perhaps some of this negativism towards the formators could be attributed to the unrealistic expectations of the idealistic youth. However, it is instructive to note that the Sisters perceive their formators in a much more favourable light than the Brothers. Is this difference in evaluations merely the result of the fact that the Sisters tend to be less critical than the Brothers? Could it be also due to the fact that the Sisters generally select someone as a formator only after a careful evaluation of the aptitude of that person in order to ensure that she has the requisite spiritual, moral, intellectual and human qualities for the job. The selection process of the formators in the seminaries is seldom so rigorous. Priests who have done well in their seminary studies are generally chosen for higher studies. When they return after the higher studies with their doctorates, they are often assigned to the seminaries as teachers and formators. The spiritual, human, emotional and interpersonal aptitude of these “doctors” is seldom looked into and carefully evaluated. “Doctors” become formators almost by default! Needless to say, just because someone has the intellectual resources to obtain a doctorate, it does not necessarily mean that he will also have the requisite spiritual and human resources to be a good formator or the communication skills necessary to be a good teacher.

Conclusion

To sum up, this sociological exploration has drawn attention to several problem areas in the formation of priests and religious in India today. Selection, it is often said, is 90% of formation. And yet this is perhaps the area that is least attended to. Dioceses and Congregations seem to be vying with each other to recruit as many as possible and as early as possible, with little thought for the aptitude or the motivations of the candidates. “A seminary is not a lumber mill or smelter. It cannot take raw youth and, after subjecting him to few approved processes, turn out neatly fashioned or keenly honed priest” (Carter, 1966: 436). Unless stringent quality control measures are introduced in the selection of candidates at all levels, the Church may find soon find itself with a leadership that has lost its credibility.

The study also has shown up the limitations of formation in the artificial and insulated environment of large seminaries and formation houses. Exploring alternative models of formation that allow the candidates to deal with real-life situations and problems on a continuous basis is also an urgent imperative.

Success of the formation process depends largely on the character and competence of the formators. The survey, however, has revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the formators, particularly among the seminarians. This certainly calls for a reassessment of the way the formators are selected and trained. Unless the Council's exhortation to choose formators from among the best and to prepare them painstakingly is taken more seriously, priestly formation in India is unlikely to yield the desired results.

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Appendix

**Table A. Comparison of Clergy and Laity on Achievement Orientation
(% Responding “True”)**

	Clergy	Laity
1. I have an urge to perform better than others	63	81
2. I like to set difficult goals for myself	47	66
3. I tend to avoid tasks at which I have previously failed	37	25
4. I do not like to compete with others	46	34
5. I do not like to work for someone who demands high standards	59	51
6. I readily sacrifice my free time to achieve something outstanding	59	65

**Table B. Comparison of Clergy and Laity on Self-Abasement
(% Responding “True”)**

	Clergy	Laity
1. I admit defeat rather easily	35	22
2. I do not always assert my rights	48	37
3. I defend myself when I am unfairly criticized	65	77
4. I do not allow people to take advantage of me	63	69
5. After getting into a fight, I usually blame myself	44	42
6. I feel shy to take part in public activities	37	34

What Kind of Culture Are Our Seminaries Producing?

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Seminaries as producers of culture

Seminaries, like churches and schools, are agencies of secondary socialization. Unlike families, which are agents of primary socialization, seminaries are agents of secondary or professional socialization. The role of a seminary is to train, form and educate candidates for a professional role, the priesthood. In this respect, they 'socialize' the candidate and prepare him for his future role as priest by helping him to internalize a set of attitudes and values.

Since values and attitudes are a specific form of culture (Geertz 1973; Keesing 1974), we might say that seminaries are institutions that are *primarily engaged in producing and mediating cultures*. They inherit, embody, transform, dramatize and pass on particular traditions, beliefs, perspectives, ideas and practices, (Caroll et al., 1997:254).

The key process transpiring in the seminary then is the production and transmission of culture. By looking at the seminary as a producer of 'culture', rather than as a producer of 'values', we are assuming a broader understanding of the way in which culture shapes action. According to the Weberian/Parsonian *Values Paradigm*, action is influenced by supplying ultimate ends or values. Thus values, like switchmen on a railway track, are the main driving element of culture (Weber 1946:280). However, according to another paradigm, Swidler's *Toolkit Paradigm*, values are only one element of culture. Culture offers an entire "toolkit" of components – symbols, values, attitudes, beliefs, ceremonies, stories, worldviews – from which a person may choose when constructing his strategy of action. Values, symbols, beliefs are often in conflict with each other, so, when choosing to act, we select only those values, symbols or beliefs, which fit in with our cultural equipment, our cultural style and our ethos (Swidler, 273).

The second paradigm is more modest. When, for instance, we say that in a seminary there is a culture of environmental awareness, we are not saying that every single seminarian, when ordained, will 'turn out' to be environmentally aware. There is no one-to-one causal correspondence. In fact, it is quite possible that some faculty and some structures in the seminary may be ecologically un-

aware and uncaring. What we are simply saying is that seminarians, who are a product of this culture, will have among the many cultural components offered to them an emphasis on ecological awareness and there is a strong likelihood that most of them will become ecologically aware. But that does not preclude the possibility that a few seminarians may turn out to be environmentally destructive.

This more or less adequately describes the process that takes place in the seminary. It is difficult to say that a seminary tries to 'produce' a priest with X, Y or Z set of values and the seminarian simply imbibes the same X, Y, Z set of values during his stay in the seminary. One would rather say that the seminary aims at developing a culture, from which the student chooses, selects, his set of values that would most prepare him for the priesthood. Our aim in this paper then is to describe the kind of culture that presently exists in seminaries, and the kind of priest it gives rise to, with the hope that if the culture is changed, the type of priest being formed will also most likely be different.

Three Research Studies

To find out what kind of culture seminaries are producing, we make use of the conclusions of three studies on Seminary Formation completed in the nineties. The first is an *Evaluation of Formation* in the Pune Papal seminary, on the occasion of its centenary, by *priests* who passed out of its portals. Four hundred and fifty priests filled out this questionnaire and the data was collected in 1992. This study (henceforth called the Papal Seminary study) looked at formation and pastoral effectiveness..

The next study assessed the impact of JDV (Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth), Pune, on the *spiritual formation* of priestly candidates. Here the sample consisted of 294 seminarians, who belonged to diverse religious congregations and different dioceses. The data was collected in 1993. This study (henceforth called the JDV study) focussed on formation and spirituality.

Finally, the third study attempted to measure the impact of SVD (Society of the Divine Word) *Seminary Formation on the psychological character* of its seminarians. For this study, completed in 1998, 413 seminarians from various countries of Asia were tested at two stages of their formation, at the beginning and at the end stage and a comparison was made. This study (henceforth called the SVD Study) concentrated on formation and psychological character.

The socio-economic background of the seminarians and the priests in all the 3 studies is very similar (see Appendix 1). So, by comparing ordained priests with seminarians at two stages of their formation - seniors (about to finish training) and novices (who have just begun) we have 3 nodal stages of assessment – priests, seniors and novices - and a longitudinal research design. Further, since the Papal Seminary and JDV house students from all over India, and the SVD sample is an

all-Asia sample, the 3 studies permit us to draw fairly “general” conclusions about the type of culture being produced in Indian seminaries.¹

Characteristics of the culture in our seminaries

Although the three studies had different objectives in mind, there are some themes, which are like a common thread running through them. These are the findings we shall focus on, pulling them together from the different studies, so as to describe facets of the culture prevailing in seminaries. From our findings, we arrive ultimately at four characteristics of seminary culture, pertaining to four central features of seminary life: pastoral work, academics, spirituality and discipline (Amaladoss 1989:258). The four characteristics of seminary culture that can be gathered from the findings of the research studies are:

1. A culture, which is deficient in the pastoral dimension
2. A culture, which emphasizes a theoretical (and cognitive) orientation.
3. A culture, which lacks the horizontal dimension of spirituality
4. A culture which exhibits some elements of rule-consciousness, conformity and fear

Each of these characteristics will be described and supported by the findings of the three research studies. No doubt the research studies also found some very positive aspects of seminary culture, but this paper, following a critical approach, will focus only on those aspects, wherein the training process in seminaries can be enhanced. The ultimate aim is to point towards the direction and shape of relevant new structures and relevant new cultures.

I. A Culture which is deficient in the pastoral dimension

We begin by looking more closely at the Papal Seminary study. One of its objectives was to assess the relevance of seminary formation in terms of its pastoral effectiveness. One major question asked of the 450 ordained priests was to look back and state the missing elements in their seminary formation.

The missing element in formation

Out of the 12 elements they mentioned, the most outstanding element missing in their formation was *pastoral experience*. Over 52 percent mentioned this as a missing element. Table one displays the entire list. (Many mentioned more than one factor, so the percentages do not total 100).

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1. In the Papal Seminary study, the sample of 450 priests comprised 380 from 97 different dioceses and the remaining 70 from various religious congregations. The 294 seminarians of the JDV study came from 14 different religious congregations and about 55 dioceses. Finally, in the SVD study, the 413 seminarians hailed from Indonesia (59 percent), Philippines (17 percent), India (17 percent) and the remaining from Vietnam, Japan, Taiwan and Papua New Guinea.

Table 1 : Missing Elements in Seminary Formation

<i>Missing Elements</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1. Pastoral experience	52.47
2. Social Justice Formation	15.18
3. Personal Guidance	14.52
4. Pastorally related studies	12.54
5. Personality Development	12.54
6. Prayer Life	11.88
7. Open relationships with women	9.90
8. Knowledge of Scripture	8.58
9. Community Organization Skills	6.60
10. A Caring Staff	6.60
11. Skill in Homiletics	6.27
12. Maturity	3.63

The table also demonstrates that the next most significant missing element was the lack of social justice formation, but this was mentioned by just 15 percent of the respondents. The main criticism, however, was that seminary formation was in a vacuum, with insufficient pastoral opportunities, no hands-on training. In the words of one parish priest, “We were not aware of the real life of the pastor and the struggles in his parish”. Others said: “Unlike most professionals, we had no apprenticeship training! There was no opportunity for pastoral work in the seminary curriculum!” (No doubt some of these priests were ordained before the Vatican II and they were speaking of a seminary culture that existed in those times). However, when constructive suggestions were asked for, this is what they said: “We need more courses on:

- counselling skills,
- community organizing skills, including formation of societies, trusts and training of leaders,
- courses in the communication media,
- management studies (how to administer a parish or school) ,
- accounting and financial management,
- legal education, specifically on land rights, land disputes and labour laws
- project management skills
- procedures for the construction of buildings, and dealing with government officials
- techniques and strategies for social action.

A priest, ordained for the last 22 years, illustrated this lack of pastoral experience with his own attitude to economics and finances. He remarked: “For 7 or 8 years as a seminarian I had little or no money at all. Then suddenly as a parish priest or as principal of a school or as director of a social works program, I suddenly had large sums of money thrust into my hands and often did not know how

to invest it. Seminary training did not give me the least idea of how to handle money. A priest colleague of mine, who had collected 7 lakhs of rupees from a raffle, naively kept it in his unlocked desk drawer for three months. Whether he forgot about it or failed to invest it is immaterial. What comes out clearly is the non-experience in dealing with finances.”

Characteristics required for the priest of today

A second piece of evidence confirming that the priests felt that seminary formation was insufficiently pastoral was given by another set of answers in the same study. Priests were asked to rank the most important characteristics for the priest of today (Table 2), and compare these with the most important characteristics as presented to them (in the past) during their period of formation (Table 3). The comparison between now and then demonstrates the difference in thinking and indicates the direction in which they want seminary culture to move. Tables 2 and 3 display both the lists (then and now) with their respective rankings of the characteristics required of the priest. The contrast stands out clearly.

Table 2

Characteristics required for candidates to
the priesthood as understood
during time of formation

Table 3

Characteristics required for candidates to
the priesthood as mentioned
now by priests today

<i>List in time of formation</i>		<i>Today's list</i>	
1	Faithfulness to spiritual exercises	78.7	1 Excellent Human Relations
2	Spirit of obedience to superiors	66.0	2 Love for prayer
3	Love for prayer	55.1	3 A sense of vision
4	Excellent human relations	54.4	4 Love for the poor
5	<i>Academic excellence</i>	47.3	5 Faithfulness to spiritual exercises
6	A sense of vision	36.2	6 Helpfulness and compassion
7	A spirit of adaptability	34.2	7 A spirit of adaptability
8	Helpfulness and compassion	27.3	8 Spirit of obedience to superiors
9	Community organization skills	19.8	9 Community organization skills
10	Good all rounder	19.6	10 A practical turn of mind
11	Leadership talent	18.0	11 Good all rounder
12	Love for the poor	17.8	12 <i>Academic excellence</i>
13	A practical turn of mind	12.2	13 Leadership Talent

While the above table affords sufficient material for a long discussion on the qualities required for the priest of today, for our present purpose we draw attention to a few significant facts. Comparing the differences between the past and the present, one cannot but acknowledge that academic excellence has dropped in value. When they were in the seminary, it was ranked fifth on their list. Now, as priests, they rank it twelfth or second last. This means that priests working in the

ministry do not give as much weight to academic excellence as to human relations, prayer or a sense of vision. In fact, ‘Human relations’, which was ranked fourth in their time of formation, has been valued by priests today as the *first* ranked characteristic,. While ‘love for prayer’ moved up one notch, the two characteristics of ‘faithfulness to spiritual exercises’ and ‘obedience to superiors’ (Table 2) have given way to ‘love for the poor’ and ‘a sense of vision’ (table 3). The training in the past emphasized obedience, faithfulness to spiritual exercises and academic excellence. Today’s priests want ‘human relations’ , ‘a sense of vision’, and ‘love for the poor’ to be emphasized. This illustrates a significant shift in the paradigm of training towards more pastoral experiences.

It must be noted that what the priests are saying is not that ‘academics’ itself is unimportant. This would be reading beyond the data. What they are saying is that ‘excellence in academics’ must be placed in perspective after human relations, love of prayer, sense of vision, love for the poor, etc. This finding becomes meaningful, not if understood by itself, but if understood as an expression of the previously described characteristic of seminary culture, viz., the lack of a pastoral dimension.

The above findings lead directly to a second feature of seminary life – intellectual formation. Here too the priests in the Papal Seminary study have something to say.

II. A Culture, which emphasizes a theoretical rather than a practical orientation

Relevance of seminary formation for tasks in the ministry

When asked to rate the relevance of seminary formation against the tasks they were currently performing, a list of 26 main tasks were outlined by the 450 priests. Seminary formation was given a relevance rating for each one of those tasks. Their responses confirmed a second characteristic of seminary culture, i.e., its too theoretical or cognitive orientation in intellectual formation.

Most said that the tasks for which the seminary trained them most was: teaching in the seminary and faith instruction. Seminary formation had the highest ranks for these tasks. Whereas the tasks, for which seminary formation least prepared them for, were: the construction of buildings, fund raising, the administration of colleges and purchasing provisions and furniture. Their median ranks were the lowest, meaning that seminary formation was irrelevant for these tasks. (See Appendix 2 for full table). A common opinion shared by many was that “The heavy academic slant makes one feel that we are all being trained to become seminary professors rather than parish priests!” A cursory glance at the seminary curriculum of major seminaries reveals the very same fact. Over 100 courses, packed into 6 or 7 years, with more than 90 percent of them having a very ‘theoretical’ or ‘conceptual’ content.

Character formation in the Seminary

This finding about the ‘theoretical or conceptual orientation’ of academics is further confirmed by a more recent SVD study. The SVD study compared the characterological profile of Novices (those who had just joined formation) with that of Seniors (those who were about to profess their vows). The instrument used was Cattell’s 16 PF (Personality Factor Test) and the results were mixed. In some respects there was change, in other respects there was little or none. However, the most significant difference was in the *area of practical action*. Below is the table of differences between Seniors and Novices on the 16 factors:

Table 4:
Mean Score differences (in Stens) between Seniors and Novices
for the 16 Personality Factors

Factor	Mean Difference between Seniors and Novices	T- Value
A Warmth	0.402	<i>Significant</i>
B Reasoning capacity	0.048	Not significant
C Emotional stability	0.149	Not significant
E Dominant	0.099	Not significant
F Serious	0.284	Not significant
G Dutiful	0.114	Not significant
H Social Boldness	0.411	<i>Significant</i>
L Trusting	0.271	Not significant
I Sensitivity	0.343	<i>Significant</i>
M Abstracted, theoretical, idea oriented	0.919	<i>Significant</i>
N Forthright	0.169	Not significant
O Self Assured	0.717	<i>Significant</i>
Q1 Open to change	0.122	Not significant
Q2 Group Oriented	0.172	Not significant
Q3 Flexible	0.167	Not significant
Q4 Relaxed	0.175	Not significant

The table shows that 5 out of the 16 factors showed significant differences between Seniors and Novices on their sten scores: factors A, H, I, M and O. However, the most significant difference was in factor M, the factor of practicality, the sten score difference being 0.919 (bolded line). With regard to the ‘practical orientation to life’, seniors were found to be more abstracted, more oriented to mental processes, more at home with theories and ideas. Novices or beginners were found to be more grounded and down-to-earth, more focused on their senses, on observable data, and on the outer realities of their environment.

Seminary formation and atmosphere does apparently develop a person’s self-concept and enhances relationship with others. Senior seminarians were found to

be more self-assured, socially bolder, warmer and more sensitive than the novices. However, the greatest difference was found to be in the area of abstractedness. Seniors were found to be theoretical and idea-oriented, novices were grounded and down-to-earth. Evidently, the long process of intellectual formation with its emphasis on rational concepts tends to make students idealistic, abstract and conceptual. After an extensive philosophical and theological training, students have a lot of ideas but often these are not sufficiently grounded in practical reality.

One priest from the Papal Seminary study, echoed this same insight when he said in the space reserved for comments: "After studying such high-level concepts in Eschatology, Christology and Ecclesiology, and reading books of Rahner, Congar and de Lubac, I found it difficult (and meaningless) to put their concepts across in my homilies and talks. Even if I managed to do so, very often my simple parishioners found it difficult to grasp. What I am saying is that we need catechesis as much as theology!"

The research findings are not saying that seminaries should play down their emphasis on intellectual formation; rather, they are saying that there must be a greater correspondence between theology and the needs/interests of the community for which the candidates are ordained. Right now the actors in seminary formation are the faculty, the spiritual directors, the bishops, the seminary policies. An important element is missing. The community for which the future seminarian is going to be ordained has no part to play in his training. M. Amaladoss puts it strongly when he says that 'when the community, where students for the priesthood are going to work, begins to play a more active role in the formation of these students', then their formation is going to be more relevant, more meaningful and more attuned to their needs. Otherwise it will be in a vacuum. (Amaladoss 1990:33).

Thus far we have discovered that seminary culture is too conceptual, too cognitive and lacks a pastoral dimension. One might very well ask 'why is this so?' The answer, I believe, lies in the fact that seminary formation has historically been based on the model of the University with its attendant degrees, professors, classrooms, lectures, theses, dissertations, examinations, syllabi. And this is understandable. The Tridentine decree for the founding of seminaries was issued not very long after the founding of the first universities in Europe. The universities were, at the time, flourishing and successful, and so when seminaries were to be started, what better model to follow than the model of the University. And so many seminaries in Europe, America and subsequently in the mission countries, were structured on the pattern of the European University (O'Malley 1992: 80).

An important question to ask would be: should Indian seminaries continue to be modelled on the same pattern of the European university, especially when Europe herself is discarding this model? Or is there need to look for a new model?

Until now, we have looked at the research studies singly or individually. Putting them together however, brings to light a third characteristic of seminary culture. This concerns the area of spirituality. Here the findings show that seminary formation exhibits:

III. A Culture that lacks the horizontal dimension of spirituality

The definition of spirituality is a very contested one in sociology of religion studies. Nevertheless, no matter how varied the definitions of spirituality and the manner in which it is to be assessed, one cannot deny that there are at least two distinct (though not necessarily separable) aspects or dimensions to it. The first is the *vertical dimension* that represents the self's relationship with the divine or transcendent being, the second is the *horizontal dimension* which represents the self's relationship with others, human and sub-human beings. (No doubt these two aspects can be combined in an integrated personality) but historically they have given way to two distinct emphases in the tradition of Indian spirituality – the ashram approach and the social justice approach to spirituality) (see Pieris 1988; Amaladoss 1989:529)

Vertical and Horizontal dimensions of spirituality

All three studies assessed the respondents on a spirituality scale, which consisted of 20 statements, 10 of which reflected the vertical dimension and 10 of which represented the horizontal dimension of spirituality. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree on a Likert type scale and given an overall score for each of the two dimensions.

Sample statements reflecting a vertical dimension of spirituality were as follows:

A spiritual person is one:

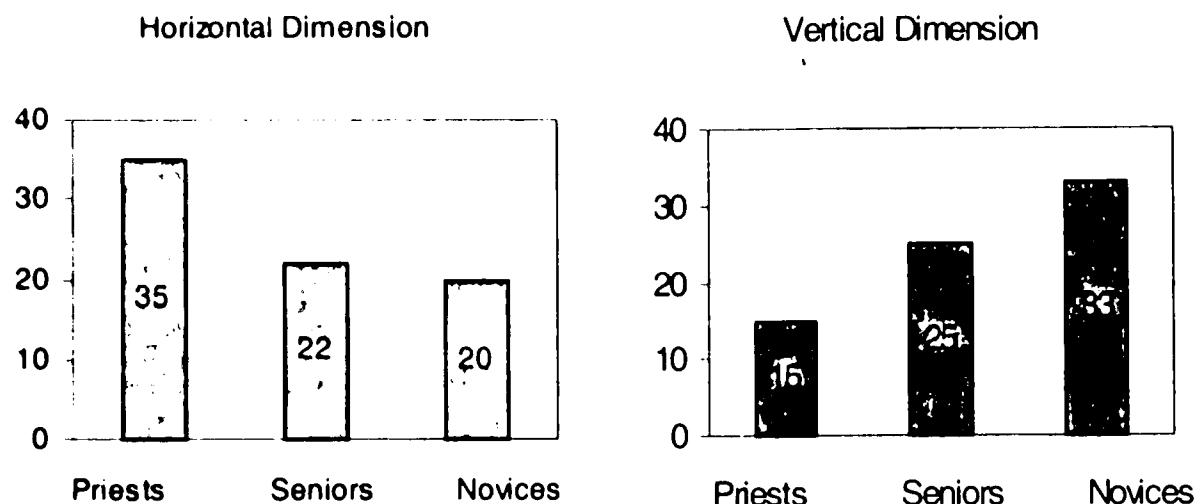
1. who sees in all things the will of God
2. who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
3. who spends a lot of time in prayer and in spiritual exercises.
4. who evaluates everything from the faith perspective
5. who feels that the main problem of our country is a spiritual problem.

Sample statements reflecting a horizontal dimension of spirituality were as follows:

1. A spiritual person is one who has a very clear vision of society and his role in it.
2. A spiritual person may be aggressive or confrontative where injustice is concerned.

3. Spirituality consists in a perspective that sees things from the viewpoint of the oppressed
4. Compassion does not necessarily depend on the amount of time one spends in prayer
5. The biggest problem of our country is a problem of inequality.

Comparison of scores on the vertical and horizontal dimension for priests, senior seminarians and novices



Putting together the findings of the three research studies, we are able to compare the scores on the two dimensions of spirituality for three groups of the respondents:

- Priests
- Senior seminarians
- Novices or junior seminarians

The bar charts above detail the differences between the three groups.

Observation one: The priests have the highest score on the horizontal dimension of spirituality (35), whereas on the vertical dimension they have the lowest score (15). Compared to the priests, the seminarians received lower scores on the horizontal dimension of spirituality (22 and 20), but higher scores on the vertical dimension (25 and 33).

Observation two: Among seminarians, on the horizontal dimension, there was scarcely any difference between novices and seniors. While seniors registered a score of 22, the novices had a score of 20. In other words, there was scarcely any growth or change in the horizontal dimension of spirituality. On the vertical dimension of spirituality, novices had a higher score than the seniors; novices scored 33, while seniors had a score of 25. How does one explain these results?

Explanation for observation one: Why do priests have a higher score on the horizontal dimension? One reason could be that the context in which they work

appears to influence the priests much more than the training. Whatever the stress on the vertical dimension they received in their training period, this dimension appeared to decrease. In fact, once they get into ministry, the horizontal dimension becomes much stronger.

One possible reason for this phenomenon is the context of poverty and suffering that they see around them in the ministry but from which they were shielded in the seminary. There is no doubt that in the seminary students live in a sort of hothouse or vacuum. They receive food on their table (irrespective of whether there is a famine going on in the country or not); they have rooms to sleep and live in (irrespective of floods, cyclones or storms) and they are not fraught with the tension of making ends meet. Once they get into the ministry, even though their personal situation does not change, nevertheless, they are constantly in contact with their parishioners and consequently with poverty, hunger, unemployment and injustice, with people who cannot make ends meet, who have no home or who are forced to starve. And so they are influenced by the context and circumstances of their ministry.

The sociologist, Howard Becker, while studying the training of physicians, questioned whether the attitudes and values learned as a student will have an effect on the student's behaviour in the distant future. Equally important, he found, in determining future attitudes and behaviours were the characteristics of the contexts and situations, which he faced as a professional. He called this the 'reaction approach to socialization' (Becker 1961:240). If we take this approach seriously, we must accept that even though Formators may train their students very well and arm them with values and beliefs, in the final analysis, the pastoral context in which the priest lives and works is equally if not more crucial in affecting his thinking and values. In fact, in the Papal Seminary study, even the few students who had previous work experience had a higher score on the horizontal dimension than students without any work experience. This forces us to think of alternate strategies of socialization, where the hothouse atmosphere of seminaries is somewhat reduced and opportunities for greater interaction with people are increased. This can be done by a different type of pastoral work, through experiments of students living out in urban slums/rural areas or through a work experience simultaneous with his academic studies. These will be explained in greater detail later in this paper.

Explanation for observation two:

The fact that there was no difference between seniors and novices on the horizontal dimension can mean either of two things:

- It could mean that seminarians are not given any special formation in the horizontal or social justice dimension of spirituality. If what they started out with and what they finished with is the same, it means that there is no growth in that dimension. It is constant.

- It could also mean that seminarians, already well versed in social justice to begin with, started out with a high score on the horizontal dimension.

This latter hypothesis is very unlikely. Earlier, in table one, we saw that the priests said that one of the missing elements in their formation was social justice training. In table two and three as well, we saw that ‘faithfulness to spiritual exercises’ and ‘spirit of obedience to superiors’ was replaced by ‘love for the poor’ and ‘sense of vision’ as necessary characteristics for the priest of today. These findings confirm that the second hypothesis is hardly feasible and indicate instead that the first hypothesis is more plausible, viz., that a horizontal dimension in spirituality is less emphasized in seminary culture.

In concluding this section, we might say that despite the fact that several ecclesiastical documents have pointed out that Indian spirituality cannot be delinked from the problems of poverty around us, this aspect (call it the horizontal or social justice dimension of spirituality) has been insufficiently stressed in our seminary culture and policies.

What about the fact that in the vertical dimension, seniors had a lower score than the juniors? This decrease can best be explained by the “law of diminishing returns”. This is a famous law of economics, which can be applied to the spiritual life. Over the years of formation, seniors tend to get inured and pay less attention to the purely vertical expressions of spirituality. After one has been living in community for several years and one has assiduously participated in all the community spiritual exercises one tends to suffer from a syndrome called “burn out”. At such a stage one tends to lose enthusiasm for spiritual exercises, especially those that are regular and mechanical, and are often a typical indicator of the vertical dimension of spirituality. The lower score of seniors can also be attributed to their hunger for expressions of spirituality, which are different from the traditional ones.

Finally, there is a fourth quality of seminary culture, brought to light by the three studies, and this concerns the area of discipline. It may be described as:

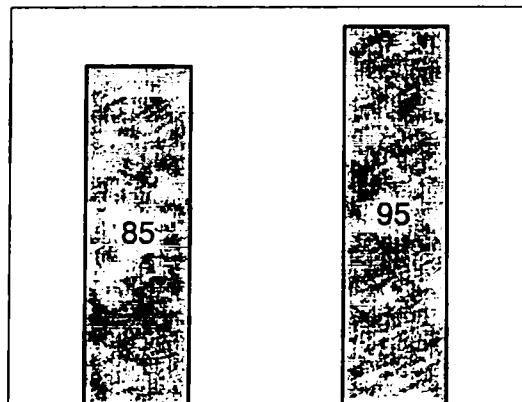
IV. A Culture which exhibits some elements of Rule Conscious-ness, Conformity and Fear:

One of the key questions in the mind of Formators is whether they should train their students to be leaders or followers. A leader is necessarily innovative and creative, whereas a follower is usually understood to be conformist and submissive. While most formators would agree that they want their students to be innovative, the question that needs to be asked is: is the necessary context provided for it? For innovation and creativity, a student must have freedom. If he does things out of a sense of conformity to the rule or because he is afraid that he will be reprimanded if he breaks the rules, then to that extent he is acting out of conformity and in such an instance, there is no socialization for commitment (Charter of Priestly Formation, CPF 3.1.4.).

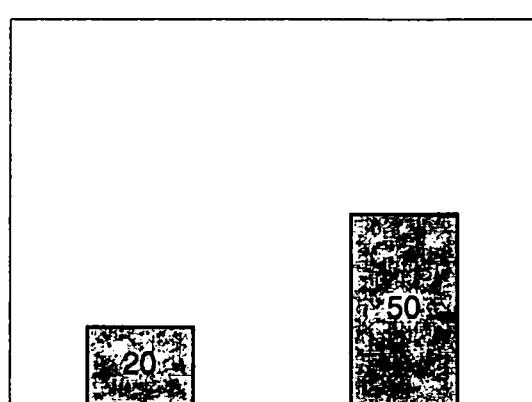
To examine the extent of conformity within seminaries, two of the three studies measured the inner conviction of seminarians and compared it with their practice. Students were asked how often they believed they should participate in the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation and these results were compared with how often they reported that they actually participated. The discrepancy between what they feel they should do and what they actually do revealed the extent or degree of compulsion. Normally, there is always a gap between the ideal and the actual. The ideal is somewhat higher than the actual. However, in the case of seminarians the actual is higher than the ideal. This gap betrays the element of conformity to the rule rather than to conviction.

While approximately 80-85 percent felt that daily participation in the Eucharist was essential, 90-95 percent actually participated. This means that approximately 10 percent were doing so out of compulsion. For the sacrament of Reconciliation the discrepancy was much higher, as much as 20 percent. While only 20 percent stated that reconciliation should be received monthly, around 50 percent reported that they actually participated in it. This shows that roughly 30 percent were acting out of compulsion. This was substantiated in both the studies of seminarians (the JDV study and the SVD study; since there were slight differences in percentages, a range is preferred). The charts below describe the results:

Percent Endorsing Daily Participation vs. Percent Actually Participating Daily in the Eucharist



Percent Endorsing Regular Reception of Reconciliation vs. Percent Actually Receiving Reconciliation



%Endorsing

%Actual

%Endorsing

%Actual

Between 10 and 20 percent of course may not be a very high rate of compulsion, but what this means is that within the context of the seminary, its rule-structure and supervision, at least 10 – 30 percent of seminarians are doing things out of a sense of conformity and submissiveness. Outside of this structure, given the context of relative freedom in the ministry, there is no guarantee that this 10 – 30 percent will perform out of a sense of commitment.

A sense of fear

While a certain amount of compulsion and fear can be expected in any organized community, one would be very suspicious if this fear gets to be inordinate. Comparing the Papal Seminary study and the JDV study (done scarcely within a year of each other) one remarkable observation was the low response rate in the JDV study of seminarians to individual questions. To many of the questions, the seminarians had a missing response rate of between 10 to 15 percent, whereas for the priests the missing response rate was as low as 3 to 8 percent. Now, there can be several reasons for a missing response rate. One reason of course could be that the question was not properly understood or explained; another reason could be that the respondent did not feel that the question was particularly relevant to him or had no interest in filling out the questionnaire.

However, one can also go by the content analysis of the data itself. And the data shows that one major reason for the lack of response or the half-hearted response was: Fear. Reading through the questionnaires one cannot miss the fact that there was an element of fear being expressed by the respondents. This fear can be observed if one reads between the lines, though sometimes it was mentioned quite unreservedly. Despite explicitly emphasizing that the responses to the questionnaire would be kept confidential, several students were afraid that, through their answers, they would be identified and subsequently penalized. Here is a sampling of indices that illustrate the fear that existed in the mind of the respondents:

- One student filled in all his personal details, then on second thoughts cancelled them out in dark ink.
- Another, in response to the remark that all this information will be confidential, asks: Are you sure?
- A third writes at the bottom of his questionnaire: "And why don't you ask my name? All other information is there...."
- A fourth states: "why so much information, you could have asked our name straightaway!!"
- A fifth writes: "There are many obstacles to my spiritual growth. But I don't like to mention them here... for fear of repercussions..."

Nearly all questions that ask about what they think or what they honestly feel about their attendance at meditation, prayer, the eucharist, the sacrament of penance, etc have a missing response rate of 10 - 15 percent. This indicates that several of the students did not wish to say exactly what they thought or felt, lest they be penalized in the future.

From the above it is clear that an element of fear existed in the minds of some students when they were filling out the questionnaire. But perhaps, one might ask, 'why this fear? From where does it arise or originate? ' One gets some kind of a clue from some of the responses given. For instance,

- In answer to “why do you participate in the eucharist?” a student replies: “Because I feel scared that my superiors will send a report to my bishop at the end of the year.”
- Another states expressly: “one of the obstacles in my spiritual growth is the *blessed report* that is sent to my superiors..the report seemingly must contain one negative remark..”
- A third asks: “ What guarantee do we have that our superiors will not see what we have written? How then can I write what I really feel? If my bishop knows that this is what I truly feel about spirituality, he may throw me out of the seminary!”

In short, one might say that one reason for the fear among the students is the report that is sent about them at the end of the year by their superiors – either to the Bishop or to the Provincial Superior. Evidently, they do not trust that the responses to the questionnaires would be kept confidential. They were afraid that what they wrote in all honesty would be seen by the immediate superior, kept in mind by him and eventually reported to their Bishop or Provincial. This fear of the eventual report was one of the reasons for the not-so-perfect response to the questionnaires. No doubt the number of students expressing such fear is small, but it is nevertheless indicative of the type of socialization.

As stated earlier, seminary formation is a type of secondary socialization. The key difference between primary and secondary socialization is the element of choice or free will. To the extent, however, that secondary socialization is done in a forced and constrained atmosphere, it approximates primary socialization. If nearly all areas of a person’s life are programmed, such formation becomes a kind of intensive resocialization, or worse, a sort of brain washing. This is what happens in military training, prisons, mental hospitals and cult groups (Rose, Glazer and Glazer, 320-338). The candidate does things without any inner conviction and at the first opportunity where freedom presents itself ‘lets himself go’, quite often going far beyond the norms of societal life, eventually becoming deviant.

The purpose of seminary training is to enthuse commitment in the candidate; and so, besides training in theology, other areas of the candidate’s life must perforce be arranged or scheduled. Nevertheless, all of this needs to be done with a certain amount of freedom or else there is a danger that the candidate may become like a child or mechanized robot. One result of our study has shown that there is some conformity, rule-consciousness and fear in the minds of the respondents. No doubt it is not extreme and in no way approaches the nature of re-socialization. However, so long as these emotions exist, one has always to be suspicious of the nature of commitment being developed. In such a situation, one cannot rest content with enthusing commitment merely by way of sanctions, punishment or the threat of dismissal.

Towards a culture and structures that are more relevant

Our paper has seen that there are four characteristics of seminary culture pertaining to four of the central features of seminary life:

- Firstly, deficiency in the pastoral dimension
- Secondly, theoretical or conceptual nature of academic formation
- Thirdly, lack of a horizontal dimension in the area of spirituality
- Fourthly, some amount of conformity, fear and rule-consciousness

Lest however this paper be construed to be too critical, by way of conclusion it will suggest possibilities for a different culture, possibilities that flow from the nature of the findings described. These recommended programmes will not be in the area of the content or style of teaching. In fact, in two of the studies, the Papal Seminary study and the JDV study, the respondents had the highest praise for the qualifications and teaching competence of the Faculty. They will rather be with regard to the structure and policies of the seminary.

1 Towards a broader understanding of Pastoral work

Since the time the study was done, no doubt the pastoral dimension in seminaries has received growing attention. Nevertheless, so long as it is still organized like a minor subject or considered an extra-curricular activity (a side activity, which the seminarian may do in his spare time) the pastoral dimension in seminaries will always be deficient. Our research has pointed out that unless pastoral work is given as much importance as a major theological subject and organized as a regular ‘internship’ programme, the spirit of the ‘Charter of Priestly Formation’ will not be implemented (CPF 3.2.4.c)

Currently, the concept of pastoral work is still too narrow. At the present time in several seminaries, pastoral work is understood as parish work and the seminarian is expected to do merely “churchy activities” viz., train a choir, teach Sunday school, conduct the liturgy, distribute communion, look after the altar boys and youth. This can scarcely be called sufficient practicum for a future priest of the new millennium. Pastoral work must be as varied and as comprehensive as possible. Community organization, (the building of small communities), an initiation into adult faith formation and adult literacy programmes, working with disadvantaged groups (like street children, domestic workers), being apprenticed to substance abuse clinics, environmental activism, working with unorganized labour, rural health programs, support for women’s issues, advocacy for poverty and justice issues, networking with secular organizations – all these could be possible settings for pastoral work. It is only when the seminarian is inducted into the diverse priestly activities (as mentioned in Appendix 2) is he truly being socialized into the varied apostolate of the future priest.

2. Towards an intellectual and spiritual formation relevant to the life of the people

It is a fact that the seminarian finds himself in a unique ‘situation’. He lives in dwellings, secluded and apart from common people, where everything is handed to him for the asking: food, books, rooms, laundry facilities, and sometimes even clothes, all expense free,. It is understandable that his thinking and spirituality will be influenced by this ‘privileged’ situation. If the seminarian had to learn to make ends meet, support himself, face the threat of unemployment, etc., he would develop into a very different person. The basic idea of such a programme is to make the student develop “a perspective” that is similar to the lives of people with whom he is going to work. Literally able to “theologize” from his living situation, his spirituality, too, arising from such a context, where he is close to people, will be very different (CPF 3.2.4.h). Three ‘experiments’ have been tried out to develop such a perspective.

A work-study programme is one of the earliest experiments, where a student for the priesthood has to travel the road of finding a job, work in a team, understand the process of the work environment, balance a budget, rub shoulders with farmers/blue collar workers and prepare for the priesthood at the same time. Within the present Indian set-up, it is difficult to envisage. Perhaps lectures may have to be re-organized, [arranged in the evening for instance] but there is no doubt that a candidate will have much more to gain if he were to work and support himself than if he were to grow up in an environment where everything is given to him on a platter. It is for this reason that the charter speaks of an ‘unstructured’ or ‘free’ regency as one possible alternative (CPF 3.2.4.i).

A second structural change is *the option offered to seminarians of living outside the “traditional” seminary* – whether in slums, chawls, or in rural areas - from where they commute daily for lectures to the seminary. This kind of experiment can possibly develop seminarians who are spiritually committed, dedicated and in touch with people. They face the day-to-day troubles of making ends meet, standing in lines, travelling in discomfort, learning the prices of groceries, contending with growing inflation, having water leak from the roof, etc. and their spirituality (as well as theological thinking) is drawn from these conditions rather than from an atmosphere that is cloistered and removed from the life of people.

A third situation is when *the entire seminary or house of formation is relocated* in the midst of the lives of people, whether it be in the rural areas or in the midst of a city. At present, these houses of formation are generally smaller in size. Regional theologates and ashram-style houses of formation are already small attempts in this direction.

3. Towards the principle of Graded and Guided Freedom

In many seminaries in India (and Asia), there is one Prefect of discipline for 50 or 60 candidates. Thus there is a philosophers’ Prefect, a theologians’ Prefect,

etc. This Prefect of discipline has a superhuman task before him. It is impossible for him to know each candidate and guide him in his growth towards the priesthood. He has to treat all 50 or 60 candidates with the same yardstick and rule, whether he is a senior or a junior (CPF 4.4.4). Personal attention is impossible. The freedom given to the student, if it is given, is neither graded nor guided. The student is left by and large to fend for himself. Worse still, candidates who are incompetent, uncommitted, neurotic or psychotic, may slip through the net and get ordained.

One structure that tries to overcome this defect is the moderator system, where there is greater proximity between staff and students. There is one moderator for a group of eight or ten students. The eight or ten candidates form a group and are close to their moderator (CPF 3.1.7). They have regular group discussions and group programmes; sometimes group outings. For all practical purposes the moderator is a friend, counsellor and guide rather than a supervisor. All the benefits of group work are utilized. The moderator comes to know each candidate on a very personal level and is much better able to keep track of his growth and development. Further, the horizontal interaction among the students is a very important process of formation. The peer group is able to guide and direct in a way that a moderator may not be able to. There is a possibility for both graded and guided freedom.

Conclusion

It was the French school of seminary formation, whose founders were Pierre de Berulle, Jean Jacques Olier and St. Vincent de Paul, who first modified and adapted the general directives of the Tridentine decree in order to give a specific formation, a specific culture and specific mentality to future diocesan priests. The French coined the term “esprit ecclesiastique” which can be translated in modern terminology as ‘clerical culture’, though understood in a positive sense. (White, 1989).

Today, there is no disputing the fact that the culture of the seminary leaves its stamp or imprint on the student. Whether the student continues into the priesthood or leaves the seminary, he leaves with a certain imprint or trademark that he carries with him, as a part of himself, all through his life. Paul Hendrickson, who interviewed seminary drop-outs and ex-alumni, found a common thread running through all of them. As one of Hendrickson’s classmates said: “I think you’re discovering that you never left...There’s a part of the seminary that always remains with you. I don’t have to search my memory for it either. Seminary Formation gave us a particular, indelible stamp” (Hendrickson, 1983).

The purpose of this paper was to describe seminary culture by reporting on research studies. No doubt the sample of seminaries may not have been representative, but the sample of students was. The ultimate aim was not to critique the

culture or to find fault with it, or to show how long-lasting its effects are, but to describe it in such a way that it can be made more effective for future ministry.

Appendix 1

Profile of the respondents:

The socio-economic background of seminarians, those studying at JDV in Pune and those in the various SVD houses of formation throughout Asia, as well as of the priests who passed out from the Papal Seminary, is very similar. The average age at which they join is between 20 and 22 years and the average age at which they are ordained is approximately between 28 and 30 years. Over 70 percent grew up in a rural area and hailed from large families with a total household size of approximately 6 or 7. The most common occupation for both parents was farming. Most of the students rated themselves in the lower middle income category. With regard to education, most of the parents (about 45 percent of the fathers and an even greater percentage of the mothers) had done only primary schooling. Less than 5 percent of their parents had professional careers like that of doctor, lawyer or engineer. The religious background can be considered traditional or conservative with about 80 percent of the candidates having spent 3 to 4 years in a minor seminary. Less than 12 percent had any kind of work experience prior to joining the seminary.

Once they had become priests, however, their educational background moved up several notches higher. 63 percent were graduates; 45 percent of these had become post graduates with 12 percent reaching the doctoral level.

Appendix 2

Table 4: Priestly Tasks and How Relevant Seminary Formation Was for Them

Tasks performed	Relevance Index
1. <i>Teaching in Seminary</i>	3.35
2. <i>Catechesis or Instruction on the Faith</i>	3.11
3. Administering the Sacraments	3.11
4. Administration of Parish	3.10
5. Conducting paraliturgies	2.97
6. Administration of Seminary	2.95
7. Visiting homes, families	2.91
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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' (= *euaggelion*) 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. Mk 10:17-27 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’SOUZA 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. Ginrich), 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. GEDEON, (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 hinc ...*
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. KUTHRAKKATTTEL, "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. KUTHIRAKKATTTEL, *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. KUTHIURAKKATTTEL, "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.

I. *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-

ties, the ancient system of clerical formation where young men were prepared for the priesthood in the cathedral schools became either impoverished or were generally abandoned. As a result, a large segment of the late medieval and pre-Reformation clergy received inadequate training and were very often ordained for an office they were not sufficiently equipped to exercise. They were morally deficient, intellectually unqualified and professionally incompetent. There was a real need to revamp this structure. This was the problem which the Council of Trent tried to solve. Toward this end, the Council put forward the true Catholic doctrine of the Sacrament of Orders in its 23rd session of 15th July 1563. In the 18th canon of the Decree of Reform, the Council made mandatory the institution of seminaries where future ministers were rightly brought up, educated in religion and trained in ecclesiastical studies and religious practices.³ But before going into the details of how Trent came upon this idea, let us briefly look at the pre-Tridentine formation of clerics.⁴

1.1 Pre-Tridentine Practices

Numerous books have been written on the history and theology of the priesthood but often we see in them little about the formation of ministers. Perhaps, for the Church, it was a matter of course that once the duties of the clergy were made clear, a suitable preparation would automatically follow. But this was not always the case. The Gospels tell us how Jesus prepared his close disciples for ministry. The ministry for which he chose them was the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. He told

his disciples that they were not self-appointed ministers but were chosen by God for a specific mission just as he himself was. Jesus' ministry was a ministry of love and service, but it was essentially a ministry of preaching the Word of God. Jesus demanded that his disciples be with him and accompany him; he constantly instructed them on the various aspects of ministry.⁵ The New Testament Churches gave birth to a number of ministries⁶ as the occasion arose. Often we come across the mention of their essential qualities⁷ but little is said about their training. The post-New Testament writings and the Fathers, too, follow similar lines. The quality of the ministerial person stands always in the forefront.⁸ Origen is already conscious of the failure of the Church's ministers to measure up to the highest spiritual ideal which belongs to their office:

Most of the bishops . . . are completely lacking in understanding of their proper vocation . . . they are worldly-minded, pursue earthly occupations and affairs, long for wealth and land, are haughty, quarrelsome, and self-assertive, allow themselves to be flattered and corrupted . . . Clergy brag about their seniority, and try to ensure that their children or relatives will succeed them . . . the only thing they take seriously are their advantages and privileges, just like the Pharisees of old.⁹

But he gives little information about the training of the clergy. The Church does not seem to have laid down fixed rules for it during this period. Most probably the cleric obtained his theological knowledge first of all in the lessons of the catechumenate, and further,

by private study. This would sometimes be with a learned Christian teacher, who after the fashion of the philosophers of antiquity now also gave lessons in the “philosophy” of Christianity. Knowledge of liturgical functions was provided by direct participation in the prayer and worship of the Church.¹⁰ The famous Catechetical Schools of Theology, like the School of Alexandria, were not training centres for priests as such, but, as important centres of theology, might have been the *alma mater* of a considerable number of priests.

Slowly the training of the clergy became more personal and practical. They were attached to the service of a particular church, and there, by assisting the bishop and presbyters, gradually learned to look after the church and to do its ministrations. In some places there already existed the practice of gathering prospective candidates around the bishop, all living together in the episcopal dwelling, like the *vita communis* of the clergy of the Church of Vercelli under bishop Eusebius.¹¹ The exercise of the Minor Orders¹² was an important preparation for the priesthood, too, because the suitability of a candidate for the priesthood could be measured through it. The existence of such a system is attested by a letter of Pope St. Siricius (d. 399) to Himerius, bishop of Tarragona.¹³ But we should also note that the sociological and cultural elements which characterized the cleric were minimum. In the early Church they lived like ordinary people, tending their farms or other businesses. Only as time went on was this changed. They began to wear special clothing, the tonsure was prescribed somewhat generally for the

clergy, and celibacy began to be required in a general way. Orders were made irrevocable, thus making a return to lay state difficult, and various exemptions were granted to the clergy, leading to the establishment of a class of the clergy, and, thus, to clericalism.

Augustine played an important role in the field of clerical training. He established perhaps the first “seminary” in his own episcopal palace. His biographer Possidius speaks of the establishment of a sort of convent where he lived, together with his clergy, a life of prayer, discipline and study. He had imposed the obligation of passing a certain period of discipline and study as a condition necessary for ordination.¹⁴ This practice, however, might not have been not widespread, and not all bishops were as solicitous for the welfare of their clerics as Augustine. So we see papal interventions by Gelasius, Leo I, Gregory I¹⁵ etc., admonishing bishops to take the training of the clerics seriously. But the example of Augustine seems to have been imitated by some local churches. The practice of assigning a determined person to undertake the responsibility for the formation of clerics under the direction of the bishop also began around this time. The Second Council of Toledo (527 or 531) speaks of entrusting the formation of clerics to a *praepositus*, and the Fourth (633), of the necessity of having the candidates for Holy Orders live together so that they might be trained together.¹⁶ Also some monasteries were engaged in the formation of clerics, like the monastery of Lérins from which proceeded a number of bishops who copied this model in their own dioceses.¹⁷ Thus, the two

important types of institutions for clerical formation in subsequent centuries, the monastic school and the episcopal school emerged. Charlemagne under an imperial ordinance commanded the establishment of schools in connection with the cathedrals and monasteries as a means of assuring a well-trained clergy.¹⁸ So from that time a greater portion of the clergy received their education and formation in these institutions. However, these schools began to fall into decadence partly due to the breakdown of the feudal system and partly due to the rise of the universities. Universities became the centres of learning but few clerics were able to pursue their studies there. Moreover, they did not offer the candidates any spiritual formation nor prepare them for ministry. The Third (1179) and Fourth (1215) Lateran Councils legislated regarding this. But it was common knowledge that clerical formation lacked a solid and well balanced intellectual and moral foundation in the pre-Reformation period.

It was left to the individual, after attending the Latin school in his town, to acquire the necessary knowledge from a pastor or in a monastery. One could obtain ordination from a bishop, usually without any special examination. The cathedral *scholasticus*, and in the fifteenth century also a special cathedral preacher, had the charge of instructing clerics and of examining candidates for ordination Shockingly slight was the indispensable minimum of knowledge which thirteenth-century theologians required of the priests and with which persons were probably satisfied in practice.¹⁹

It was natural that the Reformers with their emphasis on preaching found this situation quite unacceptable. This is the context of the Tridentine seminary legislation.

1.2 *The Tridentine Reform*

From the above it is clear that the Council's legislation was not entirely new creation. It was rather a restoration and renovation of the traditional manner in which young clerics received their formation. Fundamentally it represented a return to the concept of the cathedral school. In the report of the preparatory commission in the matter of clerical training it was pointed out that one of the worst evils in the Church was the ordination of the intellectually and morally unprepared; the report suggested measures to remedy it, namely, better supervision before conferring Holy Orders by a master or professor appointed by the bishop.²⁰ There was nothing new in this directive but the problem was identified, and therefore, was considered to be worthy of discussion. In the 5th session of the Council, on 5th April 1546, the matter came up again in connection with the teaching and preaching of Scripture. Here, too, fundamentally nothing new was said but rather the prescriptions of the Fourth Lateran Council were restated. The next discussion on the matter took place at the new venue of the Council, Bologna, the following year. Unfortunately, the recommendations, which again did not really suggest anything new, were never submitted to the Council because of the inability of the Council to continue there and its suspension in 1549. A considerable number of years would pass before

the Council came up with the system of the seminaries. Two events that occurred in the meantime influenced this decision of the Council, namely, the founding in 1552 of the German college in Rome for the formation of the German clergy by the Society of Jesus, and the seminary legislation of Reginald Pole in England in 1556.²¹ In fact, it is said that the immediate source of the Tridentine seminary legislation was canon 11 of the synodal legislation of Reginald Pole.

In its 23rd session, the Council, which resumed at Trent once again, discussed the matter of clerical education in detail, and on July 15th, 1563, in canon 18 of the Reformatory Decrees, the seminary legislation as we know it today, the longest of the disciplinary decrees, came into existence. The provisions are quite extensive and are fundamentally a return to the ancient practice of grouping candidates for the priesthood around their bishop and having them thus formed morally and intellectually under his supervision. But now it entailed the complete isolation of the candidates from their environment for the entire training period so that they did not succumb to the world's pleasures, and were brought up from adolescent years onwards in an orderly way. The lower age limit was 12 years. They were now segregated with a special dress and tonsure, and a special curriculum of studies was ordered to be taught there. Soon after the Council the decree was implemented and it had outstanding supporters, like St. Charles Borromeo. In the decades and centuries which followed, the system undoubtedly helped to revitalize the moral and spiritual life of the clergy. For four hun-

dred years it determined the quality of priesthood in the Church supported by the theology of priesthood that Trent had advocated.

At the same time, an absolutization of the Tridentine decree also took place, which was seen as the culmination and final solution rather than a beginning. Trent's theological presuppositions were very narrow. There was a total absence of reference to Jesus and his ministry in the decree. It was exclusively focussed on the Eucharist. The preaching of the Word was mentioned only in a secondary way. Leadership in the Christian community was not given any major place in the Tridentine discussion.²² The strictly orthodox, celibate priests trained in the newly established seminaries became the bulwarks of Roman Catholicism and its centralized system in the following centuries. But the Enlightenment and secularization which engulfed Europe had its adverse impact on the seminaries, too. The French Revolution and other revolutions in Europe and the subsequent spirit of restoration in the Church affected priestly formation. Some clergymen demanded a more liberal approach to formation which was vehemently resisted by the Church, for example, by Pope Gregory XVI.

1.3 *The Modernist Challenge: An Opportunity Lost*

The next opportunity for a fresh look at the seminary system came in the wake of the Modernist crisis during the pontificate of Pius X. Pius X was truly concerned about the renewal of pastoral care, and, therefore, wanted a reform

of seminaries; but what resulted was a sort of police system of surveillance and espionage, based on an overestimation of obedience at the cost of a free exchange of opinions in seminaries. Totally unconcerned about the new world that was taking shape around him, the Pope produced a seminary system which increased its inherent weakness of being an educational system leading to a ghetto life without contact with the outside world. Individual priests who were interested in bridging the gap between the Church and theology and the modern world and its temper and had demanded reforms were considered radicals and were condemned. The scholastic orientation of theological studies and strict rules of education of priests in seminaries were decreed with the result that the antiquated system of the strictly secluded seminary training continued in the Church for decades. The “worker-priests movement” in France was another opportunity to rethink the seminary system and to break free from the evils of that system but it did not take place. This was the context of the Second Vatican Council.

2. Priestly Formation in India

2.1 *The Thomas Christians: Pre-Portuguese Period*

The survey of priestly formation in India should be divided into two parts: among the Thomas Christians and in the Latin Church. The practice of priestly training among the Thomas Christians can be divided into two periods again, namely, the pre-Portuguese period and the post-Portuguese period. In the pre-Portuguese period, the Church

of the Thomas Christians had a unique structure. When the Portuguese arrived in India they found here a Church which was fully indigenised as far as the socio-cultural spheres were concerned, but under a foreign hierarchy. The Patriarch of Babylon or Persia was its spiritual head who ordained bishops for India. They celebrated their liturgy in the Syriac language, using the East-Syrian rite. But this foreign character was minimised to a considerable extent through the institution of the Archdeacon. He was a native of India and for all practical purposes the head of the Church in India. The clergy came next who were totally indigenous and local, although Mathias Mundadan says that there are some documents which would suggest that there were also East-Syrian priests working in India.²³ The clergy were plentiful, attached to each church. They were called *cathenars* or *casanars* which was the Malabarization of the Syriac word *qasisa* (elder or presbyter). Outside the church, the priests were not very different from the laymen in their dress. They did not wear the tonsure, instead they had a tuft of hair on their head. Placid Podipara, however, gives the description of a priestly dress.²⁴ I don't think there is any need to speculate much on the priestly dress and it may be wise to agree with Mundadan who says that what form exactly the priestly garb took cannot be determined from any document.²⁵ There is no doubt that priests were generally married. Besides, secular clergy there seem to have been monks and nuns also.

The ordination to priesthood took place in two stages. The first stage was when they were made *samasas*, when

the Orders up to the diaconate were conferred, and the second stage was when they were made *cathenars* or priests. In selecting candidates age does not seem to have played any major role. Boys of sixteen or seventeen and at times even little children were ordained. The reason for this seems to have been the absence of bishops for long intervals. The training was done under the care of a *Malpan* (teacher), an elderly and learned priest. Under his instruction, the candidates learned to read Syriac and to perform the various functions attached to their office, like saying the mass on certain days, reciting the divine office, performing marriages, funerals, and such family functions as *chathams* (annual feasts of diseased relatives), the first rice-feeding of a child, etc. The young clerics studied for a parish and not for a diocese and the community was responsible for their training. There was no fixed duration for training. After having been recommended by the *Malpan*, the *palliyogam* (parish assembly) and the archdeacon, they were ordained by the bishops. This recommendation was known as the *deshakuri* which also gave the assurance that after ordination he would serve that parish and the parish would be responsible for his upkeep. If centres of special learning existed, as seems to have been the case, only a few could study in them. The vast majority of clerical candidates studied in the *Malpanates*. These resembled the traditional *gurukulavasam* (living with the teacher) in India, where the disciples lived with the *guru* or teacher and studied under his care. It is difficult to make judgements about the quality of the training given in the *Malpanates*. It was

definitely not very high. The course of instruction might have been that of the East-Syrian Church where the schools of Nisibis and Edessa had set the example: Scripture, chants and songs of the divine office, the performance of the sacraments, the canons of the synods and the Fathers, grammar etc. Although they did not fare well as great theologians, the priests were held in high esteem and enjoyed a prominent position in society. They were part of the life of the people. So till the arrival of the Portuguese there was no seminary in India. In itself the system of the *Malpanate* was not extraordinary. In ancient times, “the teacher was the school” in many cultures. As we have seen, it was practised in the early period of the Church, too. Only that in India the system continued even when in other parts of the world other systems were developed, like the catechetical schools, the cathedral schools or the monastic schools because it was rooted in the culture of the country.²⁶

2.1.1 The Impact of the Portuguese

In less than fifty years after the arrival of the Portuguese, the first seminary was founded for the Thomas Christians by the Franciscan Vincent Lagos in Cranganore (1541). He wanted to give the students the same kind of education as was given in the West, and, thus, by Latinising the clergy, he hoped to Latinise the Church. This was a grave mistake. The fully Latin instruction was unacceptable to the people and they rejected the priests trained there. In 1581 the Jesuits began a seminary in Vaipicota for the Syrian Christians.

They did not repeat the mistakes of the Franciscans and used Syriac in instruction, and, therefore, it was better accepted. The seminary had to be shifted to Ambazhakad due to a Dutch attack and continued there till the Society was suppressed. Meanwhile, the Tridentine decree on seminaries was being implemented throughout the world and the Provincial Councils of Goa tried to abolish the *Malpanate* system and to introduce the Tridentine decree fully in India, too. This did not succeed fully. The *Malpanates* continued to exist.²⁷

But other seminaries were founded. The Dominican missionary Francis Donatti founded a seminary at Kaduthuruthy in 1624 and it was accepted by the community since it tried to preserve the traditions of the community but it disappeared with the death of its founder. In 1682 the Carmelite missionaries started a seminary in Verapoly. It was restarted in 1764 and both Syrians and Latins were trained there. Due to practical problems another seminary was started for the Syrians in Alangatt in 1767. In 1833 the Syrian Carmelites started a seminary in Mannanam (later on Dharmaram College) which included some secular clergy. It was during this period that the vicar apostolic Bernardine Bacinelli legally abolished the *Malpanates* and made seminary education compulsory. In the process of reorganization, other seminaries were founded: Verapoly, reserved for the Latins, and four other seminaries for the Syrians, at Mannanam, Puthenpally, Vazhakulam, and Elthuruthu. In 1888 all the seminaries were brought together once again in Puthenpally. Meanwhile, in 1866

there began a seminary at Mangalapuzha under the *Padroado* rule. In 1932 the Puthenpally seminary was transferred to Mangalapuzha and was open to all rites. The attempts continued to start a seminary only for the Thomas Christians and these fructified in 1962 with the founding of a seminary in Vadavathoor near Kottayam. In 1997 the Mangalapuzha seminary was divided once again between the Latins and the Syrians. Now the Syro-Malankara Church, too, possesses a full-fledged seminary at Trivandrum for training its priests.

This is the history of the training of clergy in the Thomas Christian community from the beginning, leading to the abolition of the ancient system of the *Malpanes* and the imposition of the seminaries which was a purely Western institution.²⁸ The abolition of the *Malpanates* has contributed a great deal toward the Westernization of the Indian Church. With the introduction of a Western system the traditions and history of the community were submerged for centuries. The *gurukulavasam* system saw to it that there was constant touch between the trainee and the teacher and the trainee and the community. It was a system based on genuine Indian tradition and the legitimate traditions of the Church. From an ecclesiological perspective, the seminary was an attack on the autonomy of the local Church and an instrument of Roman centralization. The seminaries introduced seclusion and in this secluded atmosphere it gave a “more systematic training” but who were the priests who were trained in these seminaries? They were agents of Westernization.

2.2 The Latin Church

The intervention of the Western Church outside the Thomas Christian community as far as priestly training is concerned is briefly treated below.²⁹ In the first forty years, the Portuguese did not try to found a seminary in India for the training of priests but sent the candidates to Portugal. The beginning of a seminary was in 1541 when Diogo da Borba and Miguel Vaz, the vicar general of Goa, founded the Confraternity of the Holy Faith which soon became a college for the training of priests for the East. It was entrusted to the Society of Jesus. It was called St. Paul's College and existed till the Jesuits were suppressed in India in 1759. The Jesuits also had a second seminary in Goa, the Rachol seminary, which after the suppression of the Order became the central seminary of Goa, under the jurisdiction of the bishop, after the model Trent had originally envisaged for seminaries. These were training centres for local priests who were supposed to be helpers of the Europeans. Other religious orders also had such colleges which served many purposes, including the training of priests. So already years before the Tridentine seminary decree such institutions existed in India except that they had a different set-up here. Even after the Council of Trent this particular set-up continued. They were not under the diocesan bishop but under the *Padroado* or *Propaganda*, and were administered by religious orders. The Provincial Councils of Goa tried to exert some sort of control over these institutions and to bring them in tune with the decrees of Trent. But the seminaries continued to be in the hands of Euro-

pean religious orders which were not seriously concerned about the role of the diocesan priest and their training. One can say that the entire seminary system of this period was controlled and manipulated by religious orders to their own advantage. For centuries they even refused to accept Indians into their fold on purely racist grounds.

The founding of the *Propaganda* in 1622 was a measure against this spirit of the religious orders. The *Propaganda* had a vision of a local Church and already in 1630 it had admonished the bishops of India to create an Indian clergy who are not subordinates but equals. But these pleas went unheard because of the opposition of the *Padroado*. Moreover, the methods of the *Propaganda* were no better than those of others as can be seen from the seminaries it founded. The first *Propaganda* seminary in the vicariate of Bijapur under the patronage of Matheo de Castro, its first bishop, ended in a fiasco. Another seminary of the *Propaganda* was the seminary at Verapoly founded in 1764. Its history in the first 100 years had nothing extraordinary to show. Another *Propaganda* seminary was the one at Pondicherry under the French Foreign Mission from 1778 (later St. Peter's Seminary). It too did not achieve anything very significant. The same fate befell the seminary in Bombay founded in 1819. The conflict between the *Padroado* and the *Propaganda* reached its climax in the Goan schism from 1838-1857. As we know, it was a very damaging conflict for the whole Church in India.

After that there were some attempts from both *Padroado* and *Propa-*

ganda authorities to reform the seminary system. The conditions for this were created by the erection of the Indian hierarchy in 1886 and the practical abolition of the *Padroado* in India. The seminary of Rachol was given, for the first time in south Asia, the privilege of giving the bachelor's degree in theology because its programme, it was claimed, could be compared to that of any seminary in the West. This was not really a compliment because its programme had nothing to do with the Indian context. It was totally foreign but fitted well into the uniform Roman system of priestly training. As far as the *Propaganda* was concerned, one of its important contributions was the instruction of 1845 after the Synod of Pondicherry (1844) which once and for all settled the question whether the Indian clergy possessed the moral and intellectual abilities to become priests who are equal to the Europeans. It stated that Indians should be suitably prepared so that they were able to take up the rein of their Church in their own hands. But the Apostolic Visitation of 1859-62 showed the rather depressing state of affairs in the Indian Church as far as seminary education was concerned. It seemed as if 200 years of admonitions by the *Propaganda* to bring up a local clergy had no effect whatsoever. This was the occasion for a second instruction by the *Propaganda* in 1869. Its concrete result was the founding of the Papal Seminary in Kandy in 1893. It was supposed to be a central seminary for India and a model seminary for priestly training. The centralized Roman system succeeded at last. It abolished a system that was indigenous and unique and sub-

stituted it with a foreign structure. The 20th century has seen tremendous growth, both qualitative and quantitative, in seminary education in India and the mushrooming of seminaries continues unabated even today.

3. The Impact of Vatican II and the Post-Conciliar Period.

Like every other area in the Church, priestly training was also radically affected by the Second Vatican Council. Unfortunately, the most striking thing about the priesthood in the years after the Council was the unprecedentedly large number of those leaving it and the way that the official Church reacted to this situation. The Council addressed the problem of priestly formation and ministry in two of its documents, *Optatam Totius* and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, on the training of priests and on the ministry and life of priests. But the discussion on the priesthood after the Council took place in a wider context. Many issues that had been overlooked or suppressed in the Council broke out in the post-Conciliar Church. The awareness of the different aspects of the priesthood (the wider shape of its ministry, its decreasing numbers, its obligatory celibacy, its stress, the underlying rationale of its differentiation from the laity etc.) and the open way they were discussed made it a thorny problem for the Church. Moreover, seen in the light of other Council documents such as *Gaudium et Spes* (Celibacy looked less attractive within the context of the more explicit affirmation of human values, including the value of married love) *Lumen Gentium* (the acceptance of married diaconate),

Sacrosanctum Concilium, etc., the formation and ministry of priests seemed to be in urgent need of revision. There resulted a serious crisis in the priestly and religious life immediately after the Council. Of course this happened in varying degrees in different regions of the world, the most affected being Western Europe and America.

The theological discussion on priesthood challenged many of the traditional concepts hitherto held to be unassailable. The New Testament evidence for hierarchical priesthood itself was questioned. The higher valuation of the general priesthood of the faithful as well as their being entrusted with pastoral services till then reserved for priests made one ask what the specific difference between ordained priests and the laity was. Influenced by Western democratic ethos, it was asked, whether authority in the Church was to be based on competence, and thus understood not sacramentally but functionally, and therefore, judged in service to the congregation. The question of celibacy which was an unfinished agenda of the Council was perhaps the most discussed topic of all. All these led to a massive exodus of clergy in the years immediately following the Council.³⁰

The encyclical *sacerdotalis caelibatus* of 24th June 1967 did not solve the problem in any way. In general there was a feeling that priests and priestly training had lost touch with the day-to-day world. There was a demand for closer solidarity with the working class, the poor and other marginalized social groups. There was a demand for more democratization in the Church, a

more authentic liturgy, and renewed methods in pastoral care. The radical movements died down slowly for various reasons,³¹ but the numerous surveys conducted among clergy throughout the world on the priestly ministry showed that there were genuine concerns and challenging problems which had to be addressed.³² One of them was the system of priestly training in seminaries. Seminarians pleaded for the abolition of the strictly isolated manner of life in the seminaries. They demanded that they be permitted to live individually or in groups in the midst of other students in their places of study. The curriculum of studies was considered inadequate for the pastoral task that awaited them. The decree of the Council *Optatam Totius* had made some recommendations in this regard by allowing considerable flexibility in the planning of seminary curriculum according to the needs of the local Churches. The *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* of 6th January 1970³³ encouraged bishops to pursue this matter further. The 1990 Synod of bishops treated the topic "The Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day." The preparatory document of the Synod pointed out poignantly that humanity was going through a cultural and spiritual crisis, and absolute norms and references to the past as the source of wisdom had to be rejected. But sensitive issues like married clergy, ordination of married men to the priesthood, non-stipendiary priesthood, women priests, the possibility of a time-bound priestly ministry etc. were avoided in the Synod, and there was a straight refusal to acknowledge the existence of the most basic theologi-

cal and pastoral issues. As long as that continues, no real reform of the structures, priestly formation can take place. The “cult of truth” to which the Pope in his final exhortation urged,³⁴ will remain a mere lip-service in the present system of training of priests. It must also be said that neither the Council nor any post-Conciliar initiative has questioned the basic institution of the seminary system.

Conclusion

In the concluding part of this essay let us look critically at priestly formation, especially in the light of the post-Vatican II developments which we have discussed above. Since its emergence more than four hundred years ago, the institution of the seminary has remained an integral part of the Catholic ecclesiastical structure, protected by the wall of canon law, numerous conciliar and synodal decrees and papal exhortations. No one has seriously challenged its basic structure ever since. Only there have been calls for reform. One reason for this general acceptance has been that the seminaries generally improved the intellectual and spiritual formation of the clergy. The Second Vatican Council has asserted that seminaries are necessary for priestly formation (*OT* 4), and it is reasonable to conclude that this basic structure will remain unchanged for some time to come. But it produces a rather unified priestly group and has become the main instrument of uniformity and centralization in the Church, although the Council had, in principle, given freedom to the episcopal conferences to draw up their own programme of formation “so that priestly training will always answer the pastoral require-

ments of the particular area in which the ministry is to be exercised” (*OT* 1). This is the only way to rectify some of the inherent drawbacks of the seminary system today, but it has hardly taken place in practice, and the long arm of Rome is still visible through its various pronouncements, and recently in the most tangible way, through the Apostolic Visitation of seminaries. As a result, seminary formation continues to be antiquated and out of touch with reality.

Let me illustrate this point. There had been numerous pronouncements and initiatives by the Indian hierarchy regarding priestly formation in India,³⁵ leading to the formulation of the Charter of Priestly Formation for India in 1988. The All India Seminar of 1969 had set the tone for all the subsequent initiatives after the Council when it said that the seminarians “should not be isolated from the mainstream of life.”³⁶ In the Research Seminar “The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society” it was said that seminary formation in India was not situation-oriented, and therefore, a field-oriented training should be given and for this purpose the methodology of teaching and the curriculum should undergo a radical change.³⁷ The Charter of Priestly Formation for India says that “at every stage of their formation, the seminarians should be in touch with the societal, cultural, and religious realities in which they are . . . ”³⁸ But what happens, unfortunately, is a very sad thing: Sebastian Kappen put it succinctly: “The first part of formation is creating a gulf between seminarians and the world, and the second part, in fact the rest of life, is an attempt to bridge that gulf.”³⁹ He

called the seminaries a dis-value if they did not involve themselves in action in the world.

That the lack of touch with the actual situation is a major problem in seminary formation was adequately brought to light by the various studies undertaken on priestly formation in India. Take for example the national survey which was the basis for drawing up the Charter of Priestly Formation. The survey says that about two-thirds of all the respondents are of the opinion that “the seminary was so sheltered from the mainstream of life that the seminarian lost touch with ordinary people and their problems.”⁴⁰ Another survey concludes: “For an adequate and fruitful formation, future priests should be exposed to the socio-economic, socio-political and cultural realities of Indian life while living in the seminary. They should come into contact with people in their concrete situations and their spiritual and material needs and aspirations through reflective analysis of these situations.”⁴¹ Bridging the enormous gap between expectations and reality in this regard is the first and foremost component of any effective change in the formation system in the seminary today. This may entail a radical change in the very structure of the seminary system itself and the values it tries to propagate. This may mean a creative adaptation of the ancient *gurukulavasam* which, for example, seems to be the rationale behind the regional study centres of the Jesuits in India. This would call for a transition from the foreign idiom to the Indian idiom in seminary formation because, as Michael Amaladoss says, “our cultural consciousness is heavily overlaid

with foreign elements since our formation has been in terms of a foreign idiom,”⁴² and unless it changes there can be very little effective formation.

The seminary system was imposed on the country after destroying an indigenous structure that existed in India. What went on in the name of formation in these seminaries was simply the transmission of a foreign culture with even manifest racist undertones and suppression of all indigenous elements. And our consciousness is so overlaid with these foreign elements even today that for all practical purposes we are still under its oppressive yoke, with a curriculum that is largely irrelevant. The above mentioned national survey of Paul Parathazham says that the majority of the respondents think that the theology they were taught was “largely irrelevant to the pastoral needs of India today,” and less than a third of them feel that seminary formation gave them “a deeper understanding of India and its culture.”⁴³ And Mathew Vallipalam concurs when he says that there has to be a radical change in the academic system of the seminaries from the prevailing Western model to one that is theologically and pastorally relevant to Indian spirituality, culture and life-style.⁴⁴

Are these enough? I think the educational principle in seminaries itself must undergo a radical change. It must be adult centred (andragogical) rather than child centred (pedagogical).⁴⁵ Theological education premises on fostering adult learning. Unfortunately, too few institutions design their methodology based on an adult model of learning. In an adult learning environ-

ment the student and the teacher mutually assess needs and negotiate goals. The learner is encouraged to contribute to the learning processes by virtue of his or her life experiences. The adult learner explores things that are important to him or her to apply them to developmental or life tasks. Evaluations are conducted mutually with a view to their use for setting future goals. These principles provide a good adult learning environment and offer a good model for future adult interactions for ministers.⁴⁶ This is fostered best in the pastoral field and that is why field education must be an essential and unique part of priestly formation. It is only in the field that the students are in touch with issues of personal and spiritual growth and societal change, and these are precisely the areas of growth needed for ministry.

All these will ultimately depend on the view of priestly formation and priestly identity one has. What is the fundamental identity of the priest and what is the goal of his formation? If it is to form a pliable, obedient, apparently celibate, moralizing and authoritarian clergy who will perform an essentially sacramental function for the Christian community, today's formation programme can continue without much change. While this may delight a great number of bishops and people, it may not satisfy the large number of educated people whose world of growing expectations differ considerably from that of the vast majority of ordinary people. And it is reasonable to expect that education will spread and improve rather than stagnate or decline. Therefore, a paradigm that is worth considering for

training future ministers is that of spiritual leadership.⁴⁷

Who are spiritual leaders? They are not people who have learned facts and mastered techniques but who have experienced the reality of being freed by the Gospel, who have personally glimpsed meaning in the midst of a fractured world.⁴⁸ And as a leader he is able to lead people individually and communally to a more efficacious relationship with God, each other and the world. He is involved with the world, is a person of compassion and is committed to the truth. He is a person of prayer and embraces the value of poverty. He is a person of hospitality who gives of himself, that others may find rest, comfort and challenge. Finally, the spiritual leader is one who is capable of intimacy.⁴⁹ Formation should enable a person for professional ministry as a spiritual leader.

Many people have problems with the word "professional" because they tend to think that it may somehow diminish the importance of the notion of vocation or that it sets the minister apart from the laity as a privileged person or that it cannot measure the inner relationship of a minister to the workings of the Holy Spirit, etc. But what is really meant by professional is that the minister should be provided with specific skills which he will need as a minister, which give him a sense of identity in a profession with other colleagues, and help confirm his calling. These skills include integrated studies in different theological subjects, with preparation for expertise in such performance based disciplines as teaching, preaching, counsel-

ling, and celebrating.⁵⁰ As community builders, ministers must possess good managerial skills, such as the ability to “problem-solve” and to work with others to accomplish a task. They must be the envisioners of the community. They must call the community and themselves to a greater sense of Christian identity, that is, a community that makes its decisions grounded in the Christian message. In that, the minister is the theologian of the community who is a reflective practitioner, who learns from the midst of situations which are uncertain and unique. In fact this – being a reflective practitioner – is the basic skill that a spiritual leader requires.⁵¹

One wonders whether large seminaries where hundreds of people are housed together as in a green house, practically cut off from the real world, is the right place to form spiritual leaders for the 21st. century. Formation is education and education is growth, recognizing the uniqueness of the person and his/her individuality and promoting

personal fulfilment and self-actualization. These are essential for the self-identity of the minister. This is *hardly achieved* by the present-day seminary formation. Added to that there are even institutions like the national seminary (Papal Seminary!) which is an anachronism and a relic of the past. It answered a concrete historical need a century ago. It is high time that in a country like India such institutions are abolished. Regional training in small groups under learned teachers with little or no separation from the world outside should be the normal way of priestly training. Specialised institutions where specific aspects of the ministry are taught and where people come for a limited period could be retained as they could serve a need. This will be a meaningful way to combine the traditional Indian way of *gurukulavasam* with the modern spirit. It is gratifying to note that in some regional theology centres such attempts are being made with some measure of success.

Notes

1. “Seminary”, *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 13, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 72.
2. Alexander Ganoczy, ““Splendours and Miseries” of the Tridentine Doctrine of Ministries”, *Concilium*, 8/10 (1972), 75.
3. Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. II, Sheed and Ward, London, and Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C., 1990, 750-53.
4. Two sources might be James A. O’donohoe, *Tridentine Seminary Legislation. Its sources and Its Formation*, University of Louvain, Louvain, 1957 and Anthony Lendakadavil, *Candidates for the Priesthood*, Vendrame Institute, Shillong, 1989. This book surveys the situation till most recent times.
5. See Kenan B. Osborne, *Priesthood: A History of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, Paulist Press, New York, 1988, 3-29.
6. *Ibid.*, 40-44.
7. For example, in appointing the deacons, the community is told to pick out men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom (Acts 6:1-6) or the qualities of bishops and deacons in 1 Tim 3:1-14.

8. For example in the Didache: "Accordingly, elect for yourselves bishops [episkopoi] and deacons [diakonoi], men who are an honour to the Lord, of gentle disposition, not attached to money, honest and well-tried . . ." Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, Christian Classics Inc., Westminster, Maryland, 1986, 33-34; or see Polycarp's instruction: "The presbyters must be tenderhearted, merciful toward all, turning back [the sheep] that have gone astray, visiting the sick, not neglecting the widow or orphan or poor man . . . abstaining from anger, respect of persons, unrighteous judgment, being far from all love of money . . ." Kenan Osborne, *Priesthood*, 103.
9. H. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesial Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church in the First Three Centuries*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1969, 15, quoted by Kenan Osborne, *Priesthood*, 113.
10. Hubert Jedin and John Dolan, eds., *History of the Church*, vol. 1, Crossroad, New York, 1986, 351-52, hereafter, *History of the Church*.
11. St. Ambrose, *letter LXIII*, cf. *PL*, XVI, 1207.
12. For a historical survey of the Minor Orders see Kenan Osborne, *Priesthood*, 195-99.
13. See James A. O'donohoe, *Tridentine Seminary Legislation*, 3.
14. *Ibid.*, 3-4.
15. *Ibid.*, 4-6.
16. *Ibid.*, 6-7.
17. *History of the Church*, vol. II, 275.
18. O'donohoe, *Tridentine Seminary Legislation*, 9.
19. *History of the Church*, vol. IV, 575.
20. O'donohoe, 23.
21. *Ibid.*, 63.
22. Kenan Osborne, 277-78.
23. A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. 1, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1984, 185; for this section see also Mathias Mundadan, *Sixteenth Century Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1970; Thomas Puthiakunnel, *Syro-Malabar Clergy and their General Obligations*, Vincentian Publishing Bureau, Ernakulam, 1964; Scaria Zacharia, ed., *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599*, Indian Institute of Christian Studies, Edamattam, 1994; Placid J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Darton Longman & Todd, London, St. Paul Publications Bombay, 1970 etc.
24. According to Podipara, priests had a special dress of their own consisting in long, loose trousers and a long loose gown with wide sleeves and sailor's collar - all white. See Placid J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Darton Longman & Todd, London, St. Paul Publications Bombay, 1970, 89.
25. Mundadan, *History of Christianity*, vol. I, 186.
26. *Ibid.*, 185-192.
27. Engelbert Zeitler, *Die Genesis der heutigen lateinischen Priesterbildung in Indien*, (place, publisher and year are not given), 2-10.
28. See Xavier Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabhacharitram*, Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, Kottayam, 1988, 589-601.
29. The sources for this are Carlos Merces de Melo, *The Recruitment and Formation of the Native Clergy in India (16th-19th Century)*, Agencia Geral do Ultramar, Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca, Lisbon, 1955 and Engelbert Zeitler, *Die Genesis der heutigen Priesterbildung in Indien*.

30. It is estimated that some 50,000 priests left active ministry with or without dispensation between 1964 and 1986. See Adrian Hastings, ed., *Modern Catholicism*, SPCK, London, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991, 246.
31. *History of the Church*, vol. X, 346.
32. *Ibid.*, 348.
33. AAS, 62 (1970), 321-84.
34. The final document of the Synod “Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*” in *Origins* 21 (1991-92), 717-759.
35. See S. Arulsamy and S. Singaroyan, *Guide to the CBCI - CCBI Documents*, Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI), New Delhi, 2000, 225-235.
36. *All India Seminar: Church in India Today*, C.B.C.I. Centre, New Delhi, 1969, 316.
37. D.S. Amalorpavadas, ed., *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society*, NBCLC, Bangalore, 1981, 964-66.
38. See p. 21 of the *Charter of Priestly Formation for India*, 1988.
39. Kuncheria Pathil, “Rethinking Theological Education in India: New Models and Alternatives. A Discussion with Sebastian Kappen”, *Jeevadhara*, 14 (July 1984), 285.
40. Paul Parathazham, “Catholic Priests in India: Reflections on a Survey”, *Vidyajyoti*, 52 (August 1988), 385.
41. Mathew Vallipalam, *Priestly Formation in the Changing Society of India*, St. Paul Publications, Bombay, 1989, 302.
42. M. Amaladoss, “Towards an Indian Theology: Some Methodological Observations”, in Amaladoss et al., *Theologizing in India*, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1981, 48.
43. Paul Parathazham, “Catholic Priests in India . . .”, 384.
44. Mathew Vallipalam, *Priestly Formation in the Changing Society in India*, 302.
45. Malcolm S. Knowles, “Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy”, *Religious Education*, LXXII (March-April 1977), 211.
46. John P. Wagenhofer, “Spiritual Leadership: A Matrix for Ministerial Education”, in Robert J. Wicks, ed., *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*, Paulist Press, New York, 1995, 539-40.
47. *Ibid.*, 531-44. The following ideas are adapted from this article which is worth considering by educators in seminaries.
48. *Ibid.*, 531.
49. *Ibid.*, 532.
50. *Ibid.*, 536.
51. *Ibid.*, 537.

Recruitment and Training of Religious Leaders in Hinduism

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Frankly, this title took me by surprise. How, I wondered, should I tackle the topic, for I have never heard of recruiting in any of the Hindu Ashrams. Though I have lived mostly in Rishikesh since 1974 I have neither discovered, nor experienced, any particular, explicit "preparation" method for the training of leaders. In these Hindu Ashrams there is nothing similar to the methods the Buddhists have where the aspirant is expected to stand outside knocking for admission for three days and where it is well known that the written petition for entry, slipped under the door, will be rejected for the first two days! In my experience I must say that I have been struck by the absence of any sense of "recruitment". Gurus sometimes may even persuade a candidate to postpone entry – perhaps in order to test them.

With a view to writing this paper I have held discussions with two venerable and experienced Gurus in a large and flourishing Hindu Ashram, and have had confirmation of the above when they were unable to formulate any precise answer to my question. They spoke of nothing other than the normal training that they give to aspirants. This is a brief outline of the daily schedule all the aspirants undergo in one ashram.

It includes early rising, meditation, "*Pravachans*", or spiritual talks, group meetings, different appointed works, *Bhajans* and *Kirtan*, that is, singing God's glory, or *Nama Japa*, that is repetition of God's Name. There will, in addition, be guided spiritual reading. The aspirants attend the innumerable Hindu festivals and take their full share of their preparation as well, of course, as of the daily *Satsanga*. Silence at certain times is an important requirement. Unnecessary, or worldly, chattering is discouraged.

Above all, the disciple is formed through his or her personal relationship with the chosen Guru, though actually as Jesus Himself said: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (Jn 15: 16). Traditionally, it is believed that when the disciple is ready, the Guru appears and is recognized. Maybe this is the keynote of all the training that is given – it is a matter of awaiting the movement of the Spirit rather than bowing to a set of timing, or any arbitrary programme, which may in no way suit the spiritual progress of the candidate. Could I formulate this as saying that training is essentially personal, individual, in touch with the inner movement and breath of the Spirit. There is

no set number of months, no special span of years in which the aspirant becomes a *Brahmachari*, or later, a *Sannyasi*, as compared with the regulated periods we follow in accord with Canon Law. This freedom of/for the Spirit is very wise and attractive, I think.

For any serious seeker in the Hindu tradition the Guru is a “must”

These spiritual masters, unlike our leaders in the Christian/Catholic tradition, cannot be appointed by some higher religious authority, as, in our case, with a General appointing a Provincial, and a Provincial appointing a Superior. Such appointments, we know, last usually for a limited time and the mandate passes then to another appointed person. It is quite otherwise in the Hindu vision. In the Asian way of formation the Guru appears and is recognized by the disciple who is drawn to him/her by spiritual qualities and powers, which resonate with the aspirant's own spiritual trait. The bond once forged is for life: Such spiritual masters have the remembrance of their own discipleship, and are themselves still disciples at heart, in no way seeking advancement or power, but ready to be used at God's will.

Father Neuner writes in his Introduction to Franz Jalic's book *Called to Share in His Life* that in the Catholic tradition the priest is seen “as the leader of the community, but not as a Guru in the life of the Spirit”.¹ We all know that a community “leader” may be involved in much administration, fund raising and in many social activities. We can guess, too, that he would surely envy the Hindu spiritual leader, who is assisted in ac-

tivities, if there are such, by the “*seva*” (the voluntary service) of trusted and capable disciples. The Guru will apportion this “*seva*” to each disciple, and it is often a rigorous practical training, as also the number of hours of meditation per day, and the number of *malas* (beads) to be said, and he will follow this up personally. However, for the sake of good administration there will be one over-all administrator appointed.

In *Guru-Shishya* relationships, the secret, personal and normal method of training is for the purpose of becoming, not a *leader* but a *lover* of God. In Hinduism the aim is not how to govern and rule efficiently, how to train or teach, how to convert, but essentially, how to attain God. I quote from *Hinduism Today* December 1999 where Swami Krishnanda gives a full interview. He says: “Our aim is that we should realize God in this very birth. Our interest is in the soul, *atman*. Its liberation is the foremost point.” Nothing else really matters during the formation years. The methods are flexible, various, long term and personally “tailored”. Some laymen/laywomen may get into the yellow of the *brahmacharya* robe very soon after admission as a permanent member of the *ashram*. Others may remain in white for years as *sadhakas* and *sevaks*, or even in secular clothes as *ashramvasis*, right until they pass to the Further Shore.

Whatever their status or dress, all members of the Ashram have this one goal: *to attain God-Realization*. Over the years every single time I have heard the Head of the Ashram, Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, open a talk to any audience from whatever country, he

does so with these words: “Radiant Immortal Atman, Beloved and Blessed children of the Divine.” This beautiful beginning is followed by wise and practical advice, leading to a more fervent following and seeking of this supreme goal. From his teaching, as from all the Gurus’ advice, all learn how to grow in their spiritual life – never with a view to becoming leaders, but always with a view to becoming more God-oriented and more God-like. When the early Christian Fathers said: “God became man, so that man might become God,” they were inspired by an understanding that the Upanishads and Hindu tradition had seized centuries before, and in practice had so made its own that interiority is now the hallmark of its spirituality.

The whole year of the Hindu is a continuous observance of some sacred way of worship, with various expressions of the non-Dual Divine Reality. Each month is significant for the presence of, and preparation for, some aspect of Divine Love. So from the beginning of the year to its end God-orientation is the warp and woof of life, happily devotion-filled for the many who follow the *Bhakti Marg*. Life is based upon worship.

The holiness and sanctity of life and the actions of the followers of the Vedic religion is insured by this great wisdom-based approach. All the twelve months become a composite period of adoration of the Divine Reality.²

The talks and writings of Hindu Gurus and Swamis, learned as they may be, normally aim at, and are centred on, the basic thrust of Hinduism:- “*Sarvam Vishnumayam jagat*” “The whole world

is pervaded by Lord Vishnu.” The spiritual psychology and basic conception of Indian philosophy is summed up by Sri Sankara in this couplet:-

*Shlokaardhena pravakshiyami
yaduktam Granthakotibhii;
Brahma Satyam Jaganmithyaa jivo
Brahmaiva naaparah*

[The Transcendent Being alone is real, phenomena are false,
the (apparently separate) individual self is the Transcendent alone and none other.]

Thence, it is mere *Maya* or illusion to feel different from that which is the Transcendent Being. It is this sense of human individuality that obstructs the experience of Truth.

This *ahamkar*, or ego-self, is considered the outcome of ignorance and the root cause of all bondage . . . “*Ahamkar* or egoism is the chief bar to the experience of inner reality” says Swami Sivananda in *Sadhana*. Understanding this wisdom a Hindu does not need to be attracted, enticed or “recruited”. God Him/Herself powerfully directs the chosen person to disregard the transitory, and to focus his/her full attention, energy, power of loving and dedication on seeking and serving God alone. He/She is, as it were, “impelled” by the Spirit within to “sell all and follow”. Why waste one’s life, considered such a boon, and one’s faculties, on the lesser things, which can never satisfy, which are transitory and evanescent? The genuine Hindu seeker and lover of God spares no pains to obtain that which is imperishable, permanent and true. He/ She will pursue the goal with *ekagrata* – a single-minded purpose.

Accepting this norm, it is obvious that only mature persons (not the teenagers whom Christians seem keen to “recruit”) are eligible for a life that is totally and exclusively dedicated to God. Perhaps, there is an emphasis here to note – “dedicated to God” not to God’s service, or even to “mission”. However, it is to be borne in mind that I am writing from my experience in Rishikesh, and I know that methods vary. In the Ramakrishna School of Thought and Mission the aim dictates a pattern which seems to be somewhat based on the Jesuit type. In the Ramakrishna Mission the *sannyasins* are used for missionary work, and they are trained for this specific calling.

“*Sam-nyasa*” i.e. leaving all, they follow Him, God, who is eternally faithful and who has called this person, will enable him/her to “hear all her wisdom, keen observation, powerful logic, deep research, searching analysis and scientific calculation in his/her all out attempt to pierce beyond the veil of passing appearance and to come face to face with the Truth, the Eternal Fact” writes Swami Sivananda in his *Sadhana*. It is into an open community that the new aspirant enters, and one that bespeaks freedom, with constant interchange between the members and the flow of visitors, who may be seekers, families, or the merely curious. There is room for individual spontaneity, personal choice, though all is within that one bond forged between the disciple, the “*prestha*” or dear one, and the Guru – *the bond of an unwavering obedience*.

At each stage the Guru calls, and the aspirants “listening with a disciple’s ear” follows. It is really a wonderful and

enlightening experience for those who have had the opportunity of living within an Ashram to see and admire the alacrity, love and reverence with which the words of the Guru are recorded and acted upon. The disciple is one who has come to the Master precisely in order to be guided until he/she becomes like the Master. This is shown very lucidly in the life of the great contemporary Guru, Sri Ramana Mahrishi, or “Bhagavan Ramana” and his disciple Ganapati Muni. While one can marvel at the beauty of the fidelity and gift of self made by the true disciple it is also inspiring to see the love and total gift of self the Guru is ever offering to all who follow.

However large and impressive the ashram of a genuine Guru may be, one can be sure that there is *no more “given” person* within it than the *guru him/herself* . . . simple, humble, ever-ready to serve. Sri Swami Chidanandaji always takes one’s breath away with his lightning like reaction to those who bend to touch his feet. Before they have touched his, he has touched theirs. Just watching such Masters is training enough, and disciples who have lived long years in their Guru’s presence are blessed in deed. Writing of his guru Sri Swami Sivananda, the present General Secretary of the Divine Life Society, Sri Swami Krishnandaji, says: “I can only say that he is the greatest man I have ever seen. And I do not hope to see another great man like him. Most generous. Most charitable. Everything he will give. Give, give, give and give. He was nicknamed by people as “*Givenananda*”.³

Those who are sent out to found branches in other places, carry the

Master's message, his teaching and his life example with them, and so continue the lineage of their Order. Hindu and Buddhist Masters have been teaching in the West since the 1960's. Many Catholics, who had given up the practice of their faith have become devout followers of these teachers who, knowing their own Scriptures by heart and being able to expound them, have helped such seekers to a faith in the Divine that they so need.

And these Western followers are by no means "poor relations" of the

Eastern followers, but can rival them in their generous response to austere conditions, demanding practices, regular fasting and simple living. Perhaps a form of comparison could be attempted now, as we look at the different situations with regard to recruitment and training in the two different traditions - Christian and Hindus, always allowing that there will be exceptions and variations to any general rule.

Both the Hindu candidate and the Christian aspirant are called by God. Both respond to that call generously.

Church – Christian	Hinduism
1. Reasoning mind	A heart call
2. Enters an institution	Responds to a Guru
3. Study	<i>Seva</i> to the Guru
4. Theoretical knowledge	Practical obedient service
5. Commanding others	Continuing emphasis on humility
6. Name and fame	Renunciation or " <i>Sannyasa</i> "
7. Authority as a Church personage	The <i>Anandam</i> of "God alone"

Could one look at this table as one of *opposites*? In worldly terms, could it be said that on the one side there is an ascent, and on the other a descent. Could we add: a "Descent to the depths of the HEART OF THE MATTER"?

"Jesus never dwelt on doctrinal topics or legal instruction. He guided his disciples to a full, genuine life in loving union with God, in serving and supporting solidarity with the neighbour to build a better world", writes Father J. Neuner SJ in the Foreword already quoted. He continues: "The search for a fuller, deeper, richer, life... has become an urgent quest. It is not surprising if

we reflect on the religious *formation* which is generally imparted to young people... and this holds good for the formation of priests and religious."

There is a luminous answer to this, I find, in the experience, the unique experience of Father Jacob Martin CMI, known now as Prasannabhai, who was for three years the *chela* of a Hindu Pandit. Dadasaheb Pandit, a "*Brahmanistha*" (man established in God) and a "*Shotriya*" (learned in the Scriptures), was a true Guru whose simplicity, humble service and love for the "poorest lowliest and least" was as inspiring as his sparkling scholarship and

exceptional mastery of languages. Relating his experience thus gained of the Hindu ways of formation, Prasanabhai wrote in *Indian Spirituality in Action*:

Formation of priests and religious should aim at imparting an appreciation of the values which the Indian sages and saints hold high, such as: *satya, ahimsa, asteya, bramacharya, asamgraha, sari-srama, asvada*, etc.

This demands that the candidates should lead: a) a very simple life b) a detached life c) a devotional life d) a dedicated life e) an action-oriented life f) should eat only vegetarian food - this is important g) should fast frequently h) a life of Gospel-centred spirituality i) there should be teaching & feel themselves to be so they should live for some time in a fully Hindu environment - preferably in a Hindu Ashram.

I am taking the liberty of quoting my good friend, Prasannabhai, as above, though he wrote this passage about twenty years ago, as I am so aware of

the wondrous fruits of his life as a "chela". Both for himself and in his "seva" as a formator. Perhaps as the years of training continue there is always for the Hindu seeker an emphasis on *silence*, and this is encouraged by the very way of life. "The seeker's silence is the loudest form of prayer" and to this statement Swami Vivekananda added: "The Guru's silence is the loudest counsel." He has discovered a Source within himself and is able to let others drink of the waters of fullness (*Puram*) and Bliss (*Anandam*).

Surely such a person would be ready for the leadership of a spirit-filled community, and will lead by, through and in the Spirit. "The light of the *Purusha*," as Swami Abhishiktanada wrote in a letter to his disciple, Marc Chaduc, "who dwells in the heart radiates something of her/his Plenitude and Ananda." Sat-Cit-Ananda is capable of communicating mysteriously this grace of Leadership.⁴

Notes

1. Franz Jalic SJ, *Called to Share in His Life*, Mumbai: St. Paul Bandra, 1999, p. 11.
2. Sri Swami Chidananda. Preface to *Special Insights into Sadhana*.
3. "Sitting with Swami" - A candid interview with the Divine Life Society's General Secretary. *Hinduism Today* December 1999, p. 41. Referred to "Sadhana" Sri Swami Sivananda: Motilal Banarsidass: 1958.
4. Ref: Vanda Mataji (ed.) *Indian Spirituality in Action*, Asian Trading Corp. Bangalore: 1973.

Formation of Women Religious in the 21st Century

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“The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, an effect, and a power never hitherto achieved” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 1). This reality is evident in the exceptional prominence that the subject of the dignity, status and role of women has gained in recent years. In women religious circles, ripples of awakening to this reality are also seen and efforts are being made towards empowering ourselves to acquire ‘an effect and a power’ in the Church and the world. But these efforts are too small to have a significant influence on our rapidly changing and challenging times.

Conscious of this overwhelming change in the society, the Major Superiors Conference of India emphasized that “to live fully our consecration we need new models of religious life for our times and in the context of the Indian and Asian reality” (CRI 1993). In the light of this imperative for new models of religious life, we shall endeavour to re-structure its foundation, the formation of women religious. To be true to our prophetic calling in this period of profound transformation, religious formation will have to be “in the forefront of the creative ferment which is

shaping the 21st century” (CRI 2000, p. 51).

Our main sources for this task are the reports of the CRI National Assemblies that bear years of painstaking search for how to be relevant disciples of Christ, women set apart for a radical commitment to His people.

What do the CRI National Assembly Reports say?

Scanning through the CRI Reports of the past 15 years, dating from the historic Vijayawada Assembly of 1986 where the CRI made a significant breakthrough to commit itself to liberation, to the Jubilee Year 2000 Assembly that makes a renewed call for prophetic discipleship in pluralistic India, one observes two distinct elements emerging and recurring. The first is a call to radical discipleship of Christ which determines our Christian identity as consecrated women and the second is how this discipleship which is in and for mission in pluralistic India affirms our Indian identity. Our Christian and Indian identities must have a bearing on each other and only a healthy fusion of both will see us as committed, consecrated Indian women. If, however, any one identity seeks to dominate over the other then alienation and superficiality in religious

life will follow, for “the religious is not an aspect or dimension apart, but is the Godwardness and the humanness of all the facets of liberation and life”.¹

The varied themes of the CRI selectively chosen during this span reveal a paradigm shift in awareness from being inward-looking women, withdrawn from the world, to women with a global vision for a prophetic mission; from being an appendix-daughter of a colonial-mother to being consecrated women of and for our motherland. This new thrust in vision and goal, viz., to be radical disciples of Christ in and for mission (cf. CRI 1991, p. 13) has initiated a slow but progressive movement towards a new thinking about religious formation and its structure.

All Christians are called to be disciples of Christ. What challenges does this radicality of Christ’s call pose to Indian women religious in our present times? What demands does the *Yesu-Krist Jayanti* wake-up call to be Prophets, Pilgrims and Pioneers make to the entire formation system of women religious? Together with my sister-religious, I would like to think aloud of a probable pragmatic direction our formation could take. We shall engage in some re-searching and reflection to revamp our prophetic presence as consecrated women in India. This attempt is not an offer of a new brand of formation but rather a reinforcement of the key elements that have consistently emerged at the annual CRI Assemblies in the light of the new openings available to us since the eventful Council of Vatican II.

The revolutionary statement of the 1986 CRI Assembly generated appre-

ciable interest and was a great sign of hope to the life and mission of consecrated women in India. It spoke about the force of liberation and affirmed that freedom empowers us to love all as children of God. Its manifesto included listening to the voice of the poor, immersion in the lives of the people, experiencing and struggling with them in their joys and sufferings, questioning the existing order and identifying means to change unjust structures. Taking off from this vision of radicality, successive CRI Assemblies have endeavoured to articulate the prophetic nature of religious commitment (cf. 1988, 3:8, p. 6). It was also urgently felt that a fundamental change had to be effected in the method of training, especially of young religious, if the seed of radicality sown in 1986 and watered at the subsequent yearly assemblies was to bear fruit in the life and mission of women religious in India.

Consequently, the 1989 CRI Assembly in Goa undertook the vital task of shaping this vision of prophetic radicality more concretely by focusing on the ground base of religious life, namely, religious formation in the context of India’s pluri-religious and cultural heritage and the multi-faceted forces that dehumanise our people. To be a leaven in society and the Church, a restructuring and revitalizing of formation in faith at all levels was felt necessary. Religious formation must promote rootedness in the revolutionary Jesus “through a gradual identification with Him in His total self-giving to the Father” (*Vita Consecrata* 65). It must also encourage a readiness for creative and challenging responses for his Kingdom

mission (cf. Lk 4:18-19, CRI 1989, p. 10) for “radicality is the readiness to take risks and live without securities in a life-style which is envisaged as being outside of the traditional structures of religious life”, affirms Samuel Ryan.² Several guidelines were offered. We shall highlight some important points that may be pivotal to our new search for a relevant formation of women religious in the 21st century (cf. CRI 1989, pp. 10-11).

- Commitment to put on the mind of Christ
- Awareness of the areas of unfreedom and efforts to remove blocks that hinder growth
- Encouraging critical thinking, creative action, initiative and personal responsibility
- Importance of the personal and communitarian significance of vowed life
- Strengthening a genuine Indian Christian identity
- Growth in attitudes characteristic of our Indian heritage - detachment, simplicity of life-style, asceticism, etc.
- Providing exposure – immersion programmes among the poor and the marginalized
- Developing an incarnational spirituality with a focus on the poor

The above signposts to re-define our identity, life and experience of God as Indian consecrated women underscore the need for a contextualized formation in and for mission. The persis-

tent call in the yearly CRI statements to mobilize inculturation in formation and life-style would further testify to this. This incarnational approach necessitates a re-structuring of formation in mission (CRI 1991, p. 13) in order to create a new consciousness and motivate religious for inserted and involved commitment (CRI 1993, 6:3). Formation in institutionalized structures and a programmed life-style runs the risk of preparing alienated religious for mission. This is confirmed by the findings of a National Survey of religious vocations in India that states: “for a large number of students life in the formation house is an alienating experience”, for the life-style and environment alienate them from their native culture and life-style and do not help them to identify with the people.³ With this backdrop of the radical vision, thrust and direction of religious formation that the CRI has painstakingly drawn out, we shall attempt to articulate some concrete ways to realize the dream of the 21st century.

Towards an Incarnated Formation

1.1. Retrieving the Strength and Beauty of Indian Women Religious

If women religious are to be committed to liberation, the primary step is to be liberated women for commitment. In response to the call of the universal Church to review our consecrated life “with continuous attention to the changing historical and cultural conditions” (VC 71)⁴, the CRI Assembly of 1996 reflected on the vital theme of our identity as women religious for a creative participation in social transformation in India. It suggested some introspection

concerning our role, dignity and consecration as women religious. This introspection would do well to commence with a metanoia of attitudes, beliefs and perception of our womanhood. For this the process of formation would have to possess the character of wholeness and involve the whole person, in every aspect of the personality, behaviour and intentions, to bring about the transformation of the whole person (*VC* 65).

Areas of unfreedom and blocks that hinder growth are given priority in most formation programmes with adequate psychological help. However, an area of oppressive unfreedom not yet attended to is the societal and ecclesial patriarchal control that has not only stunted our womanhood but deprived us of fullness of life. The domineering patriarchal and hierarchical structure and tradition of the Indian Society and the Church has deprived us of our human dignity and rightful status as women. The caste culture of the Indian society with its powerful overtones of patriarchy has also ingrained a sense of dependency and subordination in the woman's psyche. The depletion of our natural gifts of sensitivity, intuition, foresight, aesthetic sense, and home-making in the exploitative service of the male hierarchy has led to the dehumanization of women religious, lowering our status with stereotyped tasks in the Church, drying our wells of innate feminine potentiality and the desertification of all initiative.

Besides, forgoing marriage and maternity, consecrated virgins have developed and reinforced masculine qualities of efficiency, achievement, disci-

pline and control that are geared to developing competence. This male system stifles our feminine ethos of compassion, tenderness, endurance, gentleness, caring concern and understanding and blocks the process of developing our personal identity as women and of becoming a full person. The present formation structure still bears overtones of colonial times with the hand of patriarchy continuing to guide and influence (at times, even control!) the religious women in the planning and execution of the formation programmes.

Though much has changed since Vatican II, our formation system, initial and ongoing, continues to generate anxiety, guilt and fear, producing en masse infantile consecrated women who are docile, passively obedient, unquestioning and voiceless. Formation programmes must help release our femininity from the imprisoning shackles of patriarchy and maternalism characterized by the male ethos of authoritarian control. Formation must have the woman's hand and heart in re-structuring it if 'feminineness' in the religious life of consecrated women is to be restored. A personal responsibility to mature in one's vocation as adult women is the inescapable duty of all (*VC* 65), if we want to invest our natural instincts of nurturing life, fostering growth in persons and building human communities and of caring concern for effective mission.

In this regard, women religious can be inspired by eco-feminism that affirms the principle of concern for life in all its forms. Life is sacred and a sacrament and, therefore, must be lived in its full-

ness (CRI 1998, p. 59). Formation houses and formative communities, their set-up, programmes and personnel must provide an environment that will enable the formees to discover their inner potential as women and unearth their innate power. However, to discover one's inner potentiality, women religious must experience genuine inner freedom. It is noteworthy that the findings of two surveys on religious vocation and religious life reveal the stark reality that religious life is not a liberating and growth-promoting experience for many women religious. The findings of Rekha Chennattu indicate that many women religious lack true inner freedom and the courage to hold and assert their own convictions.⁵ By and large, they are low achievers by nature, lack emotional maturity and rate their peers outside as having greater initiative, self-reliance and self-confidence, according to the survey reported by Paul Parathazham.⁶

This reflects a serious lacuna in religious formation. A formation that does not encourage inner freedom and foster emotional maturity is questionable. Such a formation will only produce infantile and mediocre religious who are motivated by a passive spirituality of 'doing God's will' in back-stage tasks for God's Kingdom. That perhaps answers why the nearly 80,000 women religious are mostly unheard and unseen on the Indian ecclesial front. It also explains the shocking dearth of women religious leaders, women theologians and women canonists in the Church. To encourage inner freedom and initiative in the initial years and to foster emotional maturity at all other stages of religious life must be given paramount

importance if women religious of today are to be empowered women for dynamic leadership in the Church and society of tomorrow.

Empowering women religious, especially the rural, tribal and dalit girls, will, therefore, have to be the primary agenda of formation programmes at all levels if women religious are to be liberated women for effective mission in India. Empowerment will also urge women religious to enter into new forms of gender relationship and of partnership for mission. It will spur us to break through traditions and cultural practices that keep us bound to stereotyped gender roles and to break out of stereotyped images pre-determined by society and the Church.

Jesus, the master Formator, first liberated his women disciples from social and religious pressures of discrimination before empowering them to be his witnesses. We have examples of the Samaritan woman "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did" (Jn 4:29); the prostitute woman "your sins are forgiven" (Lk 7:48); the polluted woman "who was it that touched me?" (Lk 8: 45) and the bent woman "you are freed of your infirmity" (Lk 13:12,16). He restored their brokenness: "your faith has made you whole" (cf. Lk 7:50; 8:48) and wounded human dignity; "woman, daughter of Abraham" (Lk 13:16) before entrusting them with respectful roles of being partners in his Kingdom mission: "Go in peace" (Lk 7:50; 8:48; cf. Jn 4:28-29). He affirmed the full personhood of women as being created in God's image, a concept that culture, traditions and even religion may

distort and so cause women to be seen as less than human.⁷

1.2 Body Care - a religious taboo?

A related area of concern is the formation of the body for often times we may find ourselves existing as living carcasses rather than living temples of the Holy Spirit. Body care is respectful love for our body, created in the image and likeness of God and a recognition of the beauty of our womanhood "God created the human, male and female he created them". But beauty is temptation and vanity in the world of religious women. Yes, cosmetic beauty is, but not the beauty of womanhood. All beauty comes from God who is the Creator of all that is beautiful and He found it all very good (cf. Gen 1:31). If beauty is not perceived in oneself, it is not likely that one can perceive it outside in people, world and God. Aristotle rightfully said that the main attributes of God or of a being are: a being is one, good and beautiful.

Formation of the body should, therefore, include spending moments of leisure and relaxation with our sister-environment to replenish our drying wells of inner strength and vigour and of hope and life. In the human quest for meaning in life, women and nature nurture and promote life from within, allowing life to grow according to the true purpose of creation (CRI, 1998, p. 59). Well aware of the conditioned life-pattern of most religious, I would also strongly recommend the need to retrieve our youthful formative years at all stages and engage in energetic physical exercises and games rather than seeking

comfort in what the consumeristic society drives us to desire (CRI 1998, p. 60). What stops us from indulging in these little niceties of life after the official Religious Commitment - the religious garb? life-style? vows? Though the evangelical counsels requires the renunciation of certain values, they do not detract "from a genuine development of the human person" (PC 46). A healthy body and a relaxed mind fosters a sound relationship with the human and cosmic world and spurs us to be fully human and fully alive consecrated women.

2. An Inserted Formation System

A liberated woman religious can venture forth to commit herself to liberation in India only if she is of India. Therefore, the next step for an incarnated formation is to possess a genuine Indian Christian identity. The Indian formation system must be exorcised of the ghost of colonialism that still hovers around with its subtle but powerful influence. An incarnated formation can be facilitated only if it rids itself of the western mould and is immersed in the various dimensions of the Indian ethos: cultures, ancient religious traditions, myths, beliefs, folklore, literature, philosophies, religious and secular pilgrimages.⁸

This inevitably requires a radical change in the method of training, in particular through a constant interaction with the lives of the poor (cf. CRI 1986 4:2). Experience of the Indian people, participating in their life struggles and interacting with other cultures and religions will be the most potent means of inculcating formation. Furthermore,

formators who have not had an experiential knowledge of the ground realities of India will not be adequately equipped to undertake such a task for “how can colonized minds decolonize formation in an ex-colonial culture that is almost being swallowed by neo-colonial invasion via economics and the media?” rightly queries T.K. John.⁹

Since 1986 there has been a movement towards re-structuring religious formation in response to the call for a renewal of religious life. This renewal insinuates a constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the Religious Institutes according to the changed conditions of our time (*PC 1; VC 71*). However, it is important to note that this ‘constant return’ does not suggest restorationism that evokes pious conformism to the existing status quo. It is rather ‘re-founding’ religious congregations, which is “a faith journey into the paschal mystery for mission today according to the Spirit of the original Founder, Jesus Christ”.¹⁰

Thus, to effect this faith journey for our prophetic mission in pluralistic India, an oft repeated call is the urgency to be immersed in the lives of the people. It has been proposed that the location and setting of formation houses, life-style and outlook of formation should facilitate a constant interaction with the grassroot realities of the poor. Following the footsteps of Jesus, the Prophet, and strengthened by the evangelizing power of the poor, we strive to be inserted consecrated women in and for mission.

This implies an inserted formation at all levels which means entering into the mind-set, thought pattern, world-view and life-style of the Indian poor and experiencing and sharing God the true Indian way, as the genuine Bhaktas of old, who broke through social and caste barriers and helped transform society (CRI 1990, 3:6, p. 4). It would also include a sound theological formation and some basic knowledge of the social teachings of the Church and the social sciences with exposure programmes to actual involvement situations to foster a communitarian solidarity for justice action. The need to get to know other religions in order to be instruments of inter-religious dialogue and harmony cannot be overlooked. An inserted formation would thus evolve a way of life and spirituality that will bring about and nurture an integration of life of faith and action for justice (CRI 1992, 4:7).

From all that has been underlined, it is obvious that there is no dearth of suggestions on the question of evolving a contextualized formation. Involvement and participation in justice action are recurring key-themes in the CRI’s search for a relevant way of being prophetic consecrated women. Much has been discussed and written over the years on this vital need. We seem to have reached a stage of bankruptcy of ideas. There also appears to be a wide chasm between talking and walking the new way. There is not much evidence of concrete headway in the implementation of the many pious and even radical CRI statements which perhaps are often ‘inspirational and not operational’ (CRI 1988, p. 161). This new approach in most congregations has been effected

only in part. There is a humble admission of the slow pace of bringing about this transition (CRI 1990, 5:4). Most formation programmes are still searching for a fuller understanding of the implications of this transition.

A pertinent question to raise is whether the formation system of most women institutes is still governed by the culture of prudence and caution while the lives of our contemporaries outside are directed by risk-taking, initiative and creativity. Cardinal Suenens' pointed remark explains well our present state: "Caution is everywhere, courage is nowhere; and we shall all soon die of prudence". One wonders if the slow pace to change is due to a lack of courage and conviction and the fear of losing one's religious security in the process of launching into the deep (CRI 1988, 3:5, p. 5). Among the many obstacles cited by the CRI that block any effective change is the inward-looking and cocooned set-up of formation houses that stifles the daring and zeal of young and generous persons. They often get domesticated to a rigid set of rules and norms which make them fit only for risk-free and routine tasks.

This calls for some introspection: do we encourage originality in formation for creative and risk-involved ministries or an option for the beaten path that perpetuates the religious status quo? Are we promoting houses of formation (experience-based) in and for mission or houses of information (knowledge-based) for apostolic works? True, information is needed but information that in-forms and trans-forms. Information that makes sense to the head as well as

the heart, to our knowing as well as our being.¹¹

To bring about any transformation we need an attitudinal and structural change in a spirit of faith and conviction, dialogue and discernment, daring and dynamism. The Gospel is full of challenges and sets on fire the disciples of Christ to be a leaven, a counter-culture, a sign of contradiction (CRI 1998, 4:c, p. 15). To ground the work of formation concretely, we have to go forth into the milieux around us and in the process become really incarnated consecrated women in the intercross of time, place and people which constitute this moment of history.

3. 1. Towards a Cross-Cultural Formation

Pluralism is the rich heritage of the vast sub-continent of India. Diversity is not merely the spice of life, it is also the essence of life. This holds true for religious formation that possesses the character of wholeness and includes every aspect of Christian life: human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral in order to bring about a harmonious integration of every area of life (VC 65). Formation today needs to be programmed in the context of diversity not uniformity, of creativity not exclusivity. Consequently, a formation in and by the pluri-cultural and religious context of India will enrich our life, mission and spirituality. It makes us searchers and not settlers. Since inter-relatedness is the hallmark of Christianity, 'plurilogue' becomes an essential mode of formation where contact with the community, society and the world is always on-line.

Our formation houses today are often a microscopic mosaic of the cul-

tural diversity of India. We are aware that the glory of the Churches of Kerala, Goa and Mangalore as feeders of vocation is past history, and to speak of one Indian Church is a misnomer. Today the harvest is reaped from varied soils. We have recruits from rural hinterlands, tribal belts and dalit and other socially backward communities which comprise the bulk of the Catholic population of India. Further, migrant Catholic settlers who criss-cross the country also offer vocations from different regions, cultures and rites. Hence, it is essential to consider the varied socio-cultural factors that make each local Christian community distinct from the other: its history and tradition (Syrian, Padroado, Propaganda), ethnic and caste backgrounds, language and culture, geography and environment, economic conditions, etc. The important question to ask ourselves is: do we continue with the system of formation that is often a mere clone of some foreign Congregation with cosmetic adaptations to the Indian way of life or do we dare to be innovative in planning or re-formulating a formation that is incarnated in order to render an Indianness and a nativeness to religious life in pluralistic India?

The tenet of Acts 2 “one faith, one baptism, one Lord” would be the foundational experience of realising cross-cultural formation houses and formative communities where the language of love would reign supreme. This would create an environment in formation houses and communities where the young formees are formed from their nativeness, recognizing and respecting the cultural uniqueness of each. In their psychological and faith formation one

would have to consider their cultural roots, family background, traditions, customs, beliefs and myths that they have grown up with. The spirituality and charism of the congregation and the Gospel values would have to be communicated in a manner that is understandable. For instance, an emphasis on the ‘acceptance of the will of God’ and humility for the dalits would be aggravating their subordinate status and low self-worth. Insistence on silence goes against the culture of spontaneity of the tribals. Popular religious expressions like ‘worldly’ and ‘worldly ways’ may send confused messages to the same tribals for whom the world/the earth is permeated with God’s own life. We would have to find new ways of communicating the Gospel values rather than using them as spiritualized whips to discipline and shape the formees for religious life. If doing God’s will is understood as cooperating and participating in God’s plan of salvation, women religious would appreciate their special role and place as co-partners and not sub-workers in God’s work of restoring wholeness of life to our fragmented and wounded world.

3.2 Formation Houses – Homes of Communion

In this era of pluralism and diversity, there is an increasing awareness of the need of the other. Communion is God’s vision for the human and cosmic world. It is dynamic and pluralistic and demands breaking down caste, regional, cultural and religious walls that divide human communities (CRI 1997, pp. 3-4). This implies that the spirit of communion must be first and foremost in-

stilled in today's pluri-cultural formation houses so that from the earliest stages of religious life we learn to accept difference, pool in talents, work in collaboration and interdependence and live in harmony.

In today's pluri-cultural houses of formation particular attention must be paid to invest the strengths of each group to build koinonia communities of fellowship and mutuality. We shall cite a few examples of how we can concretize this principle of communion in formation houses and formative communities: the tribals are gentle, polite, sensitive and like the dalits have a strong sense of community and endurance. Both groups, however, are not achievers and lack leadership and a sense of self-worth which may not be innate but historical, enforced by social structures. The Malabar Catholics, on the other hand, are endowed with leadership, initiative and are efficient, hardworking, disciplined, achievers, dignity and status conscious, independent and rational. The Padroado Konkan Catholics are leisure and pleasure oriented, community minded, hospitable, generous and faithful to traditional religiosity. The Tamils are highly community minded and emotional, dependent but hardworking.¹² A similar study of the characteristics of other regional or caste groups would be a fitting preparation and ground work for how to instil a spirit of communion in houses of mixed cultural groups.

An inter-cultural formation would foster communities of one class of women where persons of varied cul-

tures, castes, tribes and rites would be distinct with regard to the diversity of works (*PC* 15) but united in heart and mind (*Acts* 4:32). It would also facilitate a communion for mission to bring about in fuller measure the communion of the Kingdom in the Church and society where divisions fragment life (CRI 1997, 3, p. 4). It would inculcate a spirituality of communion that sustains us on our journey and enables us to live the demands of this communion in seeking communion with the crucified and risen Lord. This call to communion is a challenge to explore new ways of being religious. It would encourage open communities of inter-dependency, collaboration and cooperation with all people (CRI 1997, 8, p. 6). It would build up a communion for mission and the mission of communion if every formee's unique personhood is recognized and respected and her unique charism is acknowledged, developed and effectively utilized (cf. *Ecclesia in Asia* no. 25).

The formators, therefore, would have to bring out the best of every culture and not merely cast them in enneagram slots of 1,2,...or attach labels of paranoid, dependent, compulsive, schizoid personalities. A synthesis of faith and culture that John Paul II speaks of would also enable us to tap the innate or hidden resources for leadership roles. Thus, the formation house or formative community is not only the womb of conceiving and nurturing an incarnated religious life for pluralistic India but also the cradle for empowering women religious for their prophetic mission.

3.3 Community as Formator

Formation within and by the community is communitarian in approach. The general trend of the ‘incubator-system’ of formation is to exclude the formees from the larger religious community. The community is excluded lest it ‘contaminate’ the young in the infancy stage of religious life. The community must be trained and trusted to offer constructive accompaniment with its rich variety and experience. But in the absence of a formative community, the formees may find themselves under the constant scrutiny of the CBI (Community Bureau of Investigation!) which will impede all growth in freedom.

The community is the natural locus where the young formee is planted, grows and matures for communion in mission. A formative community is a rich reservoir of lived formation and should have a sense of participation in the formation of the young. The community should feel responsible for it or else it becomes the exclusive business of the formators. Formation within and by the formative community also schools the formees to develop a sense of understanding, tolerance and adaptability. It is reciprocal where all, irrespective of age, learn from each other. It encourages a climate of openness, respect and mutuality, initiates team-work and fosters harmony in difference. It, no doubt, throws an added responsibility on the formator who will have to work in collaboration with the other sisters of the community. But that is the price of team-work and communion for mission.

This communion implies that formation becomes a work of partnership.

A partnership in which all – the formators, the professed sisters and the formees – have a contributory role to play. Communion calls for a co-ordinated approach to formation, for consultation and greater involvement of the community in the planning of the programme. Communion for mission is strengthened when all work together with the formators in a spirit of charity for the good of all (cf. 1 Cor 1:10. *Ecclesia in Asia* no.26). This participatory approach would also take care of the risk of formation functioning as an autonomous department of the congregation with minimum communion with the other apostolic communities. The basic principle of ecological unity “everything is connected to everything else” will throw light on the principle of communion that we are speaking of. The interconnectedness is a bond of strength. Control of any kind adversely affects the growth of the other and of the whole body (CRI 1998, p. 60). The principle of independent control, a characteristic of the male ethos, must give way to mutuality, inter-dependency and partnership that will impregnate growth and fullness of life

The mystery of God’s loving design is made present and active in the community of men and women so that they might walk in newness of life (cf. Rom.6:4. *EA* 24). At the heart of this mystery is the bond of communion which unites us to Christ and to one another. This living and life-giving communion creates a sense of belongingness to the religious congregation and the Church. It is also a sign and sacrament of our communion with God and with the whole human race.

4. An Emmanuel Spirituality

We now come to an important area of our search for an incarnated formation. The CRI statement of 1986 speaks about evolving an inculturated spirituality. However, this can not be one that is drawn from established and clearly enunciated principles and applied to concrete life situations through accommodation and adaptation. Neither is it one that is drawn from pious spiritual exercises and devotional practices that often devoids our spiritual life of creativity and newness of God's life.

An inculturated spirituality for us women must be an emmanuel experience, a God-with-women experience. This would inevitably imply exploring women's unique experience of God in the realities of her life and discovering her unique relationship with the divine. Here, the formator would have the task of demythologizing a package of concepts, images and beliefs of God that is a product of a patriarchal culture and in which the dominant categories by which the activities of the divine and its relationship to the world and people are described are male.¹³ Thus, right from the initial years of formation, the formees would have to be initiated to develop a keen sense of awareness of who is God to them and the image they have of Him/Her - as Father/Mother, Divine Master, Lord, etc. Accordingly, they would grow in consciousness of how they relate to God and the language they use to communicate with the divine and to speak of it.

This incarnational God-experience evolves, grows and is sustained from within and by the life situations unique

to women. It is discovering the human face of God as revealed in women's experiences. It is a personal as well as a communitarian God-with-women experience. This unique experience of the divine would inspire us to break forth into creative 'Magnificats' like Mary, into songs of praise and pain, of deep longings and love, of our search and struggles, of beauty and wonder, of daring and dynamism that come forth from the wellsprings of our womanhood.

Notably absent from our contemporary spirituality is the sense of wonder, a spirit of relatedness of the human and cosmic world and the divine and the virtue of wisdom. Wisdom is the quest of seeing things in relation to the greatest reality – God. T.S. Eliot rightly pointed out: we suffer today from having lost knowledge in the pursuit of information, wisdom in the pursuit of knowledge. Any God experience is also an invitation to a life of mystery, of wonder, of quiet and contemplative silence. Eco-feminism invites us to develop a contemplative attitude towards creation, towards Mother-earth who in the silence and hiddenness of her womb nurtures life to enrich the quality of our own human lives. Every touch of the divine experienced in human realities and in communion with the cosmos brings forth newness of life.

Finally, an Emmanuel spirituality for our Indian context would also include a woman's experience of being co-partners in God's creative and restorative work. It is her God-experience of:

- listening with a compassionate heart to the Spirit speaking through the poor

- sharing with an empathetic heart in their struggles of life
- questioning with an intuitive heart the existing social order which is the root cause of the oppressive and dehumanized state of life
- reading and re-interpreting the Word of God with an open heart in the light of her experiences and questions

In this way, the message of the crucified Lord is re-discovered in the groans of the contemporary crucified and the hope of the risen Lord enkindles our faith and re-energises us to enter into collaborative action with the poor for structural change. This shift from the conceptual and wordy prayer to a liberating communion with God through his people becomes an on-going adventure of God-experience.

Conclusion

Every religious institute is challenged today to examine and re-interpret its foundational charism in order to become incarnate in the contemporary Indian reality and to be relevant in its mission. The dignity of women is recognized in the official teachings of the Church, but in its total ministry, women are still marginalized. To empower consecrated women, a major task for religious life, is to make a deep commitment to creative and radical change which, undoubtedly, must begin with religious formation. Quite a few women religious congregations have already dared to change its structure and life, but a vast majority have yet to take the plunge. The hope of being empowered women in the 21st century spurs us with enthusiasm, energy and life to be partners in fashioning the new society of God's dream.

Notes

1. Samuel Rayan, "A Brief Meditation on the CRI 1986 Statement on Commitment to Liberation", *Jeevadhara*, 16 (1986), p. 214.
2. *Ibid.* p. 214.
3. Paul V.Parathazham & Anthony da Silva, *Religious Vocation in India: Changing Patterns and Problems*. Preliminary Report of a National Survey, 1999 (unpublished), pp. 11&9.
4. Cf. PC 1.
5. Rekha Chennattu, "The Quest of Women Religious", *Jnanadeepa* 2/2(1999), p. 90.
6. Paul Parathazham, *Religious Vocation*, *op. cit.* pp. 15-16.
7. Yong Ting Jin, "New Ways of Being Church", Curt Cadorette and others, ed., *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Reader*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1992, p. 201.
8. *Ibid*
9. "Decolonization of Formation", *Jnanadeepa*, 1 / 2 (July 1998), pp. 126-139, p. 132.
10. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding The Church. Dissent for Leadership*, London, 1993.
11. Francis. X. D'Sa, and others, *The World as Sacrament: Interdisciplinary Bridge-Building of the Sacred and the Secular*, JDV Theology Series, Pune, 1998, p. 4.
12. Augustine Kanjamala, *Analysis of Religious Life in India: Its Impact on Women Religious*, Ishvani Kendra, 1999 (Unpublished).
13. S.D. Isvaradevan, "God Language and Women", in *Towards A Theology of Humanhood: Women's Perspectives*, ed. Aruna Gnanadason, Delhi, ISPCK, p. 69.

Training of Priests in the 21st Century

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Introduction

In the 1990s, the different formation houses situated on the campus of Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV), Pune, began to voice their concern about the spirituality of the students.¹ The superiors of these houses felt that the students' lack of attendance at community exercises was the result of messages communicated to them by the JDV faculty and their radical teaching, and they wanted to know the "impact of JDV on the spirituality of the students." The superiors' anxiety was expressed in the following words: "If at JDV they are told that the rosary, the benediction and the way of the cross are exercises that arose in a specific historical and cultural milieu many centuries back and therefore may not have the same relevance today, then it is highly unlikely that the students will consider it important to attend these exercises today in their own communities."² Hence, they commissioned an exploratory study to learn "what the students actually think about spirituality." The study showed that the students appreciated the contribution (by way of a progressive theology) that the JDV Theological Faculty made to their spirituality. But could the campus houses offer them suitable support systems to integrate that theology in their lives? If they did, priestly training could

help form creative and innovative students.³

The concern voiced by the superiors centres on a problem that is not explained away by saying that the students appreciated the JDV Theological Faculty's progressive theology. The end product of theological formation cannot be a mere understanding of the more progressive points in theology, but depends on whether the student can integrate in his life the theology that is offered. In fact, successful priestly training requires that the formees (the students) and the formators (the Theological Faculty and Houses) have a common understanding of the priesthood. If we question the need of the formee to take part in the usual exercises of traditional piety, we must also enquire whether the impact of JDV leads him to self-doubt and/or, ultimately, to loss of faith!

How does one construct a programme for priestly training? Not merely by having recourse to past patterns and the findings of traditional dogmatic (systematic) theology.⁴ A programme for priestly training must take into account the changing needs of the community that the priest must serve. While the traditional Christian understanding of the priest's role re-

mains constant, the changing needs of society will suggest new types of service that the priest should offer.

The first part of the article reviews how priest's training programmes underwent changes in the past. The second part reflects on specific items that should form part of a programme for priestly training in the 21st century.

Part One: Priestly Training in Pre-Vatican II Times

In the past, when changes in the model of priestly training were envisaged, the needs of the Church community were taken into consideration. During the centuries before the Council of Trent (1545-63), seminaries did not exist for the training of priests. In the absence of a system for formal training – it is the diocesan priest that we have in mind – the would-be priest lacked a training in philosophy and theology. Charles the Great (c.742-814) set up schools and patronized scholars to improve the literacy of the Frankish clergy. He enacted laws (787) which obliged monasteries and bishops' houses to provide conditions for study. In the feudal society of that time, Cathedral schools provided religious instruction to the poor students and clerics.⁵ However, it is not clear that such schools made for an educated diocesan clergy. The Constitutions of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), No. 11, ask churches – especially the cathedral – to appoint a master

to teach grammar and other branches of study, as far as is possible, to the clerics of those and other churches. The metropolitan church shall have a

theologian to teach scripture to priests and others and especially to instruct them in matters which are recognized as pertaining to the care of souls."⁶

Such preparation gave future priests a limited ability for apostolic work in the parishes. Some of the ecumenical councils of the Church before Trent had to insist on the presence of qualified persons in scripture and dogma in each diocese as resource persons to guarantee soundness in the sacred sciences.⁷

It is a moot point whether a more enlightened clergy could have dealt more successfully with the reform movements that took their inspiration from the Bible and paved the way for the Protestant Reformation.⁸ Those who decided to make reform their life's goal eventually took to preaching the word of God and encountered much opposition from the established Church. A clergy that could correctly appreciate the Bible as a source of revelation, counter superstition and prevent a magical understanding of sacraments was sorely needed.

The Council of Trent understood the problems occasioned by an uneducated clergy and decreed that each bishop should set up a college near his cathedral or 'in another convenient place' to train persons for the priesthood. After setting down the "true and catholic doctrine of the sacrament of order," the Council of Trent issued canon 18 (1563) in its decree of reform.⁹ It obliges bishops to make sure that the college where boys are educated "becomes a perpetual seminary of ministers of God." While these boys were to

be trained in spirituality and piety, their being in a college underlined the importance of academic study in their priestly formation.

In the years after Trent, the seminary provided the environment for sustained religious practices, prescribed study and a sheltered existence. However, the practice of celibacy, the embracing of solitude and being separated from the outside world uncovered needs that had to be addressed. Games, tournaments, entertainment and occasional celebrations offered relaxation, leisure and social life to those confined within the seminary walls, but they also succeeded in making seminary life exclusive and strongly clerical.

While in general the establishment of seminaries provided the Church with a clergy that was more theologically literate and pastorally effective, the strictly controlled environment of the seminary contrasted with the atmosphere of classical study and search prevailing in the universities. In the aftermath of the Enlightenment, the priest found himself out of step with the world of secular learning and its scientific culture. An insistence on Thomism – mandated by Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879) – in seminary teaching resulted in priests having a universal and scholastic synthesis in theology. The unitary system present in the theology taught in seminaries contributed to logical thinking in the abstract, but prevented seminal thinking and theologizing that could offer solutions to the challenges of everyday life. In general, the 19th century was a century of caution for Catholic theology, and except for the Catholic

faculty of theology that was set up in Tübingen in 1817 and sought new avenues in theological reflection, there was only the abortive attempt of the Modernists that was tolerated by Leo XIII for some time. Seminary formation depended in great part on exposure to Church doctrine that grew increasingly distant from the world of people.

It was the aim of Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990) to understand doctrine in the context of everyday human experience. He did this by using the historical method to study the texts of Aquinas. Appointed rector of Le Saulchoir (a Dominican house of studies) from 1932-1942, Chenu explained his method in a book (published in 1937) meant for private circulation. He was committed to the worker-priest movement and he sent Dominican students into the mines as workers.¹⁰ However, persons influential in the Vatican opposed him; in 1942 his book was placed on the Index, and he himself was removed from his post.

The efforts of Chenu witness to the need for priestly training to be done in a living context. But he was not anti-intellectual and valued deep and engaging study. Although he lay great store by his being a scholar in medievalism, Chenu was no less committed to relevance in priestly formation. He was surely a forerunner of those who adopted new patterns of priestly training in the years following Vatican II.

Until Vatican II, priests were seen as persons essentially linked with the celebration of cult (sacrifice) as the Council of Trent had described them (ND 1707). Vatican II, in keeping with

the ideas expressed in Pius XII's *Mediator Dei* (1947), affirmed the unequaled priesthood of Christ and the priestly status of the entire community. It also spoke of the ministerial priesthood of the ordained minister through which service is rendered to the Church. The Vatican II image of the priest is more holistic than that of Trent. Vatican II describes the office of the priest as one of proclaiming the word of God, of celebrating the sacraments for the community and of offering leadership to the community of believers (*Lumen Gentium* no. 28).

In the Old Testament times, one discharged the function of a priest because he belonged to a particular group or family. That function was linked to temple worship. In the New Testament, the priesthood of Christ encompasses the entire community. In the words of George Soares-Prabhu: "The New Testament sees this ministry realized collectively in the common or social priesthood of all Christians, and individually in the professional, 'ministerial' priesthood of certain 'officials' in the Church."¹¹ Vatican II does not define the priesthood solely in terms of cult; rather the cult is integrated into the total function that the priest is called to perform.

If *Lumen Gentium* stresses his [the priest's] traditional cultic role, affirming that "in virtue of the sacred power with which he is endowed the ministerial priest instructs and rules the priestly people, performs in the person of Christ the eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people" (10), this traditional understanding must (according to the

normal hermeneutics of conciliar documents) be integrated into the newer understanding that the decree on priestly life provides. The cultic role of the priest, even though reaffirmed in the Council is, therefore, not to be taken as his primary role. It is part of his mission to gather together "God's family as a brotherhood of unity". Such an understanding of the Christian priesthood is certainly much closer to the New Testament than the popular identification of the priest as an agent of cultic power.¹²

In the years following Vatican II, there have been innovations in priestly formation but the seminary structure remains the single stable factor of formation alongside the new methods adopted to train priests. Does the seminary formation help train a future priest in an optimal way and, if not, how can it be suitably modified?

Part Two: Priestly Training in a Post-Vatican II Era

If Vatican II understands the priest more comprehensively than Trent, then priestly training needs to be changed or modified. Before, the priest received his identity through the performance of a cultic function; now he is characterized as a community-builder.

The total activity of the community – and not merely its cultic celebrations – is seen as giving glory and praise to God. According to the theology of Vatican II, the priest is ordained for the building up of the whole community, and the cultic function would constitute only part of his total activity. In keeping with this understanding, it would seem that the following areas should

feature in priestly training if he is to be relevant in the 21st century.

A. A New Self-understanding

In his closing remarks at the ceremony at which Pope John Paul II gave his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, Cardinal Julius Darmaatmadja spoke the following words:

4. ...In the context of immersing ourselves in these [Asian] local cultural and religious values, what we are speaking of is: the existence of authentic values that we can discover therein, such as: mercy, submission to the will of God, compassion, rectitude, non-violence, righteousness, filial piety, harmony with creation, etc... Precisely because this task urges us to root the Church in this [Asian] local religious culture and reality, we therefore support “inculturation in the field of theology, liturgy, formation of priests and religious, catechesis, spirituality, etc.”

The Cardinal’s words invite Christians to discover wholesomeness and gospel values already present in the Asian context. His words underscore an attitude of learning from others by paying reverent and painstaking attention to the Asian context in which the Church finds herself. If in the past the Church tended to understand herself by (absolute) self-affirmation in a so-called universal context – one recalls the four marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic – today, she is asked to affirm herself in an Asian context and in relation to other communities of faith.

The changed self-understanding would imply that the study of theology should always be related to the ground

reality where the priest is called to build a community with Kingdom values. In fact, such study is already taking place where students engage in apostolates that make them aware of new questions and issues that people raise. Careful reflection on the questions and concerns of people in the light of Christian faith will surely raise the level of involvement and interest of students for the priesthood. But for the Church to be truly immersed in the Asian context, such reflection should not be confined to traditional thomistic and/or systematized theology but should include all that Asia’s faith traditions have to offer. Such theological reflection will not only be universal in its scope but it will also help the future priest to serve the community at large and not only those belonging to the Christian Church.

B. The Scope of Contextual Theology

It would be a truism to say that all theology is contextual, that it always has its specific concerns and/or objectives. A theologizing subject is always historically conditioned and the theology that such a subject elaborates is partly the result of such conditioning. To do contextualized theology today means that specific concerns or objectives of the ‘here and now’ are seen as the accepted point of departure for the theologizing subject.

In India, with its varied regional and ethnic groups, the concept of contextual theology becomes exceedingly complex. To what extent does priestly training equip a person to recognize and deal successfully with the context that

he will encounter as a priest? Ms Jean Fernandez describes the problem and suggests a way of equipping the future priest for his task.

To begin with, the Indian Catholic Priest faces a far more culturally heterogeneous body of laity. The Indian priest does not deal with a Pan-Catholic, or a Pan-Indian sensibility. He encounters Tamilian Catholics, Telugu Catholics, Malayali Catholics, Anglo-Indians, Mangaloreans, Goans, tribals, Catholics of different caste and class origins. Unless his training takes into account this heterogeneity and prepares him for it, his pastoral work will remain largely unsuccessful. A Catholic priest is frequently a neophyte even after several years in the priesthood because his training has not enabled him to recognize the different value-systems and assumptions from which different social groups in the Church operate. A great deal of cultural ignorance and bewilderment prevails in our Catholic priests, especially since the Indian adolescent has a constrained social life, and may join the seminary innocent of cultural differences, with many of his naive misconceptions unchallenged... A sociology of the Indian Church needs to be taught in our seminaries along with a general sociology of the Indian people.¹³

Learning to live with people who profess different faiths and who base their lives on assumptions that suppose a novel worldview cannot take place within the walls of a seminary. The stability of the seminary's life style ill-equips persons to enter into normal human intercourse with the people he will serve as a priest. It is not enough to acquire psychological skills and have

group therapy training. One must make one's own a theological perspective that does justice to people of all faiths. Exposure programmes, live-ins with groups of different faith persuasions and varied types of field experience must be part of the priestly training syllabus.

C. *The Scope of Dialogue*

In its very first section, *Ecclesia in Asia* pointed to dialogue as a key activity of today's Christian. Pope John Paul II states that he had observed "directly the *encounter in dialogue* of the particular Churches, including the Eastern Churches, in the person of their Pastors."¹⁴ He then describes "dialogue as a *characteristic mode of the Church's life in Asia*."¹⁵ Further on, there is explicit mention of dialogue as the mission of the Church (no. 29) – ecumenical dialogue (30) and interreligious dialogue (31). Speaking about the efforts of the Church to enter into dialogue, the pope says:

Her [the Church's] efforts to engage in dialogue are directed in the first place to those who share her belief in Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour. It extends beyond the Christian world to the followers of every other religious tradition, on the basis of the religious yearnings found in every human heart. Ecumenical dialogue and interreligious dialogue constitute a veritable vocation for the Church (no. 29).

The future priest must be skilled in dialogue during the years of priestly formation. One must be convinced that others beside oneself are also striving to encounter God and subscribe to a lifestyle that is humanizing and godly. Further, knowledge about religions cannot

be gleaned only from books and study but also from conferences, meetings and collaborative efforts with people of other faith persuasions. Finally, dialogue presumes that one understands the definitive status of one's religious beliefs but realizes that they are not exhaustive. Hence, dialogue is a context for the mutual enrichment of both parties.

In the pluralist context of India, dialogue is not an accidental activity of the priest. It is a way of life that he must practise so that the community at large is built. The opportunity for dialogue begins with a fostering of internal democracy in the seminary itself where priestly training must emphasize how respect and consideration for another's point of view must be shown.

D. Corporate Management

Priestly training is meant to prepare a person to deal not only with individual persons but also with communities or societies as a whole. Such training must provide for corporate management so that the future priest can benefit the persons he serves. Corporate management will be viewed from three points of view.

(i) The Customer

The customer is the body of parishioners who have a variety of needs. As members of the Church they look to the priest duly appointed by the bishop to satisfy those needs. The priest who is appointed to a parish is one who is supposed to have the skills and temperament to attend to those needs. During the years of priestly formation, there must be provision for interaction between the potential priest and church

communities. There must be an awareness of the different constituencies that the priest must recognize, prioritize and address. Evidently, the constituencies that are made up of the poor and suffering require principal attention. The customer is one who is characterized by his/her needs in the parish community. Could it happen that the customer finds little that meets his/her requirements in what the priest offers? Does the priest as seller come across as a person who is minimally interested in making available to the customer the commodities that affect his/her decision-making, ethical living and God-centred activity? Should that be the case, the customer will slowly, but surely, cease to recognize in the priest's image a person who can benefit him/her.

The parishioners as customers have a right to expect from the management (the priest in charge) an intelligent and cogent explanation of the word of God that confirms and confronts him/her in life's varied situations. They look to the management to stimulate creative thinking and purposeful action in the different constituencies that make up the parish. Can those in charge of the parish offer help in conflict resolving and building up of persons? The management must offer the parishioners a product that they can use and that perfects them as human beings. Such a product can be understood as the offering of material help to those in need, the rendering of appropriate services to the parishioners in their daily life and in the celebration of the sacramental life of the Church. Priestly training must provide for the offering of such a product.

(ii) Core offering

Core offering refers to the commodity that the priest puts out in the belief that the commodity will enhance the life of the parishioner. The core offering should be a product that is specific not general, easily recognizable not vague, and customer-oriented. The core offering obliges the priest to acquire expertise to market it. In parish ministry, being available is not enough. Availability becomes a marketable product only when the priest has something to offer.

Priests who are part of the management in a parish have a duty to offer a product that is meaningful to the customer. Although one may not know exactly his/her appointment in the future, it is necessary to prepare oneself to be a seller in a very concrete way. This suggests that during the years of formation, the formee himself as the primary agent responsible for his formation should work hard to acquire skills and competencies that can be marketed. A formation programme should offer scope for such acquisition. Here, it will be helpful to ask if reflection on apostolic work during formation urges those in training to cultivate their minds to assess what they read or hear, and whether they have concrete customers in mind when choosing areas of study. The core offering should be a well-defined product that a potential priest invests in so that he can offer a wholesome and marketable commodity to the customer.

(iii) Competition

Selling and buying in the market by different parties creates com-

petition. Not only does competition help in generating quality products, but it also attaches affordable price tags to these. Does the security that attends Church-related management (the priests in charge) make them less serious in marketing their products? Is there good reason to believe that the customer will choose products from the management in the parish over other available ones?

A salesperson who does not renovate his/her shop in which he/she does business will soon lose out to others. In today's market, newer versions of products appear almost daily and products never seen before make their appearance as a matter of course. In the face of a changing world, can the management in a parish merely repeat the past and steel itself against change?

Conclusion

The elements that would make for a contributive priestly training in the 21st century are: an attitude that seeks one's personal identity in a continuing relationship with those of Christian and other faith persuasions; a recognition that those belonging to groupings other than Christian also have a God experience from which one can learn; engaging in dialogue as a way of life so that mutual enrichment takes place in both dialogue partners. Finally, one must also keep in mind the corporate nature of society that one finds in parishes. Could the seminary be the most suitable place for priestly training that includes these elements?

Notes

1. John D'Mello: *An Exploratory Study of Spiritual Formation in Seminaries affiliated to Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth* (mimeographed sheets), 1993-94, p. 4.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.* p. 27.
4. Refer “Theology” by Gerald O’Collins in *The Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* edited by Richard P. McBrien, Harper San Francisco, 1995, p. 1250.
5. Cathedral schools were “established in medieval or later times for the education of choirboys of cathedral churches. They sometimes served also the purposes of a grammar school, providing free education for poor boys living in the cathedral city.” (Refer *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* edited by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, Oxford, 1997, p. 303).
6. Norman Tanner (editor): *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* Volume I (Trent-Vatican II), Georgetown University Press, 1990, p. 240.
7. Refer to “Priestly Formation and Seminary Structure” in VIDYAJYOTI 58 (1994, November), pp. 693-4.
8. Reform groups included the Waldensians who took their origin from Peter Waldo, in the late 12th century and the followers of John Hus (c. 1372-1415) and others.
9. Norman Tanner (editor): *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* Volume II (Trent-Vatican II), Georgetown University Press, 1990, pp. 750-751.
10. Mark Schoof: *A Survey of Catholic Theology 1800-1970* (translated by N.D. Smith), Paulist Newman Press, New York, p. 103.
11. Refer Chapter 13, “Christian Priesthood in India Today: A Biblical Reflection,” in *A Biblical Theology for India* (Collected Writings of George M. Soares,S.J. Vol. 2) edited with an Introduction by Scaria Kuthirakkattel, S.V.D., published by Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, 1999, p. 225.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-8.
13. Refer *The New Leader*, Vol. 80, October 16-31, 1990, No. 20, “What Should be the Focus of Priestly Formation?” p. 17.
14. *Ecclesia in Asia*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, Vatican City, 1999, no. 3.
15. *Ibid.*

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Formation or Training? An Intercultural Perspective

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There are two educations:
the one that teaches how to make a living
and the one that teaches how to live.¹

0. Formation and Training

The difference between formation and training is perhaps best illustrated through concrete examples.

Recently as I was awaiting my turn at one of the immigration counters at the Frankfurt airport I noticed two Africans before me. Being a bit sleepy I did not at first realize that something was amiss. As the two German officials who examined the passports began to raise their voices it dawned on me that the Africans were having visa-problems. But I could not say what exactly the problem was. I only heard the two German officials, a lady and a gentleman, shouting at the helpless Africans, "Go away, you do not have a visa!" As the two Africans were withdrawing from the counter the lady official shouted an obscenity in German at them.

Undoubtedly, the two officials only were doing their duty having undergone *training* in matters relating to their task of checking up and examining passports and visas of people coming from different cultures, but it is doubtful if they had any *formation* with

regard to encountering people of other cultures.

Now let us turn to the following story.

It intrigued the congregation to see their rabbi disappear each week on the eve of the Sabbath. They suspected he was secretly meeting the Almighty, so they deputed one of their number to follow him.

This is what the man saw: the rabbi disguised himself in peasant clothes and served a paralysed Gentile woman in her cottage, cleaning out the room and preparing a Sabbath meal for her.

When the spy got back the congregation asked,

"Where did the rabbi go? Did he ascend to heaven?"

"No," the man replied, "he went even higher."²

Clearly no amount of training could possibly prepare a rabbi for an intercultural commitment.

For far too long formation has been understood in a narrowly religious sense: formation of persons in a reli-

gious congregation. The centre of this formation is the so-called charism of the congregation. Seen interculturally, this is just plain navel gazing. Formation has to have just the opposite goal, namely, of opening us up to the other, the other culture, the other religion. It is precisely the religious who have given up everything who are invited to be open to face any thing, any situation. That is why formation has to be understood in our times more comprehensively than in former times. In our global and intercultural village there is need of a formation that not only ensures and guarantees the existence of this village but also enables a harmonious living together of all peoples.

This means that there is need of an intercultural consciousness. For the survival of the individual cultures there is need of the awareness of interculturality, which takes note of diverse cultures and sees to it that they are all able to survive. Today the goal of formation has to be broadened so that formation can move in the direction of deepening intercultural awareness. Such an awareness ensures intraculturality (being in touch with one's culture, religion and spirituality) by promoting interculturality where religions and cultures interact positively with one another.

0.1 An Open Horizon Of Understanding

Interculturality demands openness. An important question that needs to be raised right at the beginning is, what is our access to reality, to the world, to the world of humans? Whatever our re-

sponse to this question – obviously it depends on our understanding of reality – one thing is clear, there is need for openness towards reality, need for an open horizon on our part. The kind of openness that is operative in us determines the kind of access we have to reality.

Without some sort of openness no access is possible. An access is the concretization of a specific kind of openness. The validity of this statement is seen in the opposite case where there is lack of openness. For what do the many conflicts – whatever be their nature – of our times both in India as well as in the rest of the world tell us? Genuine interaction takes place even where a minimum of openness is operative. Thus our age is beginning to show an increasing openness towards the environment. This implies a new access to reality. Such an access means a mode of approach and conduct with regard to the environment.

The different accesses constitute in effect our life and life-style. They are expressed in our attitudes and values, in our traditions and our cultures. The latter comprise the area of our discussion in this paper because they manifest themselves in whatever our society, our nation and our world do, produce and proclaim.

An open horizon is open to a certain extent only because the very horizon determines the extent of the openness.³ This is so because such openness bears the characteristics of its horizon. It is open to the extent that its horizon is open. To generalize, traditions are open, each in its own unique manner.

The Buddhist traditions are, for example, open in a manner that is different from the Hindu or Christian or Muslim or Adivasi traditions. The Hindus, for instance, (just to make an arbitrary choice) have little or no difficulty in participating in the religious ceremonies of other traditions than, for instance, Christians. Or Christian women have little or no difficulty to become nurses than Hindu women from the higher castes.⁴ So too the Buddhist horizon of understanding in India is different in the case of Neo-Buddhists than in the case of Buddhists in Tibet or Sri Lanka or Thailand simply because of its different social background. Historical traditions are shaped and formed by different layers; that is why it is not always easy to characterize them in detail. Furthermore, a tradition is something dynamic because it is constantly changing.

1. Global Problems in a Global Village

No tradition enjoys a privileged access to reality. Every tradition has its positive and negative aspects. We moderns who are in great danger of contracting the ancient disease of “hybris” (overconfidence, the temptation to be like the gods) might entertain the pretension that we are more advanced than our ancestors.⁵ The facts of our situation, however, point in the opposite direction. Not only the environmental crisis but also the relationship of individual persons and nations to one another leaves no doubt that our progress has been a double-edged sword. In contrast, the so-called primitive peoples had a better and more genuine access to nature than we have today.

It is the insight of our times that humans form a community; this conviction is gaining momentum today. It has even taken the form of a structural institution called the United Nations. Granted its inefficacy and ineffectiveness, still it is a giant step in the history of humankind – a step in the right direction.

This common-sense idea receives support from the perspective of the sciences. Whatever be the explanation of the origin of the diverse races, one thing is sure: we all share in the same stuff, the atoms and the molecules, that make up creation. “Matter-relationship” is much thicker than blood-relationship. This is the insight that the “Geologist” Thomas Berry has been communicating in his various writings.⁶ Outside of “creation” there is “nothing”. Whatever exists is perceptible (directly or indirectly) in creation. The unity of creation – here the sciences do not seem to have any other alternative – is the ground for the unity of humans and their kind.

But take the ontological grounding for the unity of the human race. Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* draws our attention to the fact of humans “being-in-the-world”.⁷ “World” and “understanding” constitute the human.⁸ Human understanding is a “worldly” event. The “world” (not just the physical world but the world of meaning too) is constitutive of every happening of understanding. Understanding takes place “in the world” – this phrase indicates more than a locative case. Understanding is always about the world and so is always connected with it.⁹ Heidegger distinguishes this

kind of [primordial] understanding from “understanding that is merely one kind of understanding among [many] others” – like, for example, “explanation”. This derivative kind of understanding, where “that which is *explicitly* understood has the structure of *something as something*”.¹⁰ Though we can not go into details here, the point is important because it is not only individual persons who understand something *as* something but also the different cultures and traditions. In other words, all understanding is historical and therefore specific to the understanding person or culture. It is here that the specificity of a person or culture manifests itself. And the specific contribution of cultures and traditions is to be located in the way they understand the world, the way they-are-in-the-world.

Thus every tradition and community has an access to reality that is specific to it. This specificity shows itself both in specific cultural communities and in the values specific to them. The Indian traditions, for instance, stress *ahimsā* (= non-violence) whereas the Christian traditions lay stress on “love of neighbour”. This, however, does not imply that the Indian traditions do not witness to “love of neighbour” or that the Christian traditions have no antenna for *ahimsā*. The specificity of a community is built on the specificity of its “foundational experience” and the plurality of traditions is to be traced back to the plurality of “foundational experiences”.

It is precisely the plurality of “foundational experiences” that will serve as the cornerstone of the follow-

ing reflections. No tradition alone is in a position to mediate the richness of reality exhaustively. The problem in earlier times was perhaps simpler where traditions could find meaning without getting in touch with one another. Today, however, traditions are in touch with one another and so the problem of meaning can no more be solved singly by the traditions. We are in need of complementarity, correction and qualification, from all the traditions in as much as they open up a genuine access to reality. In the final analysis, it is by the richness of their access to reality that the different traditions contribute their mite to the human community,

The core of any [cultural] community is without doubt religion. Religion is the community’s search for [and discovery of] meaning. Whereas on the one hand our world has shrunk to a global village, our problems have on the other hand taken on global proportions. Our problems are no more confined to “nations” or religious communities; they affect the whole world. This is obvious in the case of the environmental problems, atomic weapons and their production, the arms industry, rapid militarization of countries, especially the economically poorer countries, the political and economic world-order that is tilted in favour of some countries to the disadvantage of the rest of the world and the consequent north-south polarization.

All this has consequences as grave as massive poverty and hunger, inhuman conditions of life, the exploitation of women and of those who eke out an existence on the lowest rung of the social ladder, violence and imprisonment,

the drug cartel, etc., etc. to say nothing of the increasing devastation of our planet. The final consequence is the objectification of the world and therefore a world that is fundamentally unjust.

The signs of our times point to the objectification of the world by a *Zeitgeist* that has been struck by "hybris". The relation of humans to their world is that of a tyrannical Subject which in the knowing process "oppresses" its object. The pretension of humans is that they will sooner or later work out the mathematical formula of the world.¹¹

Understandably, then, the question of meaning in life has become more acute than ever. But God and mystery are no more part of the realm of meaning. Indeed to a great extent they appear to have become irrelevant.

2. Religion as the Quest for and the Discovery of Meaning

God and mystery may not be part of the realm of meaning as far as some of our contemporaries are concerned. But this does not mean that religion has disappeared from the face of the earth. It only means that the force of attraction of the traditional religions is becoming weaker and that their message has little or nothing to say to (some of) our contemporaries. But as we hinted earlier, the quest for meaning is coming increasingly to the fore. The widespread meaninglessness of life can be so interpreted that the traditional religions have not grasped today's search for meaning and so have been unable to respond to it satisfactorily. The question of meaning remains a quest for mean-

ing and so in fact remains a religious quest since religion is ultimately the search for meaning.

Religion as the search for meaning does not of course deny the other side, namely, the discovery of meaning. The discovery of meaning is really the specific characteristic of a religion. What is common to all – humans and religions – is the quest for meaning. The specific discovery of meaning contains elements which constitute the differences in the religions. What is more, the quest for meaning has primarily to do with human initiative. The discovery of meaning, however, refers to the transcendental (i.e. revelation) aspect of religion.¹² In a comprehensive perspective religion is both a search for and the discovery of meaning.

The question of meaning affects all areas of life. But life is becoming more and more fragmented into Sunday and the routine of every day, into science and religion; into God and the world, etc. Religion appears to have little to do with the areas which touch humans deeply. There is here a dichotomy between God, world and humans. These are the areas which lay claims on us but they are areas without any integration. The three remain separate: the human as Subject, the world as object and God, if at all, as an otherworldly being. Such a God is either so very transcendent or so very immanent that humans are unable to discover God and the world is incapable of revealing God. The paradox, however, is that the question of meaning has to be solved at the very junction where God, humans and their world meet.

Now authentic religion has to do both with the Sundays and the everydays of life. A relevant religion must see to it that it answers the question of meaning as moderns formulate it from their specific perspective. Life itself offers the content but religion has to show the direction of meaning of this content. A religion that is incapable of doing this is like salt that has lost its saltiness.

Someone may object here that religion as quest for meaning does not take into account the actual religions; furthermore such an understanding appears to be too elitist. It must be admitted that this formulation does not take into account the specificity of the different religions. But this is done on purpose. The question is whether the formulation excludes it. The intention of the formulation is to make it broad enough so that every religion finds its core reflected in it. Religions have to ask themselves if whatever they consider constitutes the core of their religion addresses the question of meaning.

The Hindu traditions have an expression which hits the nail on the head: *paramārtha* (= *parama+artha*) which means the Ultimate Being or Ultimate Meaning which is used of the Divine Mystery. *Paramārtha* could be used homologously by all religions, even by Buddhism. It is hard to imagine a religion that would refuse to acknowledge that its core message has to do with the search for Ultimate Meaning. If it really has nothing to do with Ultimate Meaning it would be at best irrelevant and at worst dangerous.

3. Quest for Meaning as the Interface between Religions

It is high time that the religious traditions of the world do away with their blinkers (i.e. their prejudices, lack of information or plain disinterest) and start establishing links with each other and with all those traditions which purport to search for and mediate meaning. This is the first step for religions and cultures to live harmoniously with one another in spite of their diverse value-systems. What is common to them all is their search for meaning.

Against this background we can now state that the first contribution of religions is in the line of what I would like to call interculturation. It consists in the fact that each religion has to take serious note of the existence of other religions and positively accept their role as mediators of Ultimate Meaning. This is important. In the spectrum that constitutes the search for meaning religions are the different colours. Like the rainbow colours they affect and influence each other. None can remain outside the circle of meaning and none can reject the search for meaning. In the context of our global village none remains unaffected by the other traditions. Interculturation is the awareness of the fact that there are traditions other than my own, that they all constitute the spectrum of meaning and that they all influence one other. Recognition of this fact is interculturation.

This however does not imply that everything is all right with whatever in its history a particular religious tradition proclaimed as its meaning. The point here is that religion first and fore-

most is a search. The history of a particular religion itself often discloses things from which its own adherents distance themselves.¹³

Now what does it mean to say that the existence of other religions has to be taken seriously? Firstly, one has to accept and respect them as traditions that are searching for and mediating meaning. Secondly, one has to make efforts to come to know them better, and for this, to begin a process of sharing and dialogue with them. *Interculturation* is the acknowledgement that cultures influence each other when they come into *real* contact with one another, that is, when they really come to *know* each other, and not just come to *know about* each other. A simple example can throw light on this. The different colours of the rainbow are different but they touch each other in such a manner that it is impossible to locate where exactly a colour begins and where it ends, or where one ends and the other begins. Similarly though religious traditions are different there is a symbiotic relationship between them. Furthermore, their mutual influence determines even the specific nature of each of the traditions. *The change that is brought about in a tradition by this symbiotic relationship of interculturation of traditions is inculturation.* Inculturation or the change that interculturation brings about has to be part and parcel of the self-understanding of a religion.¹⁴

4. Formation and Intercultural Encounter

Arguably our illustration does not explain the relationship between cul-

tures in a way that would satisfy everyone. The symbiotic relationship between cultures can and should serve as springboard for correcting and complementing each other. What such mutual contact can achieve is best seen in the operation of two principles of presence and absence.

It is through interaction with others that a person's sense of identity is deepened; such an interaction discloses factors that one could not have discovered by oneself. For most of my life I did not have a computer and I did not know about it. Only when I saw a computer for the first time, did I realize that I did not have one. This is how the principle of absence functions. Similarly with the principle of presence. When I first saw a blind person I realized that I had eyes.

Admittedly the way the encounter of cultures functions is much more complex than an encounter between persons (though such encounter has always to do with persons). However the dynamics are similar. Such an encounter brings to the fore both those elements, those that are at work but not thematized and those that are absent. In a dialogical encounter there is a process of complementing and correcting that takes place. All traditions have blind spots. It is only through such encounters that they are discovered and overcome. It is in some such way that the encounter between North and South can reveal both the prejudices that are operative and the unequal relationship that obtains between them.

Speaking concretely: Down the centuries the beliefs of Christians in In-

dia had little or no place for the world (= creation). The world as God's creation had as such hardly any role to play in their daily life. Now in certain Hindu traditions the Cosmos is believed to be the "Body of God".¹⁵ For centuries Christians and Hindus have lived like oil and water, without a real encounter taking place. But in recent times the process of a real encounter has begun.¹⁶ Christian theologians in India are waking up to the fact that the Cosmos plays an important role in the history of salvation.¹⁷

Another example: Indian history gives us examples of individual persons who have spoken out against the caste-system of the Hindu traditions. There have been even protest-movements against the caste-system like that of Basvanna in the twelfth century C.E.¹⁸ But it is only since the 18th century when the number of foreign "missionaries" and Christians increased substantially and these began to polemize against the caste-system that gradually a spirit critical of the caste-system began to emerge among the Hindus themselves. Even if today prejudices against the lower castes and the casteless are still wide-spread, public expression or defence of such prejudices is visibly decreasing. It is true that the caste-system is still operative but this practice is no more defended as blatantly in public as before. The religious leaders of the Hindus will no more publicly defend untouchability as they would have done in former times. Not only because untouchability is constitutionally forbidden but also because the social consciousness of the upper castes is undergoing change. Only the hard-core fun-

damentalists would defend the caste-system lock, stock and barrel. And contrary to appearances, their numbers are not directly proportional to their volume.

The process of change in the social consciousness of India has to be understood against the background of the process of the encounter of religions. Whereas for the Christians a new salvation history access to the Cosmos has been made available through their encounter with the Hindu traditions, the Hindus are experiencing as a consequence of the historical contacts with Christianity a revision of their understanding of the caste-system. On both sides the process is a laborious one but the fact is that it has emerged from their encounter and it can be preserved only through such an encounter.¹⁹

4.1 Formation Through Intercultural Encounters

Formation implies a widening of horizons,²⁰ that is to say, the deconstruction of existing boundaries and the appropriation of a new horizon. Obviously formation takes place in different ways but ideally through the encounter of cultures,²¹ for it is through the encounter of cultures that an optimal widening of horizons can occur.

Let us take the example of Thomas Babington Macaulay²² who worked out the British Government's policy of education for Indians and who was supposed to be one of the most brilliant Englishmen of his times. See what he says about "native literature":

"I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what

I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education...It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative portion of the two nations is nearly the same.”²³

What does this example prove? That Macaulay was not educated? Certainly not! It only highlights the fact that his formation had taken place only within the well of his own culture. It is impossible to eliminate cultural blind spots from within; this can take place only through the meeting of cultures. In Macaulay’s case we encounter the dark side of his formation. His encounter with the cultures of the Indian subcontinent were superficial; they only expose the lacunae in his formation. This only reinforces our thesis: formation today has to be an intercultural exercise. How strange indeed do Macaulay’s words sound today! Certainly this was perceived differently in his time. Today we are struck by their extreme one-sidedness.

The potential of widening one’s horizon from within one’s culture is extremely limited when seen from the vantage point of the global village. One’s culture surely offers plenty of opportunities to widen one’s horizon but that is qualitatively different. Today’s problems whether ecological or economic are world-problems. Whether we like it or not the diverse cultures of the world are getting in touch with one another and there are signs that the contacts are going to be more intensive and more extensive. That is why there is need of a formation that widens one’s horizon as comprehensively as possible, certainly more comprehensive than before. The aim is to understand our multicultural global village. Today it is not enough that we are Indians or Pakistanis or French or Germans. Only world-citizens can tackle world-problems. However one does not become a world-citizen by getting a world-passport that allows entry into all the countries but through a formation that opens one up to other cultures.²⁴

Formation takes places whenever and wherever one enters a new horizon. This happens especially through intercultural encounters which open up different aspects of reality. The more open one becomes the deeper and broader is one’s formation. This is necessary since every culture can contribute something specific towards such a formation.

A story like the following could not have been born in our Indian culture. A western Christian missionary had worked for long years among an African tribe. From the very beginning he had tried to persuade his flock to wear

clothes, a thing which they sedulously refused to do because they did not for a moment understand what all this fuss was about. In the end the missionary lost his proverbial patience and said to them, "Don't you see that you are naked?" They looked at each other unconvinced of the missionary's argument. The chief of the tribe spoke for all of them when he exclaimed, "But your face too is naked!" "That is only my face," the missionary replied. "Ah!", said the chief, "That's the point! We are face *all over!*" Does this wise approach not help us to broaden our horizon a bit, a broadening which our culture probably would be incapable of effecting?

The South African writer Laurens van der Post highlights in his books the unique talent of the Bush-people, whom his ancestors have decimated because they believed that they were not full human beings.²⁵ Reading van der Post's books one is struck by the extraordinary talents of the Bush-people where familiarity with nature is concerned – a talent that is totally missing in our technocratic age. They could read nature like none of us can ever dream of doing. We may be literate in one or other area, but when it comes to reading nature we are the illiterates ones. That is the tragedy of our times where progress has come to mean mastery of nature (and nations).²⁶

Only recently are we beginning to speak differently of the primal peoples.²⁷ But there are enough people who still speak condescendingly of the "primitives".²⁸ Our understanding of formation within our own culture may appear to be relevant, but as long as we

show no respect for and openness to other cultures it will prove itself to be very deficient.²⁹ For formation is not to be understood univocally or uniformly. Neither is formation to be reduced to expertise; it shows its real worth vis à vis openness to the "stranger", the other.³⁰

5. Intercultural and Inter-religious Encounters in India

Because of the encounter with Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, the Adivasi traditions and Zoroastrianism, Christianity in India is facing challenges that she has never faced before. Generally speaking, all these religions have lived for centuries in harmony with each other. However, the situation today has changed dramatically; the disharmony that is entering the scene has socio-economic (and therefore political) causes, and the religious reason that is being put forward is only a facade.

Be that as it may, it can hardly be denied that Christianity in India has been enormously enriched through the pluralistic religious situation. It is this enrichment and not just some Church documents that have convinced the Church in India that the dialogue of religions is indispensable, not only for a harmonious living together of all but also for an integral understanding of salvation history. Not just the theologians (who always are much ahead of the officials of the Church) but also the bishops of India are today insisting that dialogue is an integral part of evangelization³¹, that it is essential for the life of the Church³², and that it is an authen-

tic expression of the Church's evangelizing enterprise.³³

This is not any more surprising since for the Church in India, influenced as she is by the faith of the Hindus, faith is not first and foremost an *assensus intellectus*, but an experience.³⁴ In this connection, I suggest, following Raimon Panikkar, a distinction between faith, faith-experience and faith-expression or belief. Faith, for Panikkar, is existential openness.³⁵ This openness is a certain ability with respect to the transcendent mystery.³⁶ But this ability alone does not suffice; it must be activated and actualized. When this faith-ability is activated we have an experience of faith which then finds an expression, expression of faith or belief.³⁷ Panikkar has felicitously called the unity of faith and the plurality of beliefs the universe of faith and the pluriverse of belief.³⁸

Panikkar's differentiation gives religious pluralism a convincing foundation. Religious traditions meet in the universe of faith but they reach there through the pluriverse of their respective beliefs. Accordingly, for Indian Theology religious pluralism is no more a problem. The difference between the universe of faith and the pluriverse of belief has contributed substantially to this insight. On the same basis a pluralistic Christology is in the process of being born in India.³⁹ In the same way, Liturgy in the Church in India is becoming diversified, because in the light of what has been said the "nigrics" (as Panikkar calls them) are as important as the "rubrics".⁴⁰ "Nigrics" refer to texts that are printed in black and "ru-

brics" to the prescriptions that are printed in red and which prescribe how the liturgical actions are to be done. According to Panikkar, rubrics and nigrics complement and determine each other. Neither the prescriptions nor the actions are meaningful alone and by themselves. Meaning emerges when they encounter each other and mutually determine and complement one another. The liturgical action is meaningful only in a definite context and the prescriptions may not overlook the context.

6. Religious Formation and the Ability to Respond Interculturally

It appears that the dialogue of life⁴¹ that Christians in India have been engaged in for some time with people of other faith-traditions is gradually bearing fruits. Christians themselves are today showing a critical sense as regards their consciousness of their minority-status. They want to be part of the mainstream of national life. They do not wish to highlight their minority-status; they want to be Indian in the full sense of the word.

In addition, there is something that is completely new in the history of India and of the Church in India: a positive attitude towards other faith-traditions. One sees this in the attitude of dialogue among the Asian theologians in general and the Indian theologians in particular,⁴² as also in the dialogue meetings of the diverse faith groups.⁴³

Furthermore, formerly Christians used to engage themselves in "Christian" projects where people of other faith too would be employed. But to-

day we see how this is increasingly changing. Christians are working *together* with people of other faith traditions for social justice, in environmental programmes, in the women's movements, etc. Some of the projects are no more "Christian" or led by Christians; they are so to say "secular" projects where people of good will have come together in order to work together.⁴⁴

Obviously, this should not create the impression that the Catholic Church as such or the other Churches are officially part of this movement. What is meant is that the movement of intercultural action has at last begun and it appears that it has come to stay and that it will gain momentum.

A good proof (if that is a suitable expression in this context) for this is the response of the Indian people (at least in the English language papers and magazines) in connection with assaults by fundamentalists on Christians in different parts of the country. It has been believers from other traditions that have come to the defence of the Christians. And protests and demonstrations have not been restricted only to Christians but have brought together people of good will.

The ability to respond that is being discussed here shows itself in the happening of history rather than in its thematization. Thematization is always secondary and derivative, and therefore it is a matter of time before it arrives on the scene. The ability to respond that is born of authentic religious formation manifests itself first and foremost in the happening of history. It takes time to thematize this happening. We first have

the experience and only then do we begin to speak of it. Heidegger says in this regard that "what is explicitly understood has the structure of *something* [understood] as *something*."⁴⁵ When we speak of what we have understood we recognize the ability to respond interculturally. Language lays bare not only the interculturality of what is understood: in this laying bare is contained the ability to respond. There are here therefore two elements: to understand something as something interculturally and to respond interculturally.

7. The Vision of Religious Formation in a Rainbow World

It is important to maintain the distinction between formation and training; formation has to do with vision and training with strategies. Formation demands creativity; training imitates procedures and copies methods. There are no recipés for acquiring a vision; on the other hand, what concerns training new programmes are put forward and tried out. One of the lacunae of our times is that our planning has concentrated so much on training that the appropriation of a vision, which is specific to formation, has been largely neglected. World politics and world religions put in so little effort where vision is concerned that it is not surprising that the question of meaning in life is not satisfactorily answered. The question of meaning is one of the most important facets of life and culture. But more than the quest for meaning of individuals and their cultures it has to do today with the meaning of the human community and their world. More still: it has to do with a vi-

sion. Formation, especially religious formation, has to mediate a vision that comprehends the human (not just any ethnic, linguistic, national or religious) community.

A vision has to do not only with the unity of humans but also with the unity of the whole of reality, i.e. God, world and humans.⁴⁶ This is so to say the context of the quest for meaning. Everything appears meaningful only in the light of a vision. Fragmentation disappears and there is no more objectification. Body and soul, spirit and matter, subject and object, action and contemplation, wisdom and science all belong together because everything hangs together.

7.1 A Cosmotheandric Formation

Through his cosmotheandric intuition Raimon Panikkar has suggested the direction of such a unity.⁴⁷ To be able to understand this, we have first of all to recall that our starting-point is fragmented. Our being and consciousness are bedeviled by a severe separation between God, world and humans. Panikkar perceives this differently. God, world and humans are not so much substantives as primal adjectives. They are the main dimensions which constitute reality. The depth-dimension, the cosmic dimension and the human dimension are reality's constituents. The Cosmic is not an object but the perceptible dimension of reality; the human dimension is the dimension of consciousness, and the depth-dimension is the divine dimension.

Everything is constituted by these three dimensions. Paradoxically the per-

ceivable dimension of the Cosmic and the perceiving dimension of the Human reveal a certain endlessness. Neither the perceptible can be perceived exhaustively nor the perceiving dimension can perceive exhaustively. There is always something more that remains to be perceived. And perception can never be final and definitive. Both these dimensions reveal a certain infinity as it were, a depth-dimension. Each of these dimensions has its specific dynamics; though none is reducible to the others, all are interdependent and interconnected. The cosmotheandric intuition is not a programme but a direction in which we have to appropriate any vision.⁴⁸ It is the intercultural direction in which any religious formation has to be appropriated and imparted.⁴⁹

Panikkar's cosmotheandric vision does not intend either to replace religion or to propose a new religion that replaces all the religions. But he does suggest a number of things.

The foremost concern is the wholeness of reality. The cosmotheandric vision points to the fact that reality consists of relationships, of a totality of relationships. Everything is related to every thing, because everything hangs together. Vice versa something is not real which is in itself and for itself. Interculture and interreligion have their ultimate foundation in the unity of everything.

Secondly, our understanding of reality determines our understanding of religion, especially the understanding of our own religious tradition. If the Ultimate is understood cosmotheandrically then the respective religion will have a

cosmotheandric self-understanding. This will make them lead their adherents to listen to the cosmotheandric harmony of reality. Besides this, they will so express their religious experience that they will be understood interreligiously and interculturally. Understanding means to be differently in-the-world, to have a different relationship to the world.⁵⁰ Intercultural understanding would then mean to be in an intercultural relationship to the world.

Finally neither religion nor culture can any more be merely religion or culture. Today religion *is* Interreligion and culture *is* Interculture. One of the few countries to have realized the political implication of this is the Republic of South Africa which has understood itself as a rainbow republic. Humankind has taken long to grasp that our world is in fact a rainbow world.

Formation concerns can no more be centred merely around the charism of our founders and the legacy of the constitutions they have left behind them. Our concern is the wholeness vis à vis the fragmentation of reality. Wholeness is the realm of religion; but we are per-

vaded by fragmentation on all sides. Interreligion and Interculture are important steps towards the retrieval of this wholeness of reality. A piece of music cannot simply be reduced to sound waves. It can and has to be studied from different perspectives. The diverse disciplines and professions from anthropology to psychology to theology and religion can and must contribute to the understanding of music.

But the historical aspect, important as it is, alone cannot constitute the whole of the real; the transhistorical is equally important. History holds within itself salvation history. It is true that salvation history shows itself as if in a mirror and piecemeal. This, however, should not discourage us. Where through the encounter of cultures genuine interculturation and inculturation occur, history is transformed into salvation history. That is to say, when understanding becomes intercultural understanding and action becomes intercultural action, the vision of wholeness gradually becomes a reality. It is here that interculturality and formation will have to pass their real test.

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Notes

1. Anthony de Mello, *The Prayer of the Frog*. Vol. 2. p.7
2. Anthony de Mello, *The Prayer of the Frog*. Vol. I. p.228.
3. R. Panikkar, Religion and Tolerance, in: *Myth, Faith & Hermeneutics. Cross-Cultural Studies*.
4. Isn't it striking that we hardly have any Brahmin nurses!
5. The ancestors of the South African Author Laurens van der Post took the Bush-people to be something less than human and so they decimated them. In his *The Lost World of the Kalahari* he writes p. 56 : “The older I grew the more concerned I became over the part my own family must have had in the extermination of the Bushman. That it was considerable I had no doubt.” And again on p. 41: “Ominously from the start, there was nothing too bad to be said about the Bushman. He was, for instance, not even a savage, he was no better than a wild animal and he used such intelligence as he possessed merely to make himself a more dangerous and efficient animal. He was dirty even beyond the bounds of savagery.... However, it is enough to say here that over and over again I found this reproach of physical dirt used as a smoke screen to hide the naked humanity of the little hunter from the hearts of those about to crush him with their own inhumanity.”
6. Thomas Berry writes in his *The Dream of the Earth* p. 132:

“The story of the universe is the story of the emergence of a galactic system in which each new level of expression emerges through the urgency of self-transcendence. Hydrogen in the presence of some millions of degrees of heat emerges into helium. After the stars take shape as oceans of fire in the heavens, they go through a sequence of transformations. Some eventually explode into the stardust out of which the solar system and the earth take shape. Earth gives unique expression of itself in its rock and crystalline structures and in the variety and splendor of living forms, until humans appear as the moment in which the unfolding universe becomes conscious of itself. The human emerges not only as an earthling, but also as a worldling. We bear the universe in our beings as the universe bears us in its being. The two have a total presence to each other and to that deeper mystery out of which both the universe and ourselves have emerged.”
7. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 78ff.
8. It is characteristic that Heidegger sub-title runs thus: “Being-there as Understanding”. Ibid. p. 182. But Heidegger’s “understanding” is not the understanding of everyday language.
9. Ibid. p. 182.
10. Ibid. p. 189.
11. See Paul Davies, *The Mind of God. The Scientific Basis for a Rational World*.
12. This assertion too must be taken *grano salis* because it is the unambiguous opinion of Christian traditions that even the search for God is of Divine origin.

13. Which theologian would today accept the following statement of Pope Boniface VIII from his encyclical *Unam Sanctam*, "Porro subesse Romano Pontifici omni humanae creaturae declaramus, dicimus, diffinimus omnino esse de necessitate salutis." Denzinger-Schönmetzer 875 ?
14. See *Proclaiming Jesus in India Today. Challenges and Perspective*. Ed. Thomas Manjaly (CCBI Commission for Proclamation: New Delhi 2000): "At the same time, we have to admit the fact that inculturation is a two-way process, according to which there is also the need of inter-culturation, which is the awareness of the existence of a plurality of cultures and of their mutual influence." (p.26) "For the seed of mission (i.e. the Kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus) has to be sown in the soil of dialogue, nourished in the waters of interculturation, and cared for by the process of inculturation in order to bring forth the fruit of proclamation." (p. 27). "It is through inculturation one recognizes the enriching or dehumanizing elements that are operative in the cultures. Inculturation then is the process through which the Spirit guides us to discern the chaff of false values from the wheat of genuine growth." (Ibid.)
15. Cfr the Bhagavadgita 11:13, 15ff.
16. Compared to the size of the Christian community the number of Christians who have devoted themselves to the study of the Hindu traditions and Scriptures is considerable. As regards environmental consciousness, see e.g., the statement of the Indian Theological Association 1997.
17. See Soares-Prabhu, The Sacred in the Secular. Reflections on a Johannine Sutra: "The Word Was Made Flesh and Dwelt among Us" pp. 210-211.
18. See A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Šiva*. pp19ff.
19. Interculturality does not mean that cultures are just there physically as it were one next to the other; it implies an organic and symbiotic living together where unity is concretized in diversity. The unity is the unity of being-in-the-world. Not only that we find ourselves in the same world but that our being and understanding are characterized by this phenomenon of being-in-the-world. And the diversity consists in the fact that being-in-the-world is of a pluralistic, not univocal nature.
20. In contrast to formation, training consists of learning practical steps for achieving a concrete objective. It is not said that training does not at all contribute towards a widening of one's horizons. What is said is that training concentrates more on skills than on widening horizons. It rather makes one familiar with one's world in a practical way. Training makes one familiar with what is offered by one's culture so that it can be explicitly assimilated.
21. A good example of confrontation, not of encounter of cultures is brilliantly portrayed by James Clavell in his novel *Shogun*.
22. To highlight the brilliance and versatility of Macaulay I quote here fully the article on him in the *Microsoft Encarta 1997 Encyclopedia Deluxe edition*, Thomas Babington, 1st Baron Macaulay (1800-59), British historian, essayist, and statesman, best remembered for his five-volume *History of England*.

Macaulay was born on October 25, 1800, at Rothley Temple, Leicestershire, and educated at the University of Cambridge. His father was the philanthropist Zachary Macaulay, noted for his opposition to the slave trade. A precocious child and literary prodigy, he began to write poetry and a world history before he was ten years of age. In college he became known as a debater, a conversationalist, and a classical scholar. His essay on the English poet John Milton was published (1825) in the *Edinburgh Review*, one of the most notable literary magazines of the period, and Macaulay was thereafter one of

the best-known and most popular contributors to that publication. Called to the bar in 1826, he practiced little, preferring to follow literary pursuits and politics. In 1830 Macaulay entered the House of Commons, where he became a leading figure, noted especially for his oratory, in the Whig Party, later the Liberal Party. Following the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832 and a Whig victory, he was appointed a commissioner of the Board of Control of Indian Affairs. Two years later he became a member of the Supreme Council of India, created by the India Act of 1834; he spent four years in India, devoting his time chiefly to reforming the criminal code of the colony and to instituting an educational system based on that of Great Britain. In 1839, a year after his return to England, Macaulay resumed his political career and was again elected to Parliament; he also served as secretary of war from 1839 to 1841.

Macaulay wrote continually during his period of political service. In 1842 he completed *Lays of Ancient Rome*, a collection of poems in ballad form, retelling legends of the beginning of the Roman Republic; he subsequently published *Essays* (1843), in three volumes. For the next three years he worked on a comprehensive history of England from the accession of King James II. Macaulay devoted much of his time, as a member of Parliament, to aiding the Liberal Party, which was then in the minority.

With the return to power of the Liberals in 1846, Macaulay was appointed paymaster general for the armed forces. A year later he lost his seat in Parliament and afterward concentrated on writing. The first two volumes of the *History of England from the Accession of James the Second* were finished in 1848 and at once achieved a huge success. In 1852 Macaulay was again voted into Parliament, but because of a weak heart he took little part in political activity and continued to spend most of his time writing. The third and fourth volumes of his history were published in 1855, with an even greater success than the first two. The writer was created Baron Macaulay of Rothley in 1857. He died on December 28, 1859, in London and was buried in Westminster Abbey. The last completed volume of his history, relating events until 1702, was published posthumously in 1861.

Macaulay was a minor poet but a brilliant essayist. His *History of England* has been criticized for its Protestant and Whig bias, but his vast wealth of material, his use of vivid details, and his brilliant, rhetorical, narrative style combined to make it one of the greatest literary works of the 19th century.

23. Quoted by Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p.17. Said has taken the quotation from Philip D. Curtin (1971) p. 182. In his book, *Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen* p. 34f Albert Schweitzer says something similar about Brahmanism and Buddhism: "Aber diese Religiösität ist arm. Ihr Gott ist reine, inhaltslose Geistigkeit. Ihr letzter Bescheid an den Menschen ist absolute Welt- und Lebensverneinung. Ihr ethischer Gehalt ist gering. Sie sind Mystik, die den Menschen in einem toten Gotte ersterben lässt."
24. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.15: "To seek one's own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of spirit, whose being is only return to itself from what is other. Hence all theoretical Bildung, even the acquisition of foreign languages and conceptual worlds, is merely the continuation of a process of Bildung which begins much earlier."

25. See his two books *The Lost World of the Kalahari* and *The Heart of the Hunter* which document his search for the Bushpeople in the Kalahari desert commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation. (England) The dedication of the first book is characteristic of van der Post: "To the memory of Klara who had a Bushman mother and nursed me from birth". In the first chapter 'The Vanished People' van der Post speaks of the unusual qualities of the Bushpeople.
26. See Francis X. D'Sa, Discovering our Communion with God's Creation.
27. The saying "The strength of a chain is directly proportionate to its weakest member" is relevant in our context. Accordingly authentic interculturality gives attention to the weakest members. That implies that the focus of intercultural action is on the revision of the political and economic order of the world. In the context of such a revision intercultural formation sees to it that none of the different cultures is oppressed or downgraded and that on the contrary efforts are made to encourage their specificity.
28. See, for example the impossible attitude of the Nazis to the Jews as narrated by Sally Perel, *Ich war Hitlerjunge Salomon* p. 104: "Sie sagen, auch die Juden seien nach dem Ebenbild Gottes geschaffen worden. Wir antworten darauf, daß auch blutsaugendes Ungeziefer und Zecken, die Krankheiten übertragen, von der Natur geschaffen wurden. Zum Schutz der menschlichen Gesundheit haben wir aber die Pflicht, sie mit Stumpf und Stiel auszurotten."
29. Gadamer refers in his *Truth and Method* pp. 12-13 to Wilhelm von Humboldt's distinction between culture and Bildung. "Bildung here no longer means 'culture' ie the development of capacities and talents. The rise of the word Bildung calls rather on the ancient mystical tradition, according to which man carries in his soul the image of God after whom he is fashioned and must cultivate it in himself. The Latin equivalent for Bildung is *formatio*, and accordingly in other languages, eg in English (Shaftesbury), 'form' and 'formation'. In German also the corresponding derivations of the idea of *forma*, eg *Formierung* and *Formation*, have long vied with the word *Bildung*." A little later on Gadamer goes on to say (p. 12): "In accordance with the frequent carry-over from becoming to being, Bildung (as also the contemporary use of 'formation') describes more the result of this process of becoming than the process itself. The carry-over is especially clear here because the result of Bildung is not achieved in the manner of a technical construction, but grows out of the inner process of formation and cultivation and therefore remains in a constant state of further continued Bildung."
30. Unfortunately expertise for all its worth is not a helpful concept in formation because it brings in the idea of specialization which in its turn evokes onesidedness. Experts who make us aware of the (apparently) positive side of their discoveries but who do not care for the side-effects of their discoveries are signs of real danger for our times.
31. Painadath, Theological Perspectives of FABC [Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences] on Interreligious Dialogue p. 281. These expressions, the author says, reinforce the words of Pope Paul VI: "Dialogue is the new way of being Church" and of Pope John Paul II: "...interreligious dialogue is a work desired by God".
32. Ibid..
33. Ibid.
34. "God-experience", is a recurrent and popular expression of the Hindus, and is gaining currency also among Indian Christian theologians.
35. See Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, pp. 187-229 and Religion and Tolerance, pp. 1-23.
36. Bhagavadgita 18:3 stresses the structural aspect of faith: "Faith constitutes the very

being of man: therefore, whatever the nature of his faith that verily he is.” (Gita Press, Gorakhpur)

37. See Panikkar, Religion and Tolerance, pp. 1-23.
38. For Panikkar the distinction between faith and belief is foundational. But for fundamentalists who do not draw this distinction faith is identical with belief. Not surprisingly they are intolerant of other faith traditions.
39. See Soares-Prabhu, The Jesus of Faith: A Christological Contribution to an Ecumenical Third World Spirituality, pp. 139-164 and Kuzhuvelil, Jesus Christ the Sanatana, pp. 336-347 as also Indian Theological Association, The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India.
40. In his *Worship and Secular Man* pp. 69-70 Panikkar explains ‘rubrics’ and ‘nigrics’ in the following manner: “In the parlance of Western Europe from the XIV century onwards, but which was generalized only in the XVII, the so-called ‘rubrics’ (because they were written in red), stand for the external acts accompanying the internal acts of the divine service. Set alongside the rubrics is the proper text of worship, which because it was generally written in black, I here call the nigrics. The history of the development of worship in any religion shows an almost constant pattern, which I may be permitted to sum up like this: at the beginning rubrics and nigrics were regarded indiscriminately. Their forms and contents were not separable and were barely distinguished, the external act having as much importance as the internal one, if not more. Any sacramental theology could offer us examples and reflections illustrating how the sacramental act is a special blending of internal and external action. In a fascinating process in which the whole of human consciousness is involved, rituals are gradually interiorized until eventually, intention, which is often termed faith, gains the upper hand, to such an extent indeed that it endangers the material, external aspect of the act. A compromise then occurs and there is a certain balance, not always easy to keep, between the nigrics and the rubrics. The history of cult shows that sometimes it has been the rubrics which have in some way created the nigrics, i.e. the external actions have often conditioned the prayers and attitudes of worship. At other times it has been the nigrics, the intention and the conscious effort, which have sought for ways of expression. To say that the nigrics have to create the rubrics would be to approach the question too intellectually and theoretically as if the creative force of man resides in his mind alone, but it is equally one-sided to maintain that the rubrics have the initiative and that the nigrics have only to fill up, as it were, the spaces created by the external and spontaneous manifestations of worship.”
41. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (1991), n. 42.
42. *Asia Focus*. A Weekly from the Union of Catholic Asian News 15:35 (1999) brought two reports: one on the international Congress of Jesuit Ecumenists in Kottayam, India (pp.1 & 6) and the other on the Meeting of Asian Theologians in Bangalore, India (p. 6) Both make a plea for a pluralistic theology.
43. What Panikkar has put forward in his new book *Gott, Mensch und Welt. Die Drei-Einheit der Wirklichkeit* pp.27-28, is the fruit of his intercultural consciousness:
“Was der Hinduismus vom Christentum lernen könnte:
 - die raumzeitlichen Strukturen der Welt ernster zu nehmen, so daß das Politische auch für das religiöse Leben seine Bedeutung erhält;
 - die soziale Ordnung der menschlichen Gesellschaft muß sich nach einer immanenten unmittelbaren Gerechtigkeit richten und nicht nur nach einem transzendenten Grund und langfristiger Gerechtigkeit als Folge der Geburten;
 - die Geschichtlichkeit ist auch ein Bestandteil des menschlichen Bemühens um Erlösung.Was das Christentum vom Hinduismus lernen könnte:

- der Sinn des Lebens besitzt einen Faktor, der von sozialen und politischen Begebenheiten unabhängig ist, so daß das menschliche Heil nicht von solchen geschichtlichen Tatsachen allein abhängt. Auch in einer ungerechten gesellschaftlichen Ordnung kann man glücklich sein;
- die Wirklichkeit hat Schichten und Grade, die das gewöhnliche Bewußtsein übersteigen, so daß Konzentration, Meditation oder wie immer dieses Eindringen in die unsichtbare Sphäre der Wirklichkeit genannt wird, wichtiger ist als die Fähigkeit, zu lesen und zu schreiben;
- der Mensch ist mehr als Geschichte, er ist auch kosmische Wandlung. Er ist mehr, nicht weniger als ein Individuum. Er ist ein Bestandteil der kosmischen Entfaltung der Wirklichkeit, Mitglied des Ganzen.

All dies will nicht sagen, daß solche und ähnliche Punkte in den anderen Traditionen nicht vorhanden wären – es will nur heißen, daß aus verschiedenen Gründen jene Punkte nicht in den Vordergrund traten und des Ansporns von außen bedürfen, um wieder wirksam zu werden.

In einem Wort: Das Verhältnis zwischen Christentum und Hinduismus ist heute ein Verhältnis von Geschwistern, die sich nach Jahrtausenden wieder treffen, die sich ihre Erfahrungen mitzuteilen versuchen und zusammen in die gegenwärtige Situation des Menschen treten. Die Christen werden es vielleicht die Zukunft nennen – die Hindus die Anwesenheit, beiden den wahren und vollen Menschen.”

44. A living together seeks the welfare of all, not just one's own welfare. It is here that the ability to respond interculturally has its place. For as long as such an ability does not function for the welfare of all there cannot be a real intercultural living together. This is indeed the criterion for an effective interculturality.
45. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 189. The quotation continues thus: “The circumspective question as to what this particular thing that is ready-to-hand may be, receives the circumspectively interpretative answer that it is for such and such a purpose [es ist zum...]. If we tell what it is for [des Wozu], we are not simply designating something; but that which is designated is understood as that as which we are to take the thing in question. That which is disclosed in understanding – that which is understood – is already accessible in such a way that its ‘as which’ can be made to stand out explicitly. The ‘as’ makes the structure of the explicitness of something that is understood. It constitutes the interpretation.”
46. Panikkar expresses this in his inimitable style: “God, Man and World are three artificially substantivized forms of the three primordial adjectives which describe Reality.” *Philosophy as Life-Style*, p 206.
47. See Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience* and *Gott, Mensch und Welt. Die Drei-Einheit der Wirklichkeit*.
48. Panikkar, Is History the Measure of Man? Three Kairological Moments of Human Consciousness, p..45: “Historical consciousness is coming to an end. Man is embarking upon a new venture... about which we know only that we shall act the more freely the more we allow the *internal dynamism of our deepest being* to express itself, without projecting beforehand what we are about to do and to be. *We are consciously participating in the very existence of the cosmotheandric reality.*”
49. See Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience* and *Gott, Mensch und Welt. Die Drei-Einheit der Wirklichkeit*.
50. Heidegger, *Being and Time* p. 184: “*Understanding is the existential Being of Dasein's own potentiality-for-Being; and it is so in such a way that this Being discloses in itself what its Being is capable of*” On p.186 Heidegger continues: “*Because understanding, in every case, pertains rather to Dasein's full disclosedness as Being-in-the-world, this diversion of the understanding is an existential modification of projection as a whole.*”

The Encounter of Religions

The Unavoidable Dialogue

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mē phylax tou adelphou mou eimi ego?
Are we perhaps responsible for our brethren?
(*Genesis 4:9*)

Tat tu samamvayāt.
Yes! Due to the mysterious and all-embracing harmony.
(*Brahma Sūtra*, I, 1, 4)¹

This article is a condensed summary of the author's ideas or rather his life experience.²

Although "religion" is an old Latin word its present-day concept is relatively modern and one-sided. Human beings have always known something like religion. Man is *homo religiosus*, insofar as the human race has always been concerned with ultimate questions. Such questions bring about the deepest communication between people, and questions always aspire to dialogue – and are fruit of a prior calling.

A typology of the encounters between religions would point up the following *kairological* moments:³

1. Isolation and ignorance
2. Indifference and contempt
3. Rejection and conquest
4. Coexistence and communication
5. Appropriation and dialogue

To be fruitful, the 'dialogue of religions' must be a genuine dialogue.⁴ The following *sūtra*, which portray several qualities necessary for such a dialogue, are like nine threads (*sūtra*) woven into a single garland (*mālā*), that ought to be taken as a whole.

The Dialogue of Religions is:

1. A vital necessity

Of course the religions of the world do encounter one another, sometimes peacefully, though more often in confrontation and conflict. Such encounters are generally due to political and economic activities. Wars, migrations, trade, as well as the personal encounters of travelers, slaves, merchants and missionaries, have all contributed to the reciprocal influences of religions upon one another. The meeting of religions is so vital that in fact nearly all of today's great religions are the fruits of such encounters. What would Christianity be

today without the deep syncretism stemming from its Jewish, Greek, Roman, and Germanic religious roots? What would what we call Hinduism be without the contributions of the numerous religions of the indic subcontinent?

However, what formerly took place through slow assimilation, osmosis and reactions to spontaneous or consciously sought encounters, has radically accelerated. Today dialogue is not a luxury or a side-issue. The ubiquity of modern science and technology, of world markets, international organizations and transnational corporations, as well as the countless migrations of workers and the flight of millions of refugees – not to mention tourists – makes the meeting of cultures and religions both unavoidable and indispensable. Our current problems of justice, ecology and peace require a mutual understanding of the peoples of the world that is impossible without dialogue.

This vital necessity takes place at three distinct levels:

a) *At personal level*

Modern individualism which, especially in western countries, has seeped slowly and unobtrusively into human consciousness to become an essential ingredient of the modern myth, is gradually giving way – in the West itself – to what has been called dialogical philosophy.⁵ “*Esse est co-esse*,” “*Sein ist Dasein*,” “I and Thou are essentially interrelated,” “*Mensch ist Mitmensch*,” “*Welt ist Umwelt*,” “*Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia*,” “Ecology is ecosophy,” “Thinking is dialogical thinking,” “Man is androgynous,” “Freedom grows with

recognition of necessity,” “There is no private language,” “Reality is cosmotheandric” – these are just a few brief formulations that point to the recovery of an ancient consciousness, although on a new level.

Perhaps one could summarize our problematic in a phrase: Man is not an individual, a monad, but rather a person, a bundle of relationships. And human relationships require dialogue.

In brief, without dialogue, without a dialogical life, Man cannot attain a full humanity. Man is *animal loquens*. But linguisticity is not only external communication; it is most of all inner communion.

Dialogue cannot be confined to an individual exchange of ideas with one's neighbors. Man cannot be reduced to an individual. The principle of individuation must be distinguished from the principle of singularity.⁶ An unfragmented anthropology would show that Man is (and not only *has*) body (*sôma*), soul (*psychê*), community (*polis*), and world (*aiôn*), to which we would still add spirit (*pneuma*).⁷

Nor can dialogue be limited to minor topics. The ultimate questions of human existence demand more than polling the options of others; they require us to enter deeply into the very mystery of reality. Meditation implies listening, and as such it entails dialogue. In a word: Man is a dialogical being. Dialogue is a necessity for being human. To be sure, this does not mean just empty chatter, but genuine religious dialogue – difficult without an authentic liturgical life.

b) At the level of religious traditions

Today the ‘Berlin Walls’ of individualistic religious postures are collapsing, along with the apartheid of exclusivistic belief systems. It is not just from a sociological point of view that we can observe people living in a ‘supermarket’ of ethnic ‘groups,’ religious ‘ways,’ and lifestyle ‘options.’ From an anthropological viewpoint as well, people can no longer lock themselves up behind their safe pillars of orthodoxy. In the school, at the office, in the family, even on the Internet, the most divergent religious (and antireligious) positions come into close contact – which can be unsettling.

We might prefer things to be otherwise, but modern life challenges each of us in the religious depths of our being. To maintain a superficial peace of mind, of course, religious questions are often banished, and religion is too often excluded from the school, the office, the parliament, and the marketplace – in a word, from public life. The religious urge then seeks outlets elsewhere and not always in the best ways.

But this is never enough, never satisfactory. We must learn to handle our religious impulse in other ways.

Has the desacralized West not yet understood from the sustained protest of Islām anything about the price of obliging everybody to fit into the same flat pattern of modern life?

Religions as institutions, no matter how loose and flexible their structures, simply cannot escape the irrepressible winds of ecumenism.

There arise on every level all sorts of mutual influences, bound up with the resulting eclecticisms, syncretisms, inculurations and fundamentalisms of every stripe. All such phenomena stem from these unavoidable encounters.

There have always been mutual influences. But now the winds are blowing not only from the most diverse corners, and often in opposing directions, but they are redoubling their force to the extent that no single compass can be relied upon for guidance.

In short: Traditional religions are headed for shipwreck if they batten down their hatches and try to ride out the storm alone in these conflicting currents. Yet by the same token, they will lose their anchors and their very identity, if they try to avoid the dangers of life on the open sea by seeking safe harbour in the past. One might say that the time of religious ‘party politics’ is gone. But sweeping away all traditions and uprooting every deep-seated custom will not free humanity from further religious wars, and dubious new brands of religion could emerge from the chaos.

Dialogue takes the middle way between the old and the new and makes possible a creative transformation of historical traditions. Without dialogue, religions become tangled up in themselves or slip their moorings altogether. Indeed, one sees more and more clearly today that no tradition has sufficient power within itself to fulfil its own self-proclaimed role. Either they open up to one another, or they degenerate.

c) At the historical level

Man cannot live, in the deepest and widest sense of the word, without reli-

gion. The destiny of humankind depends on whether a genuine religiousness at once links (*religat*) people with the entire reality and safeguards their freedom (*ontonomy*). But the fate of the Earth is also at stake. Human wars not only kill people and their cultures, but also wreak havoc upon the natural world. Modern warfare is no longer merely a human concern. It is ecologically irresponsible to mobilize an army of thousands of soldiers and machines to defend the political or economic status quo. The justified alarms of ecology are today everywhere audible.

But mere *eco-logy* is not enough. A dialogue with the Earth is also required. I have called *ecosophy* this dialogical attitude.⁸ The Earth is not just an object, it is also a Thou for us, with whom we must also learn to enter into dialogue. In this way we would discover that *ecosophy* has a certain revelatory role. Our dialogue with the Earth can reveal how things are – for the future, for the Earth. If we listen, the Earth herself may reveal, in theistic terms, God's will regarding Man's task on this Earth. Or, to use the language of the History of Religions, the revelation of transcendence today comes to pass not only on Sinai, or Mt. Meru, Fuji-san, Kailasa, Kilimanjaro or Popocatepetl. The whole Earth tells us that our destiny is linked (*religatum*) with her.

If a truly religious encounter between ourselves and with the Earth does not take place, we shall end by annihilating life on this Earth. The dialogue of religions is not merely an academic subject matter or an ecclesial or an officially 'religious' affair, much less some

new vogue that has arisen because church services may have become dull or attendance fallen off. This dialogue is the field in which the historical destiny of humankind may be played out in a peaceful way.

Without such a dialogue, the world actually will collapse. Here praxis is decisive, and each of us must contribute to it. But the *urgency* of the task should not make us neglect the *importance* of other aspects of dialogue. Good will alone is indeed not enough.

Thus the dialogue of religions has to be:

2. *Open*

Openness belongs to the essence of dialogue. Dialogue is not instruction or teaching. Every dialogue has two poles, and neither pole can lay down the rules for dialogue on its own. This has a threefold implication:

a) *Nobody is excluded a priori*

Not only is every human being allowed to take part in this dialogue, but every ideology, worldview, and philosophy has the right to participate as well. So-called religions have no monopoly on religion.⁹ What is understood by religion needs to be spelled out in the dialogue. If it is to be a dialogue about the ultimate questions of life and death, then a marxist, a humanist, or a scientist has as much right to speak as any so-called religious person. If one party wants to end the dialogue, however, the other party can always stay open to continuing it. Dialogue keeps the doors open.

In this sense, the expression “encounter” or “dialogue” of “religions” should not be confused with the undertaking of any special group or closed-door assembly. Religion here entails *agora*, *kurukṣetra*, the place where human beings – together with the Earth below and the Sky above – gather to sincerely discuss what matters most to them, their ultimate (and ultimately common) concerns. All are invited, by right and with their own lights, to the feast of Life.

b) *Nothing is left out on principle*

The community of dialogue is not a professional society for experts. It has to do with the most deeply human concerns. Dialogue may implicitly aspire to certain answers, but cannot exclude any answer *a priori*. All possible questions should be allowed to arise and take whatever shape they wish within the dialogue itself.

Not everybody sees every problem in the same way. Dialogue has no set agenda, still less a hidden one. Everything may be called into question, even the appropriateness of dialogue, and of course the initial standpoints of the partners.

Dialogue undoubtedly represents a real risk. We could lose our own standpoint, we could even reverse our own position. Conversion is possible, but also confusion. Everything is at stake. So dialogue requires an enormous confidence in Man – and in that power, order or reality that lets Man be Man. One can easily understand, and even welcome, the warnings made by official institutions against the dangers of dia-

logue. It is also possible that people were indeed happier before they knew how to read and write, as the Pharaoh once complained and Socrates knew all too well. But once we have eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there are paths that cannot be retraced.

I explicitly emphasize that neither God nor religion are necessary assumptions for dialogue. But we have somehow to name this dialogue, and old habits tend to bring such expressions to hand. Their use also hinges on the fact that initiatives for dialogue often come from such sources. But it is all a question basically of open dialogue between people concerning the ultimate questions of reality. Whether the language of dialogue will encourage a more secular idiom remains to be seen, and is of course part and parcel of the dialogue itself. These days, genuine religious dialogue more often than not centres on justice, peace, technocracy, and so on, rather than on hell, *nirvāṇa*, or God.

c) *It is constitutively open*

Dialogue is not some provisional device intended to help people reach unanimity. The goal of dialogue is not the removal of diverse opinions, or the uniformity of the world, or the creation of a single world religion – as if reality itself could or should be reduced to a single principle. This might be an unexpected outcome of the dialogue, but it cannot be an assumption. Something would be lost if the possible pluralistic constitution of truth were to be *a priori* banned. Truth can be reduced neither to unity nor to multiplicity – entertaining the opposite opinion, to be discussed, of course. Truth is always relation, con-

nection, and admits neither singularity nor plurality.¹⁰

Dialogue is an expression of this polarity, inherent to Man and reality as such. Truth itself does not have an exclusively objective structure, since the seeker also belongs to it – and there are different seekers. Truth is always relational. Every human being is an *ontonomous* source of self-understanding. The world cannot be completely seen and interpreted through any single window: We are not only *in* a world, we *are* world. Dialogue is a fruit of the experience of our contingency. No individual, no human group, not even all humanity living at any given time, can embody the absolute measure of truth. Contingency means that we touch (*tangere*) our limits, and that the unlimited touches us (*cum-tangere*) tangentially.

In other words, the open character of dialogue belongs to the very nature of reality. The polarity of reality is a feature of its liveliness. Dialogue is not aimed at the victory of one partner over the other; it is essentially an aspect of human life, of Life as a whole, and of Being itself.

3. *Interior*

Dialogue is not mere talk. It comes from a deeper and more internal source than stimulation by others. This source might be called silence, or maybe just the human thirst for truth. Without such a thirst, dialogue will be trapped in a superficial exchange of opinions. If dialogue is to be any more than manipulating ideas, it has to issue from the deepest recesses of our being. This means that *intrareligious* dialogue is a neces-

sary foundation for *interreligious* dialogue. This interiority is also threefold:

a) *Dialogue begins with an inner questioning*

The Buddhist tradition calls this attitude the Great Doubt, the Christian *compunctio cordis*, *pentos*, and *mumukṣutva* is the Hindu name. A philosophical notion that would serve is humility (*De-mut*), the courage (*der Mut*) to be the servant of a truth that does not belong to any of us in isolation.

If I do not question myself, if I do not feel that *quaestio mihi factus sum* ("I have become a question to myself") of an Augustine; or if I lack a Shankara's fervent longing for liberation; that is, if I am not ready to give up my security or lose my life, as the Gospel would say; if I do not cast myself down at the feet of the master, as in Vedānta; if I am not aware of my contingency or sinfulness, ignorance, or desires, and am not ready to trust with my whole heart and mind in a truth which is not my private possession, then I am not ready for a mature dialogue. Dialogue is nothing to trifle with. It requires discipline, maturity, humility.

Genuine dialogue begins with the sincere questioning of all my certainties – because I have realized, on the one hand, that I am a fragile vessel, and on the other, that there are in this world other vessels whose contents I can scarcely imagine. Dialogue is a basic human attitude. Its ultimate content is not just doctrine. Religion is neither objective doctrine nor subjective viewpoint. Religious dialogue is neither the comparison of two objective states of

affairs, nor the confrontation of two subjective opinions; neither scholarly exchange alone, nor solely ecclesiastical confession. It arises rather from the innermost core of our self, when we discover that we are neither absolute nor alone in this world. Dialogue begins within ourselves. In a certain sense it requires the loss of innocence, of the first (prereflective) innocence. No wonder dialogue presents itself as a way to salvation, transfiguration, enlightenment... We discover that it is not the work of our ego, since it is this very ego that is called into question.

If I have no doubts, if my opinion is already set, if I presume that I have already grasped the whole truth, then I will surely feel no need for dialogue. Dialogue requires such an inner awareness.

b) *It touches the innermost heart of the partners*

One can compare ideas much as one might play cards. One can have rewarding conversations much as one might make a profit in business. But none of this is dialogue. Genuine religious dialogue only sets in when one or the other partner feels concerned, threatened, encouraged, stimulated, provoked, deeply stirred. Nicodemus was no coward when he showed himself willing to go to the master by night for a secret dialogue. Didn't the apostles run away when Jesus began a dialogue with the Samaritan woman? I doubt that such life-transforming dialogues could take place on television. Dialogue is more confession than information.

Something happens in dialogue before the *logos* takes center stage. Ev-

ery genuine dialogue is preceded by a silent moment that lets the dialogue spontaneously emerge. Real dialogue is made possible by this mood, this atmosphere that conveys us to where thoughts have their source, where words take their power, where we meet each other as we truly are. All in all, one could say that a certain sympathy must be there. When I am deeply moved by a book, I wish I could know the living person. If I am stimulated only by the thoughts of a book, I might be curious to ask the author something further, but the desire to get to know the author would not arise. Dialogue can produce "under-standing" only when it "stands under" both grounds, as it were, letting the subterranean streams flow freely. Dialogue breaks new ground by journeying into both the background and the underground, the underworld. Not Hermes but Orpheus is its *devaā*.

c) *Dialogue takes place at the heart of reality*

There is more still. Modern westernized Man has become so anthropocentric and anthropomorphic that we need to be reminded that the hebrew *nefesh* means at once life, heart and nature, as the japanese *kokoro* means heart, soul, consciousness, and feeling – just to give two wholly independent examples. The *corpus Christi mysticum*, the *buddhakāya* and the *dharma kāya* could also be adduced here as examples of different worldviews that believe communication does not require computers, and that the transformation and renovation of reality follows other laws than those of propaganda and data processing.

A true contemplative, whether in her forest hut or in the midst of a big city, can undertake a dialogue with wider consequences than any news item, however exciting, which will probably be replaced tomorrow by a more exciting one. Śāntideva is still alive today and engages us in dialogue not just because of his dialectical power, but because he was a holy Man living at the heart of reality. Seen phenomenologically, holy and wise people are precisely those human beings who most offer the possibility of dialogue with us despite all the barriers of space and time. Nature and animals also figure in dialogues with a good number of holy people. Were they so idiotic as not to know what we all 'know,' that such beings have no human intelligence? Or have we, perhaps, forgotten that dialogue is more than an exchange of what has already been thought? Are *kāma*, *agapē*, *karuṇā*, and love only metaphors?

Dialogue has a mystical core not visible on the surface of human relationships. Something happens to the heart of each partner in dialogue, and something also happens at the inner core of the world. Dialogue lets loose a special *karman*, reaching into the mystical body of reality. When two wise people are talking, the world holds its breath, catching the spirit of this ancient truth.

4. *Linguistic*

Man is *homo loquens*. Language is our gift, and speaking our task. But human words are more than signals for our feelings or signs for our concepts. This world is a symbolic universe, and language the main human organ for participating in the living symbolic real-

ity of that universe. Here, too, I make a threefold distinction.

a) *Dialogue is logos-freighted*

There is actually no word without the *quaternitas* of speaker, spoken to, spoken about, and spoken through – that is, without sender, receiver, message, and medium. A word is a sound uttered to a listener by somebody about something. One could also say: subject, object, content, and means; or: Man, consciousness, idea, and matter.¹¹ Here we want to concentrate on the intellectual side of the *logos*.

Dialogue is an activity of the human *logos*. It has to do with ideas, thoughts, interpretations, doctrines, views, and insights. Each of us is, consciously or unconsciously, the carrier of a whole tradition, conveying an entire world. Dialogue makes this explicit. We do not say only what we guess or what occurs to us. Genuine dialogue is freighted with the burden and the dignity of the speaker's tradition. In dialogue I express my thoughts; but these thoughts, though thought by me, reveal a past and an environment of which I am scarcely aware. The partner discovers that I live and speak with tacit presuppositions. And our speech also reveals the unspoken. When the village elder closes his address in the *palaver* of an african village, the headman says: "We understand both what you have said and what you have not said!" Here we should strongly emphasize that in no genuine religious dialogue can the *Anstrengung des Begriffes* ("struggle with concepts") be avoided. We are dealing with states of affairs whose in-

telligibility cannot be sacrificed. It would be irresponsible to involve oneself in dialogue about some religious view without being thoroughly versed in it. There cannot, for instance, be much fruitful dialogue about God, hell, *karman*, or *śūnyatā*, if we subscribe only to ridiculous caricatures of such notions. We speak words, but words have their own sense – and even their own power. No responsible speaker can ignore this sense or neglect this power. Awe before the word is the gateway to its contents.

Man speaks about something but what is said does not completely ‘cover’ this something. The ‘something’ itself has more than an only rational core. Man is not only reason, or only reasonable, but without reason humanness is not possible. Reason itself is a participation in a supraindividual *nomos*.

b) *Dialogue is also duologue*

Dialogue requires the encounter, and may even demand the confrontation, of two *logoi*. ‘Duologue’ does not mean two monologues, but entrusting to the other (without condescension) ideas, thoughts, insights, experiences – lives – that really meet, although they derive from distant sources and may even clash. This requires that the dialogue go both ways from the outset. Wanting to understand the other makes up only half the platform for a genuine dialogue. I myself have to be ready *to be understood* by the partner, and also prepared for possible misunderstanding. And the same goes for the other side. The other “side” is neither a wall nor a projection of myself. She is a real ‘I’ –

that is, an autonomous source of self-consciousness, which reacts simultaneously to me in a mutual I-Thou and Thou-I relationship. But in order to recognize the other as a Thou, many an adventure must come to pass *between* us. “True dialogue is not a monologue of the lonely thinker with himself,” wrote Feuerbach, in forging a place for the Thou.¹²

The Vedantic tradition speaks of *śravana* (listening), *manana* (reflection), and *nididhyāsana* (active contemplation) as a threefold method for dialogue. The Christian may ask the Buddhist why he does not acknowledge any God, but should also let himself be asked why he does not acknowledge any *śūnyatā* (emptiness). The Hindu may ask the muslim how he can avoid theocracy, but he in turn must allow himself to be asked how he can overcome anarchy, especially moral anarchy. In other words: dialogue actually has to run in two directions. It has to be intercultural and interreligious. Duologue is not aimed at eliciting correct answers to a given set of questions. Questions are also addressed to us, which may not be our own original queries.

The word *duologue* also contains another important and often forgotten meaning. Note that I say ‘duologue’ and not ‘multilogue.’ A duologue is possible when a common field can be established in which the discussion is meaningful. Each language is dialogical because it is directed to a listener – or to those who understand that language. The Hindu-Christian dialogue, for instance, builds a language that is not suitable for a Jewish-Christian dialogue. Here we have to

withstand the modern temptation, originating in the natural sciences, of wanting to arrive at universal laws by reducing all phenomena to fit scientific parameters. People and cultures are qualitatively different and simply do not allow themselves to be reduced to any common (even if qualitative) denominator.

c) *Dialogue means bilingualism*

To believe that through a single language we should have access to universal thinking and to human experience as a whole, is yet one more remnant of a (generally unconscious) colonialistic attitude. A genuine dialogue not only requires that each partner express herself, but that each speak her own language. Not everything can be said in English – leaving aside the fact that only ten per cent of humankind thinks in this language. Not even Indo-European languages are the measure of all things. Syntax belongs to human ways of reaching intelligibility. The simple fact of changing the disposition of a sentence already betrays another structure of thinking. The word *religion* has a dozen homeomorphic equivalents in the Indic languages, just as the word *dharma* has scores of English equivalents.

Languages do not easily let themselves be dismembered into words. Each language is a way of living, a way of being in the world, and reflects an entire worldview. For all people to speak only a so-called *lingua universalis* would be a devastating cultural and human impoverishment. It is staggering to realize that the world today is losing about a hundred languages a year; these are cultural genocides! Dialogue, I re-

peat, requires at least two languages to take part. No authentic dialogue can come about if the Thou does not show herself in it. Dialogue happens between people and not between ideas, still less between answering machines. But to discover the Thou one has to go to the very source of the dialogue. One has to really know the partner, not just hear what she says. Textual hermeneutics is not enough; one has to understand, which implies real communication, sympathy and also love. We need to know the context and be aware of the pretext of which texts are the expressions.

For each Man to speak his own language does not mean simply that each uses his own grammar or brings in his own feelings about the world. It also means that each Man is to be considered a unique source of self-understanding. The vital space for human dialogue and encounter lies exactly between sheer subjectivity and pure objectivity. Man is Man in encounter.

5. *Political*

In many countries of the world today, academics and churches enjoy freedom provided they do not threaten the status quo of the State. Institutionalized religions can go on relatively undisturbed, so long as they acknowledge the unquestionable sovereignty of the State – although, depending on the State, the scope of their freedom may vary drastically. Nevertheless, real religious dialogue cannot be satisfied with this. It cannot acknowledge the political status quo as something absolutely untouchable. Paradoxically enough, nothing enmeshed in space and time can be ultimate for the religious spirit. Religious

dialogue is also political, and therefore neither politically neutral nor universal. Socrates was a religious sage, Jesus a religious Man, Al-Hallaj a religious mystic. All three were engaged in dialogue. And all three were (politically) sentenced to death.

Here also we may stress three points:

a) *Dialogue is not a private affair*

Religion cannot be a private matter, because Man is not a mere individual and religion is a holistic human affair. Religion cannot be separated from politics. This refers not only to religious institutions, necessarily political structures, but also to religion as an anthropological dimension. Even if somebody wants to defend the idea of religion as purely an interior affair, religious dialogue about it will belong to the community and display a political character. It belongs to the *polis* (as public life), in both direct and indirect ways.¹³

Dialogue changes the self-perception of the participants and so of the religions concerned, which in turn (together with other factors) shape the life of the *polis*. But dialogue is also a political activity in more direct ways. Dialogue may have its roots in the human heart, but its fruits are visible and ready to be harvested in the *agora*. We need not think only of India, Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Palestina, Cuba, Ethiopia, the Vatican, and so forth, where religious dialogue is obviously political. We mean, rather, that in principle every interreligious encounter touches on human issues that directly influence the

life of the *polis*. Trinity also implicates social relations; death requires disposal of the corpses; sacraments have equally to do with initiation, health, and weddings; God implies social authority; justification (righteousness) includes justice; and so on. All this belongs to public, political life.

In the final analysis, religion is not a private matter because Man himself is not a private ‘thing’, and indeed not only morally, insofar as we bear social responsibilities, but ontologically, insofar as the human condition is not the private property of any individual. What is whispered in the ear is soon shouted from the rooftops. All the personal pronouns belong to each other: There is no I without Thou – and without all the other pronouns in the masculine, feminine, neuter, dual, and plural – and also viceversa. Dialogue is a public activity of such a kind that it is related to the very foundations of any political action. To bar dialogue on political problems would render politics entirely barren and irrelevant. It would not only mean accepting the political status quo, but holding it in higher regard than any religion. The Big 7 (or 8), Sudan, India, and many other States are not only geopolitical entities, they are also multireligious realities. The mistake of Christian missionaries in Asia, for example, was to suppose that they might have a Christian dialogue with Asian religions without taking into account the fact of the colonial domination. By the same token, a Hindu-Muslim dialogue won’t bear much fruit if it is uprooted from the current sociopolitical situation.¹⁴

b) *Dialogue is a theory-laden praxis that produces new theories*

The dialectic of theory and praxis is superseded in dialogue. Dialogue is a praxis stemming from a theory and leading to another praxis, which will in turn serve as the basis for a new theory. Theories are tested and appraised on the grounds of dialogical praxis, which in turn lets new theories arise. Dialogue is a praxis that not only deepens and transforms ideas, but also transforms actions and attitudes. The place of dialogue is not reduced to the lecture room or the temple, but embraces the *polis*. Every dialogue, as an encounter of real people and not just a confrontation of concepts, has a political character. Every discussion between people engages the power and the life of the *polis*. The religious dialogue is, moreover, political to a higher degree. It calls into question not merely minor means to minor ends, but the very foundations of human existence, on which political life is also based.

As a constitutive human activity dialogue corrects the neoplatonic ideal of the purely theoretical life as an end in itself, superior to practical life, which was considered to be merely a means directed toward a goal. The goal then was pure theory. It stood above politics. It goes without saying that such a view of theoretical versus practical life would consider dialogue merely another means for preaching the truth, that is, for converting the partner. When Christianity, for instance, began to call for dialogue in the so-called mission lands, non-Christians suspected this was merely a

new strategy for the old proselytism. It must be clearly stated that such an attitude is remote from any truly dialogical spirit. Dialogue is not a technique in the hands of either partner. This is not to say anything against the primacy of contemplation. To the contrary, it means that contemplation is not pure theory. *Contemplatio* is indeed an action so penetrated by theory that they both, theory as well as praxis, converge in a nondualistic harmony – namely, the harmony of being what Being itself is: an act.

Dialogue in this sense means, on the one hand, that no single person can possess the whole truth and, on the other hand, that truth itself is not any purely objective ‘thing’.¹⁵

In other words, human confrontation in the struggle for truth belongs to the human *polis*. Politics does not mean just applying the most effective means, but also the disclosure, realization, conquest, and discussion of the aim of human life.

c) *The contents of religious dialogues also have a political context*

If an uncritical mixing of religion and politics leads to totalitarian structures on either the religious side (theocracy) or the political side (State totalitarianism), their separation leads to otherworldly religion (purely abstract doctrines) and decadent party-politics (mere debate over means and power). The solution to the dilemma lies in a nondualistic view of both.¹⁶ It is a fact that the most burning religious dilemmas of our time have political contents.

No religious dialogue can bypass the meaning of ‘salvation’ for Man, letting ‘salvation’ stand here for the ultimate meaning of life. No dialogue on righteousness, for example, can leave aside the issue of justice, and no consideration of justice can overlook the sociopolitical-economic problems of the world. To discuss peace without considering the *pax civilis* is no longer acceptable, just as talks about *jihad* and ‘just war’ cannot ignore the existing political situation.¹⁷

It is equally true to say that the political problems of the world also have a religious character. The dialogue of religions is not solely within the purview of religious institutions. The religious dimension of Man permeates each and every political activity. To claim, for instance, that the priests of the Catholic Church or the *mullahs* of Islām or the Buddhist *bhikkus* should not involve themselves in politics is already a political decision regarding religion. Problems of health, education, and human welfare have a religious character as well, and are never solely technical functions for bureaucracies to solve. To go back to the controversy between Galileo Galilei and Roberto Bellarmino: the movements of the heavens which Galileo first calculated and the existential reality of heaven in which both believed can neither be totally split off from one another, nor can they remain wholly undifferentiated. There is no theology without some cosmological basis, just as there is no entirely untheological cosmology. Autonomy is as unsatisfactory as heteronomy. The healthy connection is *ontonomic*.¹⁸ The relationship is nondualistic.

It should be evident, therefore, that the dialogue of religions is not walled up in the enclosures of ‘religious’ institutions. It stands or falls in the midst of life. It is not some special area of competence solely for so-called theologians or religious ‘leaders’, much less for academic ‘experts’. Shutting out religion from the public forum is as lethal as conceding the political dominion of the clergy. The genuine dialogue of religions liberates Man from human fragmentation and hyperspecialization. Expertise in delimited fields is justified and necessary, but in the domain of the religious dialogue humanness itself is at stake.

6. *Mythical*

A *dia-logos* not only means proceeding via the *logos*, dealing with the *logos* alone; it also means breaking through the *logos* – *dia ton logon*, ferrying across the *logos* – to the *mythos*. Maybe the weakest pillar of the so-called Enlightenment, held from Descartes to Bultmann via Kant and the modern natural sciences, is the naive belief that in principle everything can be cleared up through reason, human or divine. Many people still dream of a *mathesis universalis*, holding to the theoretical possibility of grasping reality with mathematical language, as if reality could be apprehended by a supercomputer. Reason is the critical power of Man that lets us be self-conscious. Tellingly enough, Kant spoke in an unconsciously self-defeating way about ‘pure’ reason, which, to begin with, is so pure that it stays above and beyond every critique.¹⁹ Reason is assumed from the start; it stands as a

mythical *Gestalt*. One always forgets or overlooks one's own *mythos*. And, after all, *mythos* and *logos* belong together. The dialogue of religions, if it is at all alive, cannot leave the *mythos* outside the dialogue.²⁰ Here, too, three aspects of this process may be stressed:

a) ***Dialogue pierces through the logos and leaves the mythos open***

Concepts are important, even necessary, but they are never enough to bring about an integral encounter between people or between religious traditions. A dialogue with concepts alone remains merely dialectics. Dialogical dialogue is more – not less – than debate or rational discussions. In the dialogical dialogue, we are conscious that the concepts we use spring from a deeper source. I not only let the other know me but I come to know my own *mythos* better through the critiques and disclosures of my partner. Dialogical dialogue strives neither for victory in the contest of ideas, nor for an agreement that would suppress real diversity of opinions. Rather, dialogical dialogue seeks to expand the field of understanding altogether, by each partner deepening his or her own field and opening up a possible place for the not (yet?) understood. This is not the scandal it was for Descartes, because neither party absolutizes its own standpoint.

Every religion lives out of its own *mythos*, the cauldron of magma from which the *logos* bubbles up to congeal in conceptual structures and doctrines. This *mythos* as a starting point is not a logical postulate. Rather, it undergirds

the tacit presuppositions that form each tradition's horizon of intelligibility, over against which its ideas are seen to make sense.

A dialogue of religions that doesn't take into account this disparity of horizons would find itself permanently enmired in misunderstandings, and would never reach the ground out of which each tradition takes its own self-understanding. What this means is that the encounter of religions cannot be reduced to a comparison of doctrines. Each religion is like a galaxy, simultaneously shaping its own criteria of thinking and its own criteria of truth and reality as well. In order, therefore, to draw valid comparisons, one must come to acknowledge what I call 'homeomorphic equivalents'.²¹

Strictly speaking, there can be no comparative science of religions, nor even a comparative philosophy.²² There is no neutral (a-religious or a-philosophical) standpoint.²³ All this opens us to the *mythos*. But myths in this sense cannot be compared; they are literally incomparable. They are that which makes every comparison possible, by offering the horizon within which any comparison would have to be carried out. Of course, concepts and doctrines can be compared, but only over against the backdrop of a previously accepted standpoint.

This is why encounters not directly aimed at scholarly or dogmatic ends are so important. *Satsangs*, festivals, shared meals and meetings of all kinds, collaborations and contributions to joint projects, hospitality and the simplest acts of sociability often turn out to be

the most important and empowering instances of dialogue.

b) *Dialogue between religions strives to participate in their respective pisteumata*

The life of religions, whether manifest in articulated dogmas, general insights, interpreted experiences, performed rites or applied symbols, may be summarized in a single word: belief. Religion is a matter of belief. Belief is the overarching *mythos* that makes possible the various manifestations that constitute religion. The *mythos* could in fact be considered the aggregate of the tacit conditions of possibility (and thus credibility) of any given state of affairs. Consequently, the dialogue of religions must be a *dialogue of beliefs*. To understand a religion, you have to know its beliefs. Dialogue arises from belief and is about belief. But how is such a dialogue to be sustained? Can one make sense of belief statements without partaking in the belief?

Stimulated by Husserl's phenomenology, which speaks of the *noêma* as the pure content of an eidetic intuition, I have ventured to introduce the notion of *pisteuma*. We think (*noein*) the thought (*noêma*) through the act of thinking (*noësis*); that is, through the operation of *noësis* we reach the *noêma* as the pure intentional content of our consciousness; but the *noêma* does not allow us to attribute any objective truth or existential reality to itself. Paralleling this, the belief (*pistis*) is also really a *sui generis* awareness, pointing to the *pisteuma* of the believer – that which the believer takes to be the case. But the

pisteuma of the believer will appear to the outsider as the *noêma* of the believer which is not shared by the external observer. In other words, the nonbeliever can perceive what the believer says (for instance: “Tārā is the merciful divine mother who should be worshipped”), but the nonbeliever cannot understand, that is, carry out that belief. The nonbeliever in Tārā will not perceive the *pisteuma* of the believer. If at all one will reach a certain *noêma* different from the *pisteuma*. One cannot therefore speak meaningfully about the *pisteuma* if one does not share in it. What one can describe is the contents of one's own consciousness, namely the *noêma*, but not the *pisteuma* of the believer.

What the believer believes is not a rational *noêma* that can be mediated (by the outsider's understanding), but the believer's own *pisteuma*, which is what the believer believes. If I do not penetrate into this *pisteuma*, I cannot describe what the believer believes but only what I, from my viewpoint, suppose the believer holds to be true. But I cannot reach the *pisteuma* qua *pisteuma* if I do not believe what the believer believes.

Should this mean that every treasure of belief (*thesaurum fidei*), as some religions themselves express it, will remain unmediated and incomprehensible? Not at all! It means only that without dialogue the way will be blocked. To reach the *pisteuma* of the other I must somehow hold that *pisteuma* to be true, that is, I also need to believe what the other believes. In other words, the belief of the believer belongs essentially to that which the believer believes. If I

do not partake in this belief, we shall end up speaking at cross purposes from two incompatible platforms: my representation and the other's belief; my *noêma* and the other's *pisteuma*. The *noêmata* of religious phenomenology are in fact *pisteumata*.

I said that I must somehow partake in the belief of the partner if I really wish to meet her. This "somehow" means that I have to have access to her *mythos*.²⁴ Dialogue is the way to a new and truly religious phenomenology. Only in this way can many of the misunderstandings that have so often vexed the history of religions be cleared up. It leads not only to religious tolerance, but to a new interpretation of religion altogether.

Here the distinction between faith and belief becomes paramount. Belief expresses itself in statements. Faith manifests itself in life. Faith is a constitutive human dimension. Belief is a particular formulation of that faith. In this sense, the fact that people can honestly express their faith in different statements of belief is but a natural manifestation of the diversity of cultures and religions.

c) *Sharing in the same mythos sets the limits of dialogue*

Genuine and deep dialogue with one another is not always possible. The partners have to share the same myth, standing at least partially under the same horizon of intelligibility. Certainly, this common myth must emerge slowly in the encounter itself, but as long as it is not shared religious communication will not be possible. A tree is always a tree so long as people find it in the field of

their sensory perception; but no deep understanding will come about if for one person the tree is just a vegetable computer and for the other it is a body inhabited by a spirit. If they were to say they do not understand one another, they would come far closer to communicating than when one stigmatizes the other for 'talking nonsense,' or when one reduces the other to one's own categories. When they are aware that they do not understand each other, and then try again to find a new basis for possible understanding, this is a dialogical lesson. Success is never guaranteed, but the *attempt* itself is dialogue.

Modernity generates intercultural myths. For instance, the *humanum*, democracy, peace, secularity and so forth are myths that have a certain interreligious validity. Only insofar as we share such a myth can we really communicate with one another. On the other hand, a common myth tends to make doctrinal differences all the more acute. Neighboring religions, for instance, have often developed opposing attitudes that – despite similarities at the mythic level – make understanding particularly difficult, while it sometimes comes more easily for distant religions where a certain reciprocal sympathy has been cultivated. As a single example, Christians and jews are often victims of mutual antipathies in spite of the basic similarities of many of their beliefs.

7. *Religious*

The winds of dialogue today blowing ever stronger, even as new and higher walls are erected against it, represents far more than a new fashion or a

new strategy on the part of some old religious traditions to pull themselves out of a certain stagnation. It has itself a religious spirit. Dialogue in itself is an authentic manifestation of religiosity. Even the fear of the arch-conservatives, who see in dialogue only danger for the established religions, bear witness to the revolutionary character of dialogue. The dialogue of religions in fact pulls down the walls of religious ‘nationalisms.’ In spite of latter-day changes, the old saying, *cuius regio eius religio*, is all too often still valid: Religion follows after whoever holds power. The dialogue of religions frees spiritualities from rigid doctrinal frames and creates new connections that vault over all the boundaries that have been so finely drawn between religions. For too long religions, while claiming to connect (*religio*) us to the divine (infinite, transcendence or mystery), have tended to neglect the human connections. One all too easily forgets the “religion of Man.”²⁵ Religion has to do not only with God, but also and preeminently with “Man.” This opens up the way for a new religiosity whose forms are yet to be found. By no means does this demean the genuine religious spirit, as the three following considerations should demonstrate.

a) ***An ultimate source of dialogue is the experience of one's own inadequacy***

I have already mentioned the experience of contingency – that is, our touching (*cum-tangere*) of boundaries – the experience of our own inability to know the human condition fully. This does not mean that an individual can-

not find its own salvation in its own, relatively isolated tradition. Not everybody is obliged to explicitly undertake dialogue. But since the traditions themselves are the fruits of past dialogues, the roots of religious dialogue reach down to the very origins of humankind itself.

What I am saying is that the mature or contemplative person renounces any absolute claims. The religion of one’s neighbor becomes a personal matter, the diversity of religions a philosophical (or theological) problem, the situation of the world something that deeply concerns us all. Salvation, liberation, bliss, realization, enlightenment, redemption – as well as justice, peace, human fulfillment, or whatever – are not just individual problems. They require collaboration, solidarity, a growing awareness of human and cosmic *interdependence*. Dialogue is the way to overcome solipsisms and egoisms of every kind. We realize our own selves insofar as we actively participate in the fate of the entire cosmos. Is this not a religious matter?

b) ***The new dialogue contributes to the purification of religions***

The history of religions shows, without exception to my knowledge, that not only have the most sublime achievements of the human spirit been accomplished in the name of religion, but the darkest deviations from human dignity as well. Fanaticism is a well-known religious weed. The dialogue of religions today offers a medication and represents a purification. Institutionalized religions have too often been hin-

drances to peace and given their blessings to wars – even in our own lifetimes. The dialogue of religions does not seek to abolish religions. It does not intend to reduce all religions to the lowest common denominator or to establish some generalized and superficial religiosity. It opens up a middle way between, on one side, all the well-guarded religious fortresses waging war with one another from their high hills – where every castle claims that salvation lies solely within its walls – and, on the other, a tedious stay in the shallow valleys of human indolence and indecision where every religion loses its identity and specific values. This middle way avoids war, hot or cold, open or treacherous, and at the same time avoids indifference, as if all religions amounted to the same or said the same things. Dialogue opens wide the way of conversation – precisely because religions are different, and often seem to be opposed and incompatible. It smooths out the ways, and may also build bridges over the trenches that separate the various religious castles. It invites new people into the common life of the human family, without uprooting them from the native soil of their own traditions. It weaves a net of connections that relates and transforms the world of religions. And this open character of the dialogue belongs to the dynamic of the religious spirit altogether.

c) *Dialogue is itself a religious act*

When we engage ourselves in the dialogue of religions we are also undoubtedly striving for the salvation – the healing, making whole – of the entire world. Love for one's fellows, patience, humility, gentleness, forgiveness, asceti-

cism, renunciation, belief, trust, honesty – the list is endless – are essential virtues for authentic religious dialogue. Is this in itself not enough to demonstrate its religious character?

In this sense, dialogue has its own meaning and it is impossible to turn it awry or misuse it as some sort of strategy for proselytism. Dialogue requires itself a kind of inner conversion and cannot be a means for winning the other over to our point of view. I strive for truth and may even believe that I have found the truth in my religion. But I am not the only seeker of truth. If I am humble in my seeking – that is to say, honest – I will not only feel respect for the search of others, but would even like to join them – not just because more eyes see better than two, but for a deeper reason: The others are not only seekers of truth, but sources of knowledge. Man is not just an object or a bare subject looking for objectivity, but also a microcosm and a *microtheos*, *brahman* itself (although with qualifications), a temple of the Holy Spirit, a vessel able to give and receive, a contributor to the shaping of reality. Man's nature includes self-understanding and this self-understanding is not only my individual privilege. Therefore, I will not fully understand myself without somehow understanding others – which is impossible without a certain dialogue. I am not interested in others out of idle curiosity, their pilgrimage crosses my own path and, therefore, concerns me. The search for truth is not about stalking an object, it is about letting oneself be possessed by truth and, as far as possible, partaking in the fate of all the others. This is certainly a religious activity.

Today especially for many people bringing about peace among the religions and promoting mutual trust amounts to a genuine religious activity, undisturbed by the fact of one's belonging to a particular tradition. To be sure, it is not irrelevant whether the highest name be *tao*, *kami*, *śūnyatā*, God, Śiva, Allah, Yahweh, Truth, Justice, Freedom or Humanity; it is important and helps us keep our identity. But it is no less important to avoid invoking those names that bring people to hate, to fight, and to slaughter one another. It is no less important to relativize our respective Absolutes – which does not mean that they cease to be Absolutes *for us*. Relativity is not relativism. Besides this, many people today do not feel capable of sorting out all those names and may fall prey to an indifference that is not always healthy. But one thing is sure: all this bickering between religions is not salutary, and peace and harmony are human imperatives of the highest order. Maybe this represents a new myth *in statu nascendi*: the myth that makes us see religions as factors of peace, and the striving for peace as a manifestly religious activity.

8. *Whole*

It should be clear from what I have said that the encounter of religions is not merely a task for specialists. The praxis of dialogue is a way of being religious, a religious activity, and this also applies to reflections on the theory of dialogue. In our day, when so many human concerns have been hyperspecialized, this needs special emphasis. Again, three headings will suffice:

a) *Dialogue is a holistic activity*

Nobody is an expert at dialogue, because each dialogue is unique. One cannot specialize in religious dialogue, it belongs to religious life in the present. It is the whole Man, precisely as Man (*anthrōpos*), who is engaged in it. In a genuine dialogue, we do not defend ideologies or orthodoxies, but stand there, naked and vulnerable, without preconditions or hidden agendas. To truly love the neighbour implies (requires) to know the neighbour. As people encountering other people, we express our deepest convictions and try to adapt ourselves sufficiently to the worldview of the other to make ourselves understood and to overcome our solipsism. We may even tremble at the prospect of such a dialogue, or maybe bow out if the challenge seems too great or too risky – just as some prophets took fright at their own calling. The dialogue of religions is not a parliament where party discipline is the rule and members speak for their own party or coalition. Something more important – indeed everything – is at stake. The stage of dialogue is life, and life with its own risks and surprises. All the rest is playacting, psychological or sociological role-playing – if not mere careerism. Whoever balks before these dangers should not be entering the *agora* of dialogue.

Of course none of these considerations preclude establishing a certain order or selecting a topic for a given dialogue. But the business of sticking to the topic should be voluntary on both sides, so that a partner might well depart from the topic if it seems appropriate to do so. More important, although

the topic may be very specific, every participant comes to the dialogue as a whole person.

How often one embarks on a purely scholarly dialogue and ends up in politics or in the personal! But this is all to the good. It demonstrates that dialogue cannot be artificially limited. The preparation for dialogue must be practical and theoretical, but also personal. Dialogue pervades the whole Man.

b) *Dialogue has a liturgical nature*

Modern western desacralized languages do not have a proper word for this point. If I were to say that dialogue should be a rite or represent a cultic act, I should still have to explain what I mean by ‘rite’ or ‘cult.’ I prefer to speak of a liturgical act, fully aware that this word also requires explanation.²⁶ Liturgy, properly understood, means the work (*ergon*) of the people (*laos*), where this work is inspired by the Spirit. It is a synergy that gathers all the “three worlds” – the cosmic, the human, and the divine.

The dialogue of religions as a liturgical act manifests the nonduality of theory and praxis, of individual and community, politics and religion, the divine and the human. Dialogue is not a new religion. It is a liturgy to which everybody and everything is invited, aiming to transform all things while retaining the identity of all the parts and participants. Every liturgy is a process of transformation, a transfiguration.

Religions enter dialogue as they would a liturgy, to celebrate – each in its own way – the wonder of life (or whatever each religion would call it).

Each religion may believe to represent the highest truth and to play the leading role, but each is also ready to listen to the other and to let the play of life play itself out, without violence or cunning. Something happens in dialogue that is not controllable from any one side. The risk is endured because there is confidence. Many slanders and suspicions are extinguished by themselves.

I have been insisting for some time that every dialogue is a *communicatio in sacris*, a holy communion, without which no human community can truly be.²⁷

b) *Dialogical play takes on a cosmic role*

What is the encounter of religions really all about? Is it about my encounter, as an individual hindu, with Islām? About all those beautifully printed books on the various religious worldviews? About a fad for young people or a crisis for their elders? It is much more – not less – than this.

The recent divorce of epistemology and ontology, stemming from the so-called Enlightenment, makes it difficult for modern westernized people to understand that the encounter of religions means something more than merely an encounter of ideas, systems, or, at most, individuals. It is all of this, of course, but it is also an encounter of religions, in the sense of the subjective genitive (muted in contemporary English). Religions themselves encounter one another as historical and cosmic forms. The encounter belongs essentially to religion. Each religion is an encounter. Religions are powerful forces

in human history and the cosmos at large. The encounter of religions is like the encounter of galaxies; and it represents, similarly, an astrological event. The history of the world is touched by it; the very destiny of the world may be influenced by this encounter. Otherwise, there is a disaster – a *dis-astrum*: a collision of stars!

If we take religions seriously, as they took themselves in their heydays, if we consider that every religion brings along its corresponding worldview, if we do not take the myth of history for the only valid myth, then the encounter of religions is also a cosmic act for our times; it is an event which occurs with our cooperation – but only *co-operation*. It belongs to the *kairos* of our world, to the destiny of this *kalpa*, to the challenge of contemporary history. It is not that some clever individuals have discovered we cannot go on like this as before. It is rather that some people have uncovered something already written in the stars, felt the freshening spirit of a new dawn about to shine, discovered that the growth of Man demands something like a turning point, that religions themselves are opening up and aspiring to take together this new step into the depths and heights of reality. Indeed, something is moving in those spheres, something that belongs to the very dynamism of Being. After all, human history and the life story of the Earth are both incomprehensible without religions. What an array of changes have come about in the Islamic world, the Christian world, and the world of animistic traditions! And this is not the work of any single caliph or pope or

chieftain, it is the achievement of what we call religion.

Each culture will use different ways of speaking. The main thing is not to absolutize any single cosmology. As I have said, the encounter of religions is more than small talk here and there, or a gratifying increase of tolerance between this or that group of people. It may be hard for some to believe but what is happening before our eyes has cosmic proportions. Do we need to cite here the metaphor of the “butterfly effect,” so widely reported by modern “chaos” theory in the sciences?

9. *Unfinished*

The encounter of religions is an ongoing process. It is always on the way. Its goal is not to arrive at complete unanimity, or to mix up all the religions, but rather communication, sympathy, love, polar complementarity. Life wants to live and not slip away into death. Being is a verb. Reality is polar, dynamic – trinitarian, I would add. The strongest harmony, as Heraklitos said, is the hidden one: *harmonia aphanēs phanerēs kreittōn*.

Here, too, I pursue a *triloka*:

- a) *Dialogue remains always provisional, a continuous process*

Because dialogue represents an end in itself, the goal is not to complete it – and therefore render it, at some time or other, superfluous. The completion of dialogue is not a finale, but a continuous performance. This constitutive provisionality does not imply relativism, but relativity; nor does it mean that dia-

logue does not or cannot provide specific answers to particular questions. What it means is that every answer is relative to its question, and that the question itself only appears as a question in relation to a given state of affairs. Dialogue does not give definitive answers, because there are no definitive questions.

Dialogue is also provisional in the sense that there is never a completed dialogue. Not only does dialogue never finish, but it is never exhausted. This openness not only vouches for its dynamism, its tolerance, and novelty, but also reveals the impossibility of absolutes. Answers are never definitive; there is always room for supplements, corrections, continuations. Dialogue is continuous. It remains ever unfinished, and yet, any actual dialogue has itself a genuine completeness – an end in itself. Perhaps it is useful to recall here the scientific metaphor of a self-expanding and self-organizing universe.

b) *Dialogue is trinitarian*

This provisionality reflects the human situation. It is not properly a weakness of dialogue as such. The dialogue we are talking about is not dialectical but dialogical, as we have stated. The dialectical dialogue sets thesis over against antithesis and aims at a synthesis. It is dualistic. The dialogical dialogue is a never-ending process, it belongs to the very life of Man. The relationship itself remains constitutively open, properly displaying a triadic structure. This is not because there may be three *logoi* but because the process itself brings the two participating *logoi* into an open space which will not permit the dialogue to collapse entirely or

be utterly extinguished. There is *pneuma*, spirit behind any *logos*. A classical word for this openness is transcendence. And transcendence experienced in the ordinary course of dialogue. No single participant, nor even all the participants together, have the whole of reality at their disposal. We dialogue about something that transcends us, something we cannot dispose of at will. There is always something that lets the dialogue arise. This ‘something’ lies beyond the power of any participant. One could say that both partners are transcended by a third, whether called God, Truth, *Logos*, *karma*, mercy, compassion, or whatever. This ‘third,’ around which the dialogue flares up, thwarts any manipulation from either side. We are not the absolute rulers of religious dialogue. And the situation is all the more striking in that any judge coming from the outside is out of the question. Dialogue is not a ceremonial dispute in front of judges.

A scientific discussion can and properly should clarify whatever postulates it requires. We can speak about speed, spin, entropy, or whatever, once we have defined our terms. We may then discuss laws, relationships, and mathematical structures, or empirical confirmations of hypotheses. But when our dialogue turns to the good, God, human destiny, justice, or liberation, then my opinion is no more than an invitation to hear a corresponding opinion from the other side. And this makes it possible to begin the dialogue without having in hand the positive criterion of an independent judge. Logical contradiction may be a negative criterion. In a rational dialogue we cannot allow anything

totally contradictory in itself. But religious dialogue is not bound to be only rational, even though it cannot be irrational, if it is to be truly *dia-logos*.

This ‘third’ dimension may be quite inaccessible to our thought, in as much as we cannot with our thoughts infringe the laws of thinking. The ‘third’ element is not bound by our ways of thinking. Nevertheless, we raise the claim to have this ‘third’ in the dialogue because we are aware of our limits – of our contingency. Some partners may claim, even if only through reason, to have access to a revelation, but every partner stops at an ultimate horizon over against which our words make sense. *Anagkē stēnai!*, said the Greeks: “We have to stop somewhere.” This ‘somewhere’ is the mystery, the myth. Only by expressing our differences while attentive to this third is dialogue realized. In other words, Heaven and Earth also take part in the dialogue, and bear witness to all that we human beings have to say to one another.

It is this trinitarian structure that vouches for the openness and continuous process of dialogue. The invisible third partner is not necessarily a self-sufficient, immutable Essence or an all-knowing ‘God’. The partners should not be bound to platonic or theistic foundations. But this third element of dialogue is nonetheless there: A Spirit that breathes where, when, and however she will.

c) *The ultimate character of dialogue is its imperfection*

The human constitution is dialogical. Polarity belongs to the essence of

Man and reality alike. Religious dialogue brings up our deepest humanness.

I am speaking about the ultimate structure of dialogue, since at other levels dialogue may well dispel many human errors, deepen all sorts of insights, and replace unconvincing opinions with better ones. Religions may purify themselves and discard unpleasant rites, moribund symbols, outdated dogmas, and so forth. Through dialogue, insights are deepened and convictions transformed.

But here I wish to get at something else. Each actual dialogue, I said, is complete in itself because it is not a means for something else outside the dialogue itself. And yet, paradoxically, it is not perfect (*perficere*), finished (*teleios*), as if nothing else could be added. Dialogue belongs to human life, and life is constant novelty. We go on engaged in dialogue as we proceed living in symbiosis with heaven and earth without ever exhausting the fullness of life. The dialogical activity belongs to that level.

Here lies the deeper anthropological and cosmic structure of dialogue. Its foundation lies in the fact that no human being can properly claim to have access to the whole truth of the human race. An angel, as the only individual of its species, might not need any interangelic dialogue. No so with Man. Even though a Man or a People may receive a particular divine revelation, the human vessel of this revelation will always be bound by human contingency: The echo of the Absolute is no longer absolute.

We not only have to maintain a sense of (human) proportion, but also

to think realistically: We may have the best of intentions and may welcome all the positive steps toward tolerance and understanding made in dialogue, but human nature, though not immutable, has never shown itself to be particularly peaceful or pure of heart. Dialogue is the manifest human path, but it can be blocked or deliberately obstructed. And there can also be deserts, seas, and mountains standing in the way. Sometimes dialogue falls apart or just does not come about.

Another word appropriate to the ultimate dialogical constitution of Man is pluralism. Pluralism is the human attitude we adopt when it dawns upon us

that it is impossible, without lethal reductionisms, to bring the whole of human experience into an unqualified unity. In other words, through dialogue we cultivate our humanness. Religious dialogue is the expression of this quest. In it, we partake so deeply of the *Logos* in the Spirit that we come to drink from the same source as the *Logos*: Silence.

The *unavoidable dialogue* is not just a social imperative, a historical duty; it is the awareness that in order to be ourselves, simply to be, we need to enter into communion with the Earth below, the Humans at our side and the Heavens above.

Notes

1. It should be obvious that the two translations are not literal.
2. A german version of it was the inaugural article of a new journal *Dialog der Religionen* Nr. 1, München 1991, pp. 9-39. Jordi Pigem prepared the first English draft, Scott Eastham put it in correct English, Joseph Cunneen edited the present version and I interfered in all the texts, so that while expressing my gratitude to the three friends all imperfections are mine. The self-references are for brevity's sake. The word Man stands for *anthrōpos* and neither for the male nor for a member or a species of a particular kind of 'beings' of a zoological classification.
3. I have set forth a typology of the relationships between religions in *Religionen und die Religion*, München (Hueber) 1965; "Un mythe naissant," préface to J. Langlais, *Le Bouddha et les deux bouddhismes*, Montréal (Fides) 1975, pp. 9-15; "Autoconciencia cristiana y religiones," in the vol. 26 of a collective work, *Fe cristiana y sociedad moderna*, Madrid (Ediciones sm) 1989, pp. 199-267.
4. Cf. R. Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue," in F. Whaling (ed.), *The World's Religious Traditions*, Edinburgh, 1984, pp. 201-221, for the philosophical background of this study.
5. Cf. H.H. Schrey, *Dialogisches Denken*, Stuttgart (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft) 1983, for an overview of some of these currents.
6. Cf. R. Panikkar, "Singularity and Individuality: The Double Principle of Individuation," in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, vol. 29, 1-2, 1975, pp. 141-146.
7. Cf. R. Panikkar, "Der Mensch – Ein trinitarisches Mysterium," in R. Panikkar and W. Strolz (eds.), *Die Verantwortung des Menschen für eine bewohnbare Welt im Christentum, Hinduismus und Buddhismus*, Freiburg (Herder) 1985, pp. 147-190.

8. Cf. *The Cosmotheandric Experience* (edited with introduction by Scott Eastham), Maryknoll (Orbis) 1993, specially its Epilogue, and *Ecosofia: la nuova saggezza – per una spiritualità della terra*, Assisi (Cittadella) 1993.
9. Cf. my short essay “Have Religions the Monopoly on Religion?” in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 11:3, 1974, pp. 515-17.
10. Cf. my book *Invisible Harmony*, Minneapolis (Fortress) 1995.
11. Cf. my essay “Words and Terms,” in M. M. Olivetti (ed.), *Esistenza, mito, ermeneutica*, in *Archivo de Filosofía*, vol. 51, 1980, pp. 117-13.
12. L. Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, W. Bolin & F. Jodl (eds.), vol. 2, Stuttgart, 1959, p. 319.
13. Cf. my book *El espíritu de la política*, Barcelona (Península) 1999.
14. Cf. J. D’Arcy May, “Integral Ecumenism,” in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 25, 4, 1988, pp. 573-91: “Any breakdown of communication between or within communities of faith constitutes an ecumenical problem.” (577) I would interpret “communities of faith” in the widest sense as natural human communities, because in the final analysis, religion is the soul of culture.
15. Cf. R. Panikkar, “The Existential Phenomenology of Truth,” *Philosophy Today*, 2, 1958, ¼, pp. 13-21.
16. Cf. R. Panikkar, “Non-Dualistic Relation between Religion and Politics,” *Religion and Society*, Bangalore, 25, 3, 1978, pp. 53-63.
17. Cf. my book, *Cultural Disarmament. The Way to Peace*, Louisville (Westminster/Knox) 1995.
18. By *ontonomy* I understand the intrinsic link of an entity in relation to the totality of Being, the constitutive order (*nomos*) of any being qua Being (*on*), that harmony which allows space for the inter-in-dependence of all things. Cf. the description of this notion in my essay, “Le concept d’ontonomie,” *Actes du XI Congrès International de Philosophie*, Louvain (Nauwelaerts)1953.
19. Cf. the far-reaching critique of M. Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, Berkeley (U.C. Press), 1986: “As far as the critique of pure reason is concerned, reason as the criticizing subject always remains in a safety zone where it preserves its own security without having to criticize the possibility of critique itself. Yet precisely because reason cannot thereby avoid self-disruption, the reason that does the criticizing and the reason that is to be criticized must inevitably be separated from each other... Reason must recognize that it lacks the capacity for critique; otherwise the criticizing reason can only be distinguished from the reason to be criticized. In either case, there is no avoiding the final self-disruption of reason. In other words, reason that tries to establish its own competence by means of self-criticism must finally, contrary to its own intentions, recognize its absolute self-disruption.” (43)
20. Cf. my book, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, New York (Paulist) 1979; as well as my article, “Mythos und Logos. Mythologische und rationale Weltsichten,” in M. P. Dürr/ W. Zimmerli (eds.), *Geist und Natur*, Bern (Scherz), 1989, pp. 206-220.
21. By *homeomorphic equivalent* I understand a third degree analogy which uncovers corresponding functions in the respective systems. Cf. *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, New York (Paulist)2, 1999, p. 18 ff.

22. Cf. R. Panikkar, "What is Comparative Religion Comparing?" in G. J. Larson/E. Deutsch (eds.), *Interpreting Across Boundaries. New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, Princeton (University Press) 1988, 116-36.
23. Cf. R. Panikkar, "Aporias in the Comparative Philosophy of Religion," in *Man and World*, Nr. 13, 34, pp. 357-83.
24. Cf. R. Panikkar, "Verstehen als Überzeugtsein," in H.G. Gadamer/P. Vogler (eds.), *Neue Anthropologie*, Nr. 7, *Philosophische Anthropologie*, Teil 2, Stuttgart (Thieme) 1975, pp. 132-67.
25. Cf. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, New York (Macmillan) 1931. "The idea of the humanity of our God, or the divinity of Man, the Eternal, is the main subject of this book" (p. 15).
26. Cf. *Le mystère du culte dans l'hindouisme et le Christianisme*, Paris (Cerf) 1970 and *Culto y secularización*, Madrid (Marova) 1979.
27. Cf. P. Puthanangady (ed.), *Sharing Worship. Communicatio in sacris*, Bangalore (CBCLC) 1988.

The Christian Programme: A Theological and Pastoral Study of the Sermon on the Mount, by Joseph Pathrapankal, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1999 (pp. xii + 380; US \$ 19).

Dr. J. Pathrapankal CMI seeks an adequate response to two interconnected questions: (1) What is the essence of a healthy Christian spirituality? (2) How to distinguish a true Christian spirituality from spurious ones? (cf. p. ix). In answering these two very important and extremely relevant questions, Pathrapankal (= P.) has recourse to the Bible, particularly the teachings of Jesus (cf. p. x). Among Jesus' various teachings, the Sermon on the Mount has a unique place "because it presents a basic and radical programme of life to all the followers of Jesus who want to hold on to an authentic source of Christian spirituality" (p. xi).

The purpose of the work, as the subtitle indicates, is theological and pastoral. In realizing this purpose P. employs three steps in his study: (1) a brief investigation into the Old Testament background of the text; (2) a detailed study of the Matthean text (when required other New Testament writings are also taken into consideration); and (3) the teachings of the Church, notably that of Vat. II.

The work consists of a lengthy introduction (pp. 1-34) and ten chapters — the last chapter is some sort of a conclusion in the context of a pluralistic world.

The introduction commences with the question: "What does it mean to be a Christian in our times?" (p. 1). The relevance of this question is brought to light by focusing on threefold challenges: (1) challenges of the world religions; (2) problems emerging from secular humanism; and (3) the proposal of a "religionless Christianity". A study of the Sermon on the Mount, P. claims, would offer an adequate response to these threefold challenges.

As a preamble to the study P. establishes that discourses form an integral part of the scriptures of all major world religions. In the Gospel of Matthew there are five discourses; of these the Sermon on the Mount is the most important one in which the evangelist spells out the Christian programme.

Having offered the Matthean rationale for the study in the second chapter, P. focuses on the inner dispositions Jesus demanded from his disciples (Mt 5:3-16) in the third chapter. In the fourth chapter, probably the most important one too, P. dwells upon Mt 5:17-20 in which Jesus unequivocally affirms that he has come not to abolish the Law and the Prophets but to fulfil them.

In the fifth chapter the attention is centered on various dimensions of the dharma in the form of six antitheses (5:21-42) while in the sixth chapter the focus is "the faithful practice of the three major religious exercises of Judaism, known as the 'Three Pillars', on which the good and pious life of a Jew was to be based" (p. 213).

In the seventh chapter P. spells out the attitudes required in the practice of the new dharma (Mt 6:19-7:12). The general principle that controls this section (= 6:19-7:12), P. opines, is "the sound eye" in 6:22-23 by which is meant the correct vision of life (cf. pp. 253-259).

In the eighth chapter P. focuses on Mt 7:13-23 from an eschatological perspective while in the ninth chapter the last two pericopes (7:24-27 and 7:28-29) are studied. The

first is a short but evocative parable whereas the second highlights Jesus' extraordinary authority in his teaching.

The last chapter sheds light on the significance of the Sermon on the Mount in a pluralistic world. Pluralistic perspectives are discernible in the Old Testament as well as in the New. This chapter is concluded by extending an invitation to people of all religions to personally experience God as the loving Parent and to respect and love all humans as one's brothers and sisters, for all are children of God, the ever loving Parent.

As far as I know the first Indian exegete to interpret the Sermon on the Mount as Dharma of Jesus was the late Prof. George M. Soares-Prabhu, SJ (1929-1995). He published the article, "The Dharma of Jesus: An Interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount", *Bible Bhashyam* 6 (1980), 358-381. Since then he published at least four articles and studies on this theme. Those who are sufficiently familiar with the writings of G. M. Soares-Prabhu on Dharma of Jesus and related topics will find the content of this book repetitious to some extent. This reviewer considers the following as the merits of this work. (1) There are some personal insights into the Matthean text (5:1-7:29); (2) an extensive treatment of the Old Testament background of the Matthean text is provided; (3) one does find a healthy dialogue with some of the key problems of the world in which we live; and (4) in particular, the thoughts of the Matthean text is further developed in the light of the documents of Vat. II.

Yet I do find some drawbacks (a few of them major ones) in P.'s work: (1) the format of the book fails to have international standard; (2) lack of precision and accuracy in languages whether classical languages (Sanskrit, Hebrew or Greek) or English (in the use of orthographic signs, grammar and spelling); (3) because the thought-pattern is on the whole very abstract and some of the sentences too long, the reading (and understanding too) becomes rather difficult; and (4) there are mistakes in biblical references.

A few points in the content are seriously questionable: (a) according to the Marcan usage, "disciples" are exclusively the inner group of the Twelve who had left all things and followed Jesus" (p. 91). This is true of Matthew (cf. 10:1-4) but not applicable to Mark, for according to Mark Jesus appoints the Twelve from those whom he wanted (cf. 3:13-14); so Levi whom Jesus had called to be his disciple (2:14) does not figure in the list of the Twelve (cf. 3:16-19). (b) Parables of Salt and Light (pp. 130-138): these are not parables but metaphors. (c) I am of the opinion that a Christian programme, according to Matthew, should include other discourses as well, particularly, the Community Discourse (ch. 18).

Finally, the question of readership: Is the book meant for biblical scholars? If 'yes', they may not find many new and striking ideas or seminal insights in it. Is it meant for educated lay persons? Certain technical aspects (for instance, the two source theory that is presupposed, foreign expressions like *Redaktionsgeschichte* [p. 55], abundant use of Greek script, etc.) may confuse and confound an average reader.

Scaria Kuthirakkattel SVD

History of the Pondicherry Mission: An Outline Jean Lafranez mep English version by P.A. Sampathkumar & André Carof mep.

The volume under review is the English version of the *Précis d'histoire de la mission de Pondichéry* by Jean Lafranez, 1953. It was a summary of Fr. Launay's famous 4 volume *Histoire des Missions de l'Inde (The History of the Missions of India: Pondicherry-Mysore-Coimbatore)* published from 1895-1998 and some additions of his own. An English translation of it was prepared for private use and the present volume is a revised and

reedited text of the same, prepared by P.A. Sampathkumar and Andre Carof mep published by the Department of Christian Studies, Chennai.

Historical studies have never been the strength of the Indian Churches. If such studies were undertaken at all, they were done mostly by foreign missionaries. So for example, most of the historical records we have about the indigenous Thomas Christian community have been those left behind by the Portuguese missionaries. Only in 1972, was the first serious attempt to write an ecumenical history of Christianity in India undertaken which fortunately has done an outstanding work by publishing three solid volumes of history and two part-volumes. As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned this history is complete with E.R. Hambey's volume on the 18th century having been released recently, and Hugald Gafe's volume on the 19th and 20th centuries published already in 1990. Of course both authors have referred to the volumes of Launay and Lafranez but as can be expected, it is a very sketchy reference. Therefore, works such as these are always a welcome addition and as a historian one is pleased to see that such attempts are being made. At a time in our country history is being written to serve the purpose of the majority community or the ruling class and a lot of falsehood is being circulated in the name of history, attempts to show the past with as much objectivity as possible is an urgent task.

As the title indicates, the book deals with an outline of the Pondicherry mission with a short note on the situation before 1776, and the transition from the Jesuits to the MEP missionaries (1773-76). From chapter III onwards it traces the situation of the mission under the MEP missionaries under its outstanding leaders such as Pierre Brigot, Champenois, Hébert, Bonnand, Godelle, bishop Laouenan, archbishop Gandy, archbishop Morel etc., and concludes with an epilogue by archbishop Colas. There is a chronology of events from 1673 to 1992, a few maps, a bibliography, and, fortunately, an index. Although the book covers primarily the period of the MEP missionaries, the story of the Pondicherry mission begins with the Jesuits and the famous Carnatic mission. The book provides valuable information, about people, places, and events. For example, it mentions the arrival of the Ursulines in Pondicherry in 1738, the first foreign women missionaries to arrive in India, and their unsuccessful attempt to settle down in India because of the unsympathetic attitude of the ecclesiastical authorities (In 1827 the sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, the next group of foreign women missionaries did manage to set foot in India, in Pondicherry). There are references to the Malabar Rites controversy, the *Padroado*-Propaganda muddle and the clashes over jurisdiction in general, the wars between the French and the British, the growth and division of the Pondicherry mission and the formation of different ecclesiastical units, the efforts at bringing up a native clergy, the famous synod of Pondicherry of 1844, etc. A number of persons and places come alive in the detailed descriptions in the book. Each chapter has a structure which unfolds the history in systematic way, giving attention to all the important activities of the missionaries.

Some of the details in the book are obviously wrong like the date 1592 which is given as the date of the arrival of the Portuguese. I do not know what the author has in mind. The Portuguese arrived at the western coast of India much earlier. Another historically wrong date is the one on page 4 where it is said: "Father Aries de Sa SJ died in 1613 at Tranquebar before the Lutherans could arrive there in 1618." The traditional date for the arrival of the Lutherans in India in 1706. I haven't examined all the dates. Hopefully they are more accurate. In spite of such mistakes, I consider the book valuable for the information it contains. The only way to write a complete history of Christianity in India is to begin with regional histories and this book is a good beginning in this.

Isaac Padinjarekuttu

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