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CONTENTSPAGE

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. "FOREIGN MISSIONARIES?" WHAT KIND OF PRESENCE?
Karl Gaspar, C.Ss.R. | 208 |
| 2. THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN, A STATEMENT OF VALUES.
Canadian Religious Conference. | 216 |
| 3. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE.
Canadian Association of Broadcasters | 221 |
| 4. WOMEN IN THE MISSION OF JESUS.
Maria Riley O.P./Adrian. | 223 |
| 5. THE ROLE OF THEOLOGY IN A WHOLISTIC FAITH COMMITMENT.
M. Amaladoss, S.J. | 228 |

IN THIS ISSUE

This issue opens with a reflection by Karl Gaspar, C.Ss.R., on the specific role that foreign missionaries can play in a country such as the Philippines that is rocked by social unrest and confronted with the challenge of social transformation. After analyzing various aspects of the society such as the culture of silence, popular religiosity and the unconscientized, unpoliticized and unorganized poor, Karl makes practical suggestions about what missionaries can do and contribute in these areas.

At the recent Synod on the Laity, the Canadian Church presented some of the best statements regarding the role of women in the church and in society. The Statement of Values issued by the Canadian Religious Conference and addressed to all the Religious of Canada takes a clear stance advocating the advancement of all women and develops practical guidelines for promoting this in various contexts.

Language defines who we are. Canadian Broadcasters developed guidelines and terminology for television and radio that reflects the new variety of roles played by women in their society. Their language code refers to the English language. What about other languages?

Jesus went against the profound patriarchy of his day, and chose women to be his chief spokespersons at the most crucial moments of revelation concerning who he was. Jesus was really about creating a discipleship of

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equals in the community of his followers. Starting with the Gospel story Maria Riley looks at the church today and addresses the implications of both the exclusion and inclusion of women at the heart of the church.

Catechesis must be a language of proclamation that seeks to communicate or rather recreate an experience. Instead, children and adults are offered reflections, explanations and answers to questions which they have never even asked. Michael Amaladoss focuses on the true role of theology in the total faith life and clarifies the three levels of faith.

DANS CE NUMERO

Ce numéro débute avec une réflexion du P. Karl Gaspar C.Ss.R., sur le rôle particulier que peuvent jouer les missionnaires étrangers dans un pays comme les Philippines ébranlé par les troubles sociaux et confronté avec des problèmes de changement de structures sociales. Après avoir analysé certains aspects de la société, tels que le culte du silence, la religiosité populaire et l'absence de conscientisation, de politisation et d'organisation de la part des pauvres, le Père propose des suggestions pratiques sur les possibilités qui s'offrent aux missionnaires pour aider dans ces domaines.

Dans le dernier Synode sur le Laïcat, les Eglises du Canada ont présenté certains des meilleurs exposés sur le rôle des femmes dans l'Eglise et dans la société. Le communiqué de la Conférence des Religieux du Canada, adressé à tous les Religieux du pays, prend nettement position en faveur de la promotion de toutes les femmes et propose des directives pour la réaliser dans différents contextes.

Le langage que nous utilisons indique ce que nous sommes. Des hommes de la radio et de la télévision du Canada ont proposé des directives et un vocabulaire tenant compte des différents rôles joués par les femmes dans leur pays. Leurs propositions se réfèrent à la langue anglaise. Mais qu'en est-il des autres langues?

Le Christ s'est dressé contre le patriarcat prédominant de son temps, en choisissant des femmes comme principales porte-parole aux moments les plus cruciaux de la révélation concernant sa vraie personnalité. Jésus était en train d'établir une vraie égalité dans la communauté de ses disciples. En partant de l'évangile, Maria Riley jette un regard sur l'Eglise d'aujourd'hui et aborde les implications de l'exclusion ou de l'inclusion des femmes au coeur de l'Eglise.

La catéchèse doit être un langage de proclamation qui cherche à transmettre ou plutôt à réveiller une expérience. Cependant, aux enfants comme aux adultes, on propose des réflexions, des explications ou des réponses à des questions qu'ils ne se sont jamais posées. Michel Amaladoss met l'accent sur le vrai rôle de la théologie dans une vie de foi et illustre les trois niveaux de la foi.

NEWS AND NOTICES :

CONGRATULATIONS to the new Superior General of the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles: Sr. Patricia McMenamin. Our best wishes and we look forward to meeting you at upcoming SEDOS meetings.

GENERAL CHAPTER: We send our prayers and good wishes to the Divine Word Fathers who are now holding their General Chapter at Nemi.

NEW SEDOS MEMBER: We are happy to welcome to membership of SEDOS the Figlie di Nostra Signora di Sacro Cuore (Daughters of Our Lady of The Sacred Heart). The Superior General is Sr. Jacinta Belani and their address is Via Casale di S. Pio V, 37, 001645 Roma. (Tel. 62.22.027).

MEETING IN ROME: The International Association of Mission Studies is holding their VII triennial conference here in Rome from 29th June to 5th July. The theme of the conference is "Christian Mission Towards the Third Millennium: The Gospel of Hope". SEDOS is working with the Association in planning and organizing the conference and is anticipating an interesting and worthwhile conference. WELCOME TO ROME!

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION (USCMA)

The United States Catholic Mission Association will hold its Annual Meeting from the 4th to the 6th of November in Lancaster, PA on the theme: "The Broken Christ -- Christians in Mission". In collaboration with the World Council of Churches, this meeting will be modeled on the WCC/CWME 1989 San Antonio Meeting on "Your Will Be Done -- Mission in Christ's Way". The USCMA Meeting will treat the four sub-themes from a Catholic point of view.

The Rev. Alan Neely, a Professor of Missiology at The Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, will open the meeting with an appropriate Bible Study. The Rev. Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., a Professor of Doctrinal Theology at The Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, will speak on "Turning To The Living Christ". The Rev. Alain Rocourt, the Chairperson of The Methodist Church of Haiti in Miami, will talk on "Participating In Suffering and Struggle". The Rev. Samuel Rayan, S.J., a Professor of Systematic Theology at St. Mary's College, New Delhi, India, will speak on "The Earth Is The Lord's", and Sister Barbara Hendricks, MM, a past president of the Maryknoll Sisters, will speak on "Toward Renewed Communities in Mission".

There will also be five interest groups whose themes will center around what the church in the U.S. is doing for mission today.

For information, please contact the Rev. Joseph R. Lang, MM, Executive Director, USCMA, 3029 4th St., Washington, D.C. 20017 (tel. No. 202/832-3112).

"FOREIGN MISSIONARIES?" WHAT KIND OF PRESENCE?

Karl Gaspar C.Ss.R.

The following article was written with the Philippines specially in mind. Karl Gaspar believes that "foreign missionaries" are still needed and still welcome in the Philippines. But 300 years after the Church was established here and in Latin America there is undoubtedly a question as to why these Churches if they are authentic are not themselves sending their own people to carry the good news to others. A beginning is being made in the Philippines and in countries of Latin America. The missionary effort today is to be seen mainly as a work of mutual assistance and collaboration between local Churches, and Karl Gaspar presents ideas of how this assistance can be most usefully offered by those who come to the Philippines. We think these ideas can also be useful and encouraging to all those who cross cultural and political boundaries today in this missionary movement of international collaboration.

One segment of the Filipino people is quite happy at the presence of foreign missionaries as a normal fact of the life of local Churches. Another segment however while continuing to welcome foreign missionaries would do so from a totally different perspective. They believe that simply because there are too few Filipino priests and religious is no longer sufficient reason for the presence of foreign missionaries.

There has been a shift in the role of foreign missionaries; they are no longer seen in the same mold as those who came before Vatican II. Expectations of them have changed and, if missionaries cannot respond to these expectations, then they have no business staying in this country.

It is of course difficult to ascertain what percentage of the people would hold this view. One can assume that the majority (those not yet reached by Vatican II-inspired seminars on ecclesiology and missiology) would continue to accept foreign missionaries uncritically. But a growing percentage has explored their role in our society today. It is a positive sign that some missionaries here are among the first to explore questions related to their roles in a Third World country rocked by social unrest and confronted with the challenge of social transformation.

This paper is an attempt to help define this perspective which demands a critical look at the cultural system operative in our society. It also provides some suggested courses of action that could be explored by those who consider this agenda very relevant.

THE DOMINANCE OF THE CULTURE OF SILENCE

Typical of Third World nations, our people are enveloped within a culture of silence. Some of the characteristics of our people, especially the poor in the countryside are the following:

- Low self-esteem, and lack of confidence in being able to change their marginalized situation.

- A strong tendency to depend on other people, especially those in authority whom they look up to, e.g. government officials, landlords, teachers, priests and the like.
- A tendency to look outside for a solution, rather than mobilize local resources, an attitude otherwise known as the "colonial mentality".
- Lack of initiative to respond to collective needs, and an inability to act together communally to solve their problems.
- Lack of creativity in developing ways and means of effectively responding to their problems and needs.
- Blind acceptance of their fate (owing to the all-powerful hold of "kapalaran", "pagbuot sa Dios", etc).
- Reliance on spiritism (diwata) to see them through situations.

Concerned Christians who commit themselves to the task of social transformation, can become involved in initiating and supporting ongoing conscientization programs that reach out to the poor and powerless. Such programs should aim at the following:

- To develop among the people a sense of dignity and an acceptance of their worth as human persons.
- To provide them with the self-confidence needed to empower them to participate in the process of change.
- To instill in their minds and hearts self-reliance that can liberate them from blind subservience to all those in authority, and from utter dependence on outside resources.
- To encourage them to reach out to others towards building viable people's organizations that help them to defend their rights and promote their interests.
- To develop a creativity that leads them to discover methods and techniques appropriate to their situations, including those related to health, agricultural practices and the like.

What Missioners could Do: Much can be done by foreign missioners to help facilitate and support implementation of ongoing conscientization programs. If missioners do not feel competent to be involved directly, they can always provide indirect support to those who are involved in such programs. What is important is openness to coordinate efforts with such groups, and to share whatever resources are at their disposal.

It makes a lot of difference if missioners themselves are directly involved. There are many ways to implement good conscientization programs. By giving prophetic sermons that are based on the Bible and the Church's social teachings, one can provoke consciousness-raising. A good justice education program at the parish level could be quite relevant. Issues

tackled could include: ecological balance, land reform, human rights promotion and the like. Setting up social action programs related to special areas like health could provide openings for deeper understanding of the roots of the people's poverty. A good pastoral program in building small Christian communities provides a good framework for conscientization if it is not too tied up with reinforcing traditional ecclesial structures. BCC's serve as viable venues for molding a culture of commitment which can put an end to the enslaving silence.

What they should Not Do: Missioners will need to be very careful about their role in conscientization work. If they take a dominant role, especially regarding decision-making where they play the classic "one-person show", the people's belief that the foreigner knows best is reinforced. They should trust staff members, and provide them with needed encouragement, while remaining in the background. They should not plan everything, nor impose their ideas from above. They should provide a lot of affirmation to the people. They should see to it that education programs are evocative and dialogical in methodology, so that the people can be drawn to appreciate their resources, experiences and gifts. The banking approach must be dismantled, once and for all.

POPULAR RELIGIOSITY: ENSLAVEMENT, OR AWAKENING?

Religion plays a very important role in reinforcing people's enslaving worldview. Cultural values linked to people's religiosity are often blocks to their growth and development ("God's will"). Folk religiosity also plays the same role, (e.g. belief in the spirits). There is a need for a religiosity that promotes faith-life integration, that empowers people to commit themselves to prophetic discipleship and that brings forth creative responses to their problems. The idea is not to negate folk religiosity as such, but to try to facilitate good inculturation. The people need to see for themselves the enslaving function of some aspects of folk religiosity, while retrieving those with liberating influences.

What Missioners can Do: An area where missioners can play a very important role is in developing systematic formation programs for lay leaders and the people themselves, programs which promote the emergence of such a religiosity. Much work needs to be done in developing effective formation programs which enable the people:

- To look critically at their folk religious practices in the hope of discovering liberating aspects which need to be highlighted;
- To have a deeper appreciation of a biblical worldview which empowers them to do transforming collective action;
- To express their dignity as children of God in creative liturgical celebrations which draw them together as a community which is liberated and liberating; and
- To embrace the world in all its levels, thus provoking in them the need to promote reconciliation, social justice, harmony with nature and peace with the whole of creation.

Religion is the realm of missionaries' involvement. The challenge is for them to reverse the social function of religion. Rather than legitimizing the oppressive status quo, religion can help bring about a process of dynamic critique that leads to transforming action. Instead of playing a domesticating role, religion can bring oppressed people to an awareness of what frees human persons and society.

One cannot be part of this exciting evangelical process, however, if one holds on to outdated and irrelevant worldviews that effect orientation, lifestyle and spirituality. The fact that foreign missionaries are better able to help de-mythologize such ways of looking at faith and life only makes it imperative that they take part actively in this task. In the process, they also need to be more sensitive to what the people are saying. With openness, they can readily see that the poor can be evangelizers. If the evangelizing capabilities of the poor are tapped, missionaries would have done a great job.

The Philippine Institutional Church Today: Due to historical and sociological factors, the Philippine Church has developed into the institution that it is today, with the consequences of rigid institutionalization which we continue to suffer until today. Despite reforms introduced in the decade following Vatican II, the Filipino Church as institution remains alienated from the majority of our people who are poor and disenfranchised in so many ways - economically, politically, socially, etc.

Many dioceses are presently faced with paralysis for various reasons: fear, lack of leadership, lack of unity among the clergy and the like. Many BCC programs have been coopted into authoritarian structures and are now mainly concerned with sacramental work. Justice and peace, social action and creative pastoral programs have been abandoned. Pastoral formation programs no longer give attention to analysis of the signs of the times. Coordination and setting up of linkages are no longer encouraged for fear of "infiltration and manipulation."

In the 1960's and 1970's, there was an upsurge of creative pastoral responses in the local Church. Many foreign missionary groups pioneered in what were then new ministries. With the present malaise and paralysis, perhaps foreign missionaries again are called to help bring forth "new wine".

DISCIPLESHIP ROOTED IN JUSTICE

While priests and religious can play major roles in transforming religio-cultural systems, it is accepted in the Church today that they also have a part in helping to bring about a just and humane society. This involves a prophetic role in denouncing the evils that exist in society, and in working for justice and peace. The present situation is not radically different from the realities under the Marcos regime. Nowhere is this more true than in the barrios where the people have not seen any major change since the new government took over two years ago. Poverty and powerlessness continue to characterize the people's lives. Human rights violations continue to take place. Social reforms are slow in coming. Consequently, peace remains elusive.

In the Philippines, a strategy known as "Low Intensity Conflict" was activated during the Marcos dictatorship and continues today. Vigilantism is its most visible indicator. So is more intensive U.S. intervention....

An Option for the Poor. One doesn't have to be a radical activist to acknowledge that the Church must take a prophetic stance no matter who controls the government. Just because the Church helped put Cory Aquino into power does not mean it should close its eyes to present realities, and pretend that everything is in good shape. Such a stance will not be clear, however, unless the Church truly makes an option for the poor, an option which will counter the interests of:

- U.S. right-wing personalities who are extremely active in the Philippines, despite the Iran-Contra fiasco.
- Big transnational corporations, the IMF-World Bank and business technocrats who are asserting greater influence in government circles.
- Big landlords who oppose even the moderate land reform CARP, and rich and powerful loggers who continue to rape the forests.
- Corrupt politicians, family dynasties and traditional warlords who have staged a comeback in the political arena.
- Abusive military personnel who are in cahoots with vigilantes.
- Other elements who are out to protect their vested interests in the face of social unrest.

Such an option means being on the side of the poor as they struggle for genuine land reform, equitable distribution of the country's wealth, peace based on justice (shalom), respect for their dignity and rights, and access to social services. In short, all that which brings forth LIFE. This remains a challenge to foreign missionaries, despite the fact that such involvement can easily be misunderstood. To take a prophetic stance does not necessarily mean giving strong sermons denouncing social injustices, nor joining picket lines of striking workers, and the like. It is a far more all-inclusive stance that includes one's view of what kind of change is needed in this society; whether one's lifestyle is alienated or alienating; one's associations and relationships.

What Prophetic Stance means in the Philippines: Many factors need to be considered with regard to what prophetic stance a foreign missionary can take in a society as complicated as the Philippines. Among these are the following:

- The prophetic task of denouncing the evils of our society properly belongs to Filipino bishops and priests and religious but, for many reasons, the foreign missionary may have to play a complementary or supplementary role. Among these reasons are that our own may not be prophetic, and that foreign missionaries are less vulnerable, better protected and far better able to attract attention because of their involvement. Of course, it is always risky to take a prophetic stance.

But the risks faced by foreign missionaries are far less than those faced by Filipino priests and religious, and certainly far less than those faced by ordinary farmers and lay leaders.

- As a consequence of the Low Intensity Conflict strategy (LIC), which spreads a vicious "red-scare", it is very easy for church people to be branded "communist", "rebel" or "subversive" if they take a strong justice-peace stance. Even within church circles, there is "witch-hunting" going on. The legacy of the Marcos regime - Filipinos no longer trusting one another - and the consequences of the L.I.C. - Filipinos pitted against each other - have made us very vulnerable to witch-hunting. Unless one is grounded in a desire to really identify with the interests of the poor and powerless, it is easy to be swayed into believing that movements for social transformation are "communist". This is a tragedy for church people, since one is left doing nothing for the sake of God's reign.
- Since foreign missionaries are less subject to the pressures faced by Filipino priests and religious, they can help to crystallize the issues, and to bring about collaboration among church people. This presupposes a comprehensive grasp of the dynamics of power in our society, and a clear option to be on the side of the marginalized. The efforts of the Philippine International Forum (PIF) seem to provide directions in this area but given the priorities it has set itself it also has been vulnerable to witch-hunting.
- An area in which foreign missionaries can contribute is in bridging the Philippines with their own home countries in a spirit of solidarity. This, I believe, is the new dimension of the universality of the church. We can reach out to one another across our national boundaries. We can explore the ties' that bind us together and seek ways to promote justice and peace. Many lenten campaigns in First World countries (Trocaire, CAFOD, CCODP, etc.) have explored this theme. Vacationing missionaries can do much in this area during home visits.

SUGGESTIONS

Within the above perspective, the following suggestions are offered in relation to various groups and institutions in our society:

Groups Advocating Human Rights and Promoting Justice and Peace:

More often than not, these groups and institutions are church-related and faith-inspired (e.g. AMRSP task forces such as TFD, and EMJP and PAHRA), and they are participated in by a broad spectrum of society. They also have often been branded by the military as "communist fronts". They are finding it even more difficult now than in Marcos' time to accomplish their objectives for various reasons, including threats from vigilantes and witch-hunting. And yet there is no denying their role in the present times. No other institutions or groups have been as consistent in promoting human rights. The government Commission on Human Rights is not heard from these days. It has been left to the churches to maintain the type of vigilance that was one of the significant factors in the downfall of Marcos. More than

ever, the church must be in the forefront of asserting people's dignity. One concrete way this can be done is by supporting groups such as these that are at the frontlines.

Cause-oriented Groups and Politicized People's Organizations:

There are a variety of cause-oriented groups and people's organizations in the country, some of whom take a moderate stance, while others are clearly 'left-of-center'. The latter have also been branded "communist fronts", including groups like BAYAN, KMU, KMP and other organizations of students, women, teachers, etc. A number of possible options could be considered by foreign missionaries in relation to these groups:

- Find out what they actually do. Check which ones most approximate the Church's call for the "preferential option for the poor" and involvement in social transformation. Exposure to their activities and open dialogue with their members/officers would be helpful. One should not make judgements based on hearsay unsubstantiated by facts. One should rather make one's own judgement based on the reliable process of "see, judge, act".
- Once a missionary decides that a particular organization should be supported, it is necessary to determine the type of linkage to be established. It could be just provision of moral support, or it could mean direct participation in their activities, possibly involving the provision of technical, financial and other types of resources.
- This question of alignments is, for some missionaries, academic because such organizations do not exist where they are. Missioners in the hinterlands are too cut off from where such organizations thrive. If, however, there are plans to set up such organizations where they are, the missionary can explore possibilities of providing assistance to those initiating such activities. If, because of the LIC strategy, such groups are already being branded "communists", it may not be advisable for the missionary to be involved directly in order to avoid fueling the propaganda based on hearsay and loose talk. In the final analysis, direct or indirect involvement is best left to the discretion of the missionary.

Ultimately, we grapple with our own individual consciences. But one should not be guided only by fears, anxiety, intrigues and narrow-mindedness. The words of Dom Helder Camara remain very relevant.

Unconscientized, Unpoliticized and Unorganized Poor:

Although the poor and powerless majority are considered a pastoral priority by most missionaries, the reality is that few rural and urban missionaries are involved in new ministries centered on justice-peace issues affecting the poorest people, issues such as ecology, land reform, just wages, unemployment, lack of social services, poor health and the like. If one looks back over the last twenty years, foreign missionaries often pioneered the setting up of new ministries (e.g. basic Christian communities, work with Tribal Filipinos, agricultural programs, etc). Most of these remain

relevant, but there is still an urgent need to develop newer and more effective creative responses to our people's needs. Given the limited response of the local church, foreign missionaries could provide a counterpoint by continuing to give witness to the Gospel through action. This time, however, they need to be more sensitive in the following areas:

- People's participation must be guaranteed.
- Good leaders must be identified, trained and given support.
- More attention must be given to inculturation as the people seek to have a greater appreciation of the underpinnings of culture.
- Faith/Life integration should be promoted, as the people take their discipleship seriously vis-a-vis the signs of the times within their own surroundings and in the country.

Indeed, all these constitute a tall order. But, whoever said following Jesus was a picnic?

- end -

Ref. P.I.F. reprint January 1988. Association of Major Superiors of the Philippines, B.C.P.O. Box 10238, Quezon City, Philippines.

GRAINS FROM CHAFF

The Chinese have a saying, "An idea which is not expressed in words is a bad idea. And an idea which is not expressed in action is an evil one."

Here are a few attempts to prevent some ideas from becoming bad:

Dialogue must not only be a dialogue of life. It must be a fruit of a life of dialogue.

One must move from fear of dialogue, to dialogue out of fear, to love of dialogue, and above all, to dialogue out of love.

In the world of dialogue, time does not respect what is done without it.

No culture is static. No person is without a culture. Thus people in dialogue with persons cannot remain static.

In dialogue, when things go deeper, one may have to be asked how one relates with God.

In dialogue one has to walk on "weeds" as gently as among "flowers."

In the last analysis, what is important in dialogue is not what it does to us, but what it "does" to God. It allows God to enter into God's own world.

Bishop Tutud, Dialogue of Life and Faith,
Claretian Publications, Philippines.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN A STATEMENT OF VALUES

Canadian Religious Conference.

(The Administrative Council of the Conference approved the following text for distribution to the Religious of Canada in the hope that it might inspire future action on the part of religious congregations regarding the situation of women. The values chosen to be fostered are: equality, communion, co-responsibility and mutuality between men and women. The statement refers to Canadian society. We considered it worth while drawing SEDOS Bulletin readers' attention to it. At the recent Synod on the laity the Canadian contribution on women in the Church was noteworthy and the sense of disillusionment at the final statement all the greater).

I. EQUALITY

Women and men, similar yet different, are created as complete sexual persons, in order to work together for the good of humanity and of the universe (Gen. 1:27-28).

- . Through Baptism and Confirmation, both are equally reborn in Jesus Christ as the "new creation" (Gal. 6:15; 1 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:5;
- . Both are co-heirs of salvation (Gal. 3:26-29; Cf. L.G. 32), - both are citizens joined together in the Spirit for the building up of the Church, the new humanity (Eph. 2:18-22).

In Canadian society, this equality is inscribed in the Canadian Constitution.

WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS NO EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN - WHEN:

1. The "male" remains the criterion of "normal" humanity on all planes: physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, and, in the final analysis, is the norm that governs all decisions;
2. Women are considered to be the passive receivers rather than full agents in the unfolding of their personal, individual, social and ecclesial lives, and in the history of humanity;
3. We maintain a dualistic and hierarchical model of men-women or women-men relationships;
4. We define women exclusively or primarily in terms of their roles of wife and mother, thereby excluding any re-thinking of this matter on the part of women themselves;
5. Cultural biases against either sex are unchallenged in our pluralistic society.

WE BELIEVE THAT EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN EXISTS IN FACT - WHEN:

1. Women and men can use and develop their gifts and talents, live openly their strengths and weaknesses, engage in their apostolic ministries and pursue careers according to their aptitudes without being subject to prejudicial sex stereotyping;
2. Women have access to the necessary training in order to exercise leadership in society and in the Church and can benefit from equal opportunities;
 - in the selection process which precedes admission to institutes of training;
 - in the monetary assistance which is provided by financial institutions;
 - in the possibilities for employment in any ecclesial or societal position of responsibility;
 - in the access to the benefits and obligations of promotion and remuneration delineated socially and ecclesially.

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN,
AS RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS - WE CAN:

1. Contribute to the correction of current normative models established from a masculine point of view of human relations, since these still form the core of social and ecclesiastical institutions;
2. Encourage and develop an "inclusive" vision and language regarding women and men in all spheres of life -- social, religious and ecclesial;
3. Encourage the emerging of a spirituality expressed by women, inspired by and based on the New Testament, present in the Tradition of the Church; a spirituality lived out today by women of faith who are characterized by a new social and church conscience;
4. Have recourse, more frequently, to women as resource persons: physicians, lawyers, spiritual directors, Chapter facilitators, theologians, retreat directors;
5. Commit ourselves actively, through the advocating of appropriate policies, to the correction of discriminatory practices against lay or religious women in the Church, especially in the areas of hiring, remuneration, promotion, financial assistance;
6. Denounce situations of injustice to women and establish projects which promote justice to and for them.
7.

II. MUTUALITY

Mutuality implies recognition of the other in his or her differences and in his or her similarities, as well as a relationship characterized by sharing within this twofold recognition.

Men and women can complement each other without domination of one sex over the other, without exclusion of one sex in relation to the other.

WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS NO MUTUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN - WHEN:

1. Women, because of their sex, are presented and maintained as dependent on men: physically, psychologically, morally, religiously;
2. Women are restricted to occupations which are servile by nature or in areas which have been traditionally known as women's work;
3. The relationship of authority men-women and therefore of subordination women-men is maintained in the organizational structures of society and the Church, so that men are always considered, consciously or unconsciously, to be the natural leaders.

WE BELIEVE THAT MUTUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN
EXISTS IN FACT - WHEN:

1. Women and men, convinced of the importance of their respective points of view, their personal richness, their unique experience, contribute equally to the task at hand, in an atmosphere devoid of prejudice and characterized by mutual respect;
2. Women and men participate fully in the building up of the Christian community and thus share the gifts they have received from the Spirit for the life and mission of the Church.

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE MUTUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN,
AS RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS - WE CAN:

1. Promote, in a prophetic manner, the Christian model of humanity where the person is considered as valuable and important in one's own right - and this beginning in our own milieu;
2. Establish, within our Congregations and in the Church, modes of participation which encourage sharing and reciprocity among women and men;
3. Encourage and request a significant presence of competent lay and religious women as faculty members in Schools of Theology and in other areas of ecclesial training;
4. Set aside funds in order to encourage theological studies or other training for ministry;
5. Work together within the Church, to develop a realistic and healthy attitude toward human sexuality;
6. Provide moral and concrete support to married persons who are striving to fulfill their common needs as well as their particular responsibilities.
7.

III. SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

By reason of their creation, women and men are called to share equally in the stewardship of the earth's resources.

By reason of their Baptism, women and men are equal as members of the people of God and "for this reason they participate in their way in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ and are called each according

to his or her particular condition, to exercise the mission which God entrusted to the Church..." (Canon 204).

WE BELIEVE THERE IS NO SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN - WHEN:

1. Men alone direct a social or ecclesial body affecting the lives of both women and men;
2. Women cannot exercise leadership because of the importance placed on maintaining and encouraging a system which is traditionally patriarchal and androcentric;
3. Women are put aside and considered as minors, unable to make decisions which affect their future, particularly in the judicial, familial and ecclesiastical spheres.

WE BELIEVE THAT SHARED RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN
WOMEN AND MEN EXISTS IN FACT - WHEN:

1. Women are recognized as full partners in all the areas affecting human life: cultural, familial, political, economic, scientific, religious, ecclesial;
2. Men and women can share the task of nurturing, either in the home or through a career;
3. Women can share in the decision-making process especially in those decisions which concern them.

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN,
AS RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS - WE CAN:

1. Challenge and endeavor to change structures which do not allow for the voice and place of women - religious or lay - at all levels: political, cultural, economical and ecclesial;
2. Assist, by our visible presence, in overcoming the fears related to women taking leadership roles in the Church;
3. Work towards obtaining precise mandates for women involved in pastoral ministry;
4. Participate in the structuring and developing of a theology of religious life and of the laity where the experience and knowledge of women are considered as constitutive elements of theology in general and of religious life in particular;
5. Foster the development of a theology of marriage which promotes the full human development of the partners in their roles of spouse and parent;
6. Work to provide better marriage preparation courses - courses which underline the equality, mutuality, shared responsibility and communion of both partners;
- 7

IV. COMMUNION

As active and consistent commitment promoting equality, mutuality and shared responsibility between women and men in the Church and in society will have as consequence the building up of a Church which will be, by its very nature, one of communion according to the gospel.

WITH A VIEW TO CHANGES WHICH MIGHT CONTRIBUTE TO THAT, AS RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS - WE CAN:

1. Continue to raise awareness of the condition of women, in local communities, in the Christian community, and in the workplace;
2. Sensitize our members to the injustices done to women, in order to "be in solidarity with" them and to initiate and encourage concrete action for justice;
3. Support situations of solidarity (women and men - laity, priests and women religious - women and women) so that, within the Church, an authentic dialogue leading to communion will be initiated and emphasized;
4. Continue to work together at all levels in the Church, especially within the local Church, particularly wherever concerted action and effort are possible.

- end -

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

(As an addendum to the statement of values of the Canadian Conference of Religious we are giving here a short example of how we may become more sensitive to the use of language. It is taken from the GUIDELINES for NON SEXIST LANGUAGE developed by the CANADIAN ASSOCIATION of BROADCASTERS as part of the associations continuing commitment to its "voluntary code regarding sex role portrayal in television and radio programming").

Language defines who we are. As Canadian society evolves, the challenge for broadcasters is to use terminology which reflects the new realities of our everyday lives. Stereotypical language applied to either sex can be demeaning and does not reflect the variety of roles played by both women and men in our society.

USE NEUTRAL TERMINOLOGY. EXAMPLES:

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
Fireman	Firefighter
Policeman	Police officer
Foreman	Site supervisor
Cameraman	Camera operator
Housewife	Homemaker
Mailman	Letter carrier
Steward/stewardess	Flight attendant
Maid	Housekeeper
Man-made	Manufactured, synthetic
Mankind	Humanity
Forefathers	Ancestors

AVOID PATRONIZING TERMS OR DESCRIPTIVE PHRASES. EXAMPLES:

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
Little lady, old lady	Wife, spouse
Girl (referring to adult)	Woman
Women's libber	Feminist
Coed	Student

AVOID STEREOTYPING JOBS AND CAREERS OR USING TERMINOLOGY WHICH CALLS ATTENTION TO THE GENDER OF THE PERSON DOING THE JOB. EXAMPLES:

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
Authoress	Author
Lady doctor/lawyer	Doctor/lawyer
Male nurse	Nurse
Weatherman	Meteorologist

II. GUIDELINES FOR NON-SEXIST LANGUAGE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

<u>Examples of common usage</u>	<u>This alternative may be better</u>	<u>Comment</u>
The client is usually the best judge of the value of <u>his</u> counseling.	The client is usually the best judge of the value of counseling.	"his" deleted.
	<u>Clients</u> are usually the best judges of the value of the counseling they receive.	Changed to plural.
	The best judge of the value of counseling is usually <u>the client</u> .	Rephrased.
The authors acknowledge the assistance of <u>Mrs. John Smith</u> .	The authors acknowledge the assistance of <u>Jane Smith</u> .	Use given names in author acknowledgments. When forms of address are used in text, use the appropriate form: Mr., Ms., Mrs., Miss.
males, females	men, women, boys, girls, adults, children, adolescents	Specific nouns reduce possibility of stereotype bias & often clarify discussion.
mothering	parenting, nurturing (or specify exact behavior)	Noun substituted.
The <u>girls</u> in the office greeted all clients.	secretaries, office assistants	Noun substituted.
Woman driver	driver	If specifying sex, use female driver.

WOMEN IN THE MISSION OF JESUS

Maria Riley O.P./Adrian

(The following is an excerpt from a reflection on WOMEN'S FIDELITY given by Sister Riley during a study-day on WOMEN IN THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY organized by the Conference of Major Religious Superiors in Dublin, Ireland. The day began with a reflection by the participants on the Gospel story in Mt.15:21-28 (see also Mark 7:24-30 where the woman is referred to as Syrophenician by birth).

"Jesus left that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, 'Sir, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil; but he answered her not a word. And his disciples went and pleaded with him 'Give her what she wants', they said 'because she is shouting after us'. He said in reply, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel'. But the woman had come up and was kneeling at his feet. 'Lord', she said, 'help me'. He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the house-dogs'. She retorted, 'Ah yes sir; but even house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table'. Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again".

Let's step back and try to enter into the experience of the woman. Can we imagine how deep is her anguish over her child, that it propelled her, absolutely pushed her, into such a vulnerable position? It left her open to insult. She had absolutely no right to approach Jesus, according to both the social and the religious mores of that time. She was a pagan, she was an outsider and she was a woman.

However, in her was a deep courage to take on what she knew was potential rejection, what she knew was potential insult, what she knew was potential failure because of her profound commitment to the well-being of her child. She was persistent. The Gospel tells us she was shouting after Jesus. She doesn't come across as a particularly attractive person. None of us likes to be shouted after. But she is shouting after Jesus to the point that the apostles throw up their hands and say 'do something, she's embarrassing us in public'.

And Jesus stops and responds by saying that his mission was only to the people of Israel. And that answer sets up the real confrontation between the woman and Jesus. How are we to interpret this interchange?

I have already mentioned the woman's courage in breaking through all the barriers that would have kept her silent and kept her on the margins. And secondly, in the face of her courage and her anguish, Jesus' harsh response (and I do believe it was harsh to be told that you do not take the crumbs from the table of the master and feed it to the dogs - how harsh can

somebody be?) must have cut very deep into the heart of that woman. But it does not dissuade her and that's what is important. Because she is so convinced of the correctness of what she is doing it impels her to continue and she takes Jesus on.

She is even willing to be compared to a house-dog but she will insist that Jesus recognise that the bounty of God's table overflows - even to those who are not among the chosen of Israel, even to those who are outside of the covenanted people.

As I reflect upon this particular passage as a woman, and enter into the lives and thoughts and feelings and complexity of the characters in it, I suggest that her very persistence and her very cleverness must have both delighted and challenged Jesus.

He immediately moves beyond his initial understanding of his mission: "I was sent only to the lost children of Israel" and grants the woman her request because of her great faith. And at this point, because I believe in the growing understanding of Jesus concerning his mission in the world, faith and not nationality becomes the defining characteristic of the followers of Jesus.

The encounter with this woman's fidelity to her daughter, and her faith in the power of Jesus to heal as well as her faith in the bounty of God, open the floodgates of God's compassion and this theme of faith becomes ever increasingly the central evangelizing message of Jesus. And in this Gospel story, it is a woman who evokes that message.

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BARRIERS

As I think about how this Gospel story speaks to me today as a woman called to continue to speak with and for women in the chambers of power in the Church and in the society - chambers which for centuries have been closed to women - I am struck by the courage and persistence, the cleverness and humour that she brought to her task, challenging all the cultural and religious conventions of her day as she seeks the truth of what she is about.

I think that her story speaks to us and encourages us to move ahead and continue our struggle to break through the cultural and religious barriers which try to restrict us to certain limited roles both in church and in society. In the face of our contemporary realities and our contemporary struggles, I believe the Syrophoenician woman is a great model, because we too are slowly - sometimes softly, and sometimes with a profound anger that is I believe, a righteous anger - raising our voices publicly and calling upon the church to re-examine its traditional definitions of women, its concept of the nature of women and its view of what is appropriate and inappropriate for women to be about in the transformation of the church and in the transformation of the world.

I am often struck when I read Vatican documents that speak about 'giving to women their proper role according to their nature.' Now I have

yet to read in any church document statements about 'giving to men their proper role according to their nature.' This, fundamentally, raises the question whether the church does believe that there really are two human natures. The language is - as we say in the United States - 'a dead give away'! It sounds as if, somehow or other, there are two natures. Now, I challenge that. I believe that we have one human nature, and God created that human nature male and female, woman and man, to God's image.

So as women challenge the church to rethink its positions on the understanding of women, we challenge the church to recognize that both the way the questions have been framed and the answers that have been given to the questions - all questions of human life - have been framed on the experience of men.

I believe women are also asking the church to examine itself in relation to women: the attitudes of the clergy and the hierarchy towards women, the way women's cases are presented and understood in our marriage tribunals - how very often women are counselled when they have been victims of domestic violence to go back into violent situations and be a better wife, as if the violence is their fault; the exclusion of women from preaching to the whole of the People of God, from ordination, the exclusion of women from the heart of the church and the exercise of authority within the People of God.

Women continue to point out that the church's patriarchy, that is, the overriding rule by men, is linked to an inadequate understanding and appreciation of the full potential and the full vocation of women in the People of God. Because women are excluded at the heart of the church, the church itself lacks the fullness of human reflection, male and female, in the formation of its doctrinal, moral and pastoral life.

LEGITIMATES INEQUALITY

Furthermore, this exclusion of women at the heart of the church legitimates the inequalities of women in societies all over the world.

Like the apostles in the Gospel story, the clergy and bishops today are often disconcerted or angered by the questions that women are raising. They admit that the questions women are raising have some legitimacy in the external society but very often, they do not see that the questions that women are raising pertain to the life of the church. They tend to identify these questions as marginal to the real concerns of the church, or they say that these are questions of only a few women.

However, I think that the responses that came from all over the world in preparation for the Synod of the Laity came as something of a surprise to the planning committee, and I believe it was your Cardinal who humourously pointed out - after he made his strong plea for an opening to the questions concerning the role of women - saying "the women's movement is no longer an aberration of North America, it has become an aberration of the whole world".

But there are many among the clergy and the hierarchy who would be happier if we would stop crying out, following them around and trying to

point out the questions. I would like to say that I challenge that the questions are only "women's questions". Because as long as we so define them, it is very easy to do one of two things in our patriarchal world. One is to say "O.K. these are women's questions so we'll hand them over to the women to take care of, and we're finished, we've done it", or the other is to say "these are women's questions and they're very marginal, they really are not at the heart of who we are and of the evangelizing call of the church in the contemporary world".

I would like to challenge that. Are they really only women's questions or are they ecclesial questions - questions that go to the very heart of our self definition as the People of God? Are they not central to our understanding of the Gospel and of how Jesus was dealing with the patriarchy even of his own day, creating among his followers a discipleship of equals?

Remember, at all the crucial moments of Jesus' presence in the world, he relied upon the word of women to announce who he was. It was to women - Mary and Elizabeth - that the moment of revelation of the Incarnation was given. It was to a woman - the woman at the well, another outcast by the way - that Jesus revealed that he indeed was the Messiah. And it was women, at the moment of resurrection, that Jesus sent with the message that he was risen. As we recall, the apostles said to the women "your story is sheer nonsense", but of course we also know the outcome of that story.

So, I do not believe that Jesus accidentally called upon women to be the bearers of the most significant moments of revelation because he couldn't find any adequate men around. All the mores of his society would have said "you'd better have men as the bearers, because people aren't going to listen to women". And yet, Jesus went against the profound patriarchy of that world, and chose women to be his chief spokespersons at the most crucial moments of revelation concerning who he was.

DISCIPLESHIP OF EQUALS

So Jesus was really about creating a discipleship of equals in the community of his followers. I cannot believe that the questions that women are raising are peripheral, but that they go to the heart of our understanding of the Gospel. I would also ask, is it only women who feel excluded regarding the question of ordination, or are women beginning to point to the inadequacy of our very understanding of the meaning of the priesthood within the community of the People of God.

Is it only women who demand inclusive language and more inclusive images of God, or are women pointing to the fact that the very mystery of God has been too limited by an over-identification with masculinity?

Is it only that a growing number of women feel that their experience of human sexuality is ignored when the official church speaks, or in fact, has the absence of women's experience and of women's insights concerning human sexuality impoverished the very truths that the church seeks to enunciate about the dignity of the human person?

Today women are asking these and other questions. We are asking them with great courage in the face of what we know will be misunderstanding, and at times being silenced, at times being marginalized, at times being verbally rebuked. But we are also asking them out of very very great fidelity.

Women are often considered trouble-makers in their parishes, trouble-makers at meetings, trouble-makers wherever they come together. This is a very painful experience - we have been so schooled to be always polite and calm and nice and keeping everybody happy. So when we are accused of being trouble-makers or being aggressive of showing our anger, it is very painful. But our very experience of God and our reading of the Gospel, and our solidarity with the suffering and struggle of women everywhere compel us to speak out. We feel deeply that the struggle for equality and mutuality in the church is not only for women, but is really - at its deepest core - the struggle for the integrity of the church in the contemporary world, and for the credibility and integrity of the Gospel in our lives.

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PEACE AND SECURITY

"How can the world of nature and the community of peoples with their national economies be harmonized? Posing the question this way suggests that the two are separate. But not so. Humanity, the human species, exists and is supported within the world of nature. And I mean that not figuratively but literally.

We are deep-air animals living inside an ecological system. We draw boundaries, of course, on the ecosphere for national and regional purposes. But it is all of one piece.

When, therefore, we optimistically declare that economic development and environmental maintenance can go along hand in hand, this qualifier must immediately be added: only if the maintenance of the ecosphere is made the first priority. Economic development must be secondary, guided by strict ecological standards. These fundamental ideas are far from being universally accepted."

Stanley Rowe,
Saskatchewan Environmental Society,
WCED Public Hearing, Ottawa. 26-27 May 1986.

THE ROLE OF THEOLOGY IN A WHOLISTIC FAITH COMMITMENT

M. Amaladoss, S.J.

What is Faith? Theology is usually described as faith seeking understanding. It is a sufficiently good description to start with. It depends, of course, on what we mean by faith. For many people in the Church, even today, faith means a Creed, a system of dogmatic affirmations, derived from revelation and the magisterium. The task of theology is seen then as understanding, explaining and also justifying these statements, showing their interconnection as a system of truths. This is systematic theology - or for many, simply theology. Other areas of reflection like worship, morals, etc., are practical applications in a particular situation of eternal theological principles.

Faith as Commitment to a Person: This neat structure however is radically questioned when we think of faith primarily as an experience of commitment to a Person whom one encounters and not as a body of truths. The first expression of this faith experience, which is one dimension of the experience itself, is celebration. Then comes a more formal, but still original expression in the context of communicating it to another. This is witness or proclamation. Only at a third stage does one start reflecting, either when one's witness is questioned by some who object to it because of their own world-views or when questions and doubts arise in one's own mind with regard to faith-experience in relation to other experiences of life, other cultures, and other socio-political situations. It is this attempt at reflection and understanding that is properly theology. We have then three levels of faith: faith experienced, faith proclaimed and faith reflected on.

FAITH EXPERIENCED

Distance between Faith Experience and Theology: For my purpose here I need not go into the analysis of the elements that make up a personal experience - especially a spiritual one. These elements certainly include also a spontaneous symbolic expression. At a second level this experience is witnessed to and proclaimed in a language that is symbolic, charged with emotion, combined with other media like gesture, and more deeply manifested in a transformation of life. Poetry, music, dance, the plastic arts and even the way of life supply the tools of self-expression at this level. These are some of the constituent elements of culture. Theology is a reflection that is twice removed from the faith experience which is its source. However, theological reflection is not a merely rational process, conceptual and abstract, cut off from reality. Rather, theological reflection finds expression in any media; an image, a story, a poem, a symbol or finally a philosophic statement. Today some will speak of symbolic or narrative theology. The myths in religious traditions are often first expressions of such reflection in the face of cosmic and human problems.

A Pluralism of Cultural Expressions: It should be enough just to recall here that as soon as we speak of languages, symbols and world-views we are in the world of cultures and a pluralism of cultural expressions is inevitable. Theology today can no longer pretend to a universality that was, rather artificially, maintained thanks to Latin and the Scholastic system of thought. Because of historical conditions the European-American cultures still have a hegemony. But theological pluralism and the consequent limitation of any particular theological expression will become evident as the Asian and the African theologies come into their own: the 'disturbance' being caused by the Latin American theologies is only a forerunner.

FAITH PROCLAIMED

Proclamation seeks to communicate an experience. It tries to recreate in the hearer or spectator through symbols of every kind the conditions for the emergence of an experience similar to the one that one has had oneself. It has a concreteness about it. Theology, on the contrary, is at an abstract level of rational explanation, useful and convincing perhaps to someone who has already had an experience and who is committed in faith, but unable, by itself, to communicate a conviction or to provoke a conversion. I do not mean to say that such reflective articulation is not necessary. We need to understand, to make sense of our experience in the multiple context of a world view that underlies our perceptions, of the other sources of knowledge like the various sciences, and of the structure of meaning that we ourselves have created in terms of a philosophy, explicit or implicit.

The Difference Between Proclamation and Theology: I think it is crucial to understand clearly this difference between proclamation and theology. In recent years we have tended to see 'theology' in any expression of faith-experience and we have tended to thrust theology everywhere. Such an imprecise use of terms devalues the importance and immediacy of the language of proclamation on the one hand and on the other imposes burdens on theology that it cannot bear. Thus worship must really speak a language of experience. It is primarily not even proclamation, but a re-living of experience. It is couched in symbols, gestures, symbolic action, light, sound, atmosphere and doxology. An undue insistence on the 'word' - not the Word of God, but verbal formulations, often substituting or overshadowing symbols and gestures - easily makes it an ineffective discourse.

Catechesis Recreates an Experience: Similarly, catechesis must be a language of proclamation that seeks to communicate or rather recreate an experience. Instead, the children are offered reflections, explanations and answers to questions which they have never asked. Can we not call these efforts abuses of theology which has a mistaken notion of its own identity? Perhaps the difference between some of the new religious movements and institutionalized religions may lie in this: while the new religious movements seek to communicate an experience, the institutionalized religions try to teach a body of doctrine. I am not saying that theology is not needed. I am only saying that it is not the most important element in religious experience. And yet, if we look at the place it has in the programme of priestly formation, one wonders; and if one realises that

often it is a system that does not seek a basis in living experience, one wonders even more.

FAITH REFLECTED ON

Looking only at its formal object, namely "everything in relation to God", theology was called the queen of the sciences. Philosophy was its handmaid. The other sciences, busy with more material objects, did not even deserve to be compared with the queen of the sciences. I think that this perspective has changed. The Reality that we encounter in religious experience is infinite, ineffable and beyond all limitations. But the person experiencing the Reality, cuts the experience down to size - that is, to his or her size. The experience itself is historically, culturally, and personally conditioned - inevitably. At the time of the experience the attention is on the Reality experienced: one is ex-static. The conditioning of experience is unconscious, because it is structural, part of the person experiencing. The person can become aware of it if he or she looks at the experience reflexively. Otherwise it is just an element of the experience. This conditioning becomes the more pronounced and the more explicit as soon the person tries to express the experience: because she or he is obliged to do it in terms of a particular culture, in the background of a particular world-view, with the mediation of a particular symbol system, in the context of a particular history. The farther the expression moves away from experience, the more pervasive and the more explicit the conditioning.

Constantly in Touch with the Original Experience: The human and social sciences have as their objects of study precisely these cultural, human and social structures, which not only condition the experiencing and the expression, but also raise the question of relevance. Theology has a complex relationship with them. On the one hand it cannot fully understand and analyse the situation and the conditioning without the help of the various sciences and the tools of analysis that they provide. On the other hand it has to remain in dialogue with them and keep on challenging them and their perspectives on behalf of an experience that, in its origin and its outreach, transcends them. While being obliged to speak their language, theology has to use it precisely to challenge them. It can do so only in so far as it keeps constantly in touch with the original experience. The more theology tends to become a system in itself, the more it tends to move away from the experience. On the other hand its closeness to experience is not of the same order as that of the language of worship or of proclamation.

The Special Kind of Human/Religious Experience: One speaks sometimes of an interdisciplinary approach in theology. This is true in so far as one cannot reflect theologically today without some knowledge, either implicit or explicit, either first or second hand, of the human and social sciences. But clarity requires us to specify that while all the sciences have to intervene in our analysis and study of the same human experience, not all of them do so from the same point of view or with the same objective. For theology the point of reference and coordination remains always the special kind of human/religious experience on which it seeks to throw light.

Theology as Hermeneutics: To speak of the hermeneutics function of theology is one way of coming to terms with this complexity. The task of interpretation will have to take into account the following factors: the original experience in its original expression; the contemporary situation to which this original experience is not only relevant in some abstract way but in which it seeks to be re-presented, re-created, re-lived; the various personal, social, cultural and historical structures which condition both the original experience/expression and its contemporary re-living; the various sciences that analyse these structures. To describe its function as hermeneutic points to its subordinate, reflective role in an overall process that is the religious dimension of life itself.

The Charismatic and the Institutional Dimensions of Religion. The role of religion is an ambiguous one. On the one hand it prophetically challenges existing structures in the name of a fullness to which everyone is called. But unfortunately religion has also often legitimated the existing structures, and preached an other-worldly salvation. One could recall the charismatic and the institutional dimensions of religion. While the Charismatic element pushes ahead and calls to conversion, the institutional tends to be conservative, preferring the status quo. In all religions these elements are found in varying proportions. Theology could be found as an adjunct to both these elements. I feel that if some one chooses to support the prophetic element in religion it is not because of theology. The basic option is made at another level of experience or commitment. Theological reflection then comes to explain, support and sometimes even justify the option that one has taken. The option itself is induced by an experience. One does not opt for the poor as a conclusion of an argument. One makes such an option because one has lived with the poor and experienced the unjust situation to which they are reduced by the oppression of other people. After the option has been made one finds reasons for it that fit it in with one's theological world-view.

Theology and 'Praxis' It is almost a truism to say that theology must lead to "praxis". That theology must not be seen as irrelevant to life is a good intention. But it is difficult to see how theology by itself can lead to praxis. It lacks the power which experience has to provoke commitment. At the same time, before it can pass to the level of praxis it will have to be mediated by many other factors like a concrete goal spelt out in socio-political terms, an ideology that leads to action, strategies and action plans, cultural action leading to change of attitudes, etc. At all these levels, action groups need the input of the various human and social sciences. Between a spiritual experience that urges to action and a concrete project for action theology is certainly a necessary and important link. Otherwise, the experience can merely remain emotional. But theology is only a link. I agree that it is wrong to make of theology a 'science', that is an autonomous discipline with its own first principles, theses, theories and proofs. But this does not mean that we should make theology into an ideology. Theology is but a stage between experience and 'praxis'. I think that some today do not realize the important mediation of the human and social sciences, not only between experience and theology, but also between theology and action. The danger then is that theology itself

becomes an ideology, all the more inauthentic for being a direct application of selective biblical categories, often in a moralistic way, to the contemporary situation.

A 'Communal' Theology: Theology is normally confessional - not in the sense of being a confession of faith, but in the sense of being conditioned by the Creed of a community. The adjective 'communal' may be more appropriate. As such theology often seems to be a force for division rather than for unity. It has been the experience of many people engaged in dialogue, either inter-religious or ecumenical, that while spiritual people seem to be more ready to understand and respect each other and even see how close they are to each other in the depths of their spiritual experiences, it is the theologians who keep reminding them how far they really should be from each other. At the level of experience it seems easier to communicate. At the level of symbolic expression too it seems easy to understand each other. The symbols provide a wide field of meaning in which locating the plurality of perceptions and of interpretations of the symbol does not pose an insurmountable problem. But as soon as one comes to the level of reflection, one tends to slip easily to the rational, conceptual level. Then one goes for 'clear and distinct' ideas and one is bound by logical rules of expression. What would have seemed complementary perspectives or dialectical contraries become simple contradictions. Could this be a problem with all our ecumenical discussions and also with our interreligious dialogue? It is not that we should not take theology seriously. But we need not give it the same importance that we give to the primary experience and its symbolic expression. And if our experience is one of a basic unity of all human beings as children of God called to share in God's own mysterious ways the new life of Christ, then our theological reflection has to be first of all ecumenical before focussing on what divides us.

Conclusion: The way from experience to action necessarily passes through reflection. While it is wrong to think that reflection has the central role in the process, one cannot do without it. In day to day life, excellent guiding principles and lofty ideals have to be applied to the concrete situation and this is not done without reflection. Theology thus fulfils a necessary role of mediation between experience and action.

A mediator has to keep in constant touch both with experience and with action. The temptation for theology, as rational discourse, is to claim an autonomy and to build for itself a 'Kingdom' that slowly gets cut off both from experience and from action. It becomes then a special technical dialogue among experts who ignore the mystics on the one hand and the ordinary person-in-the-street on the other.

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SPECIAL MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCHES

Over 200 representatives of Christian Churches and religious congregations of women and men in Rome met with a high level delegation of Church leaders representative of the South African Council of Churches member-Churches and the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference. The meeting which was organized by SEDOS was held on May 26th at the Augustinianum.

Representatives of the South African Council of Churches member Churches included: Archbishop Desmond TUTU--Metropolitan of the Church of the Province of South Africa; Mrs. Virginia GCABASHE--Vice President of the South African Council of Churches and a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches; Rev. Sol JACOB--Coordinator and Secretary of this Delegation; Rev. Paul MAKHUBU--Member of the Executive of the South African Council of Churches and General Secretary of the Council of African Independent Churches and Rev. Khoza MGOJO--President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

Representatives of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference included: Archbishop George DANIEL--Archbishop of Pretoria and Chairman of the Commission of Ecumenism of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference; Archbishop Peter BUTHELEZI--Archbishop of Bloemfontein and Bishop Mansuet BIYASI--Bishop of the diocese of Eshowe.

The purpose of their visit to Rome was to hold discussions with the Holy Father and his advisors at the Vatican in order to share with them the suffering of the people of South Africa and what the Churches are experiencing there at the present time. The delegation also considered their visit to Rome an occasion to seek strong moral and spiritual support for the Churches in South Africa in their struggle against apartheid. The delegation considered the presence of so many church leaders at the SEDOS meeting to be a sign of genuine concern and solidarity.

The joint ecumenical visit to Rome was historic and gave expression to the close working relationship and co-operation between the S.A. Council of Churches and the S.A. Catholic Bishops' Conference both within South Africa and on the wider international Church scene.

During the main talks and in the question and answer period the deteriorating situation in South Africa became clear. One issue that was of particular concern to the Churches is a new Bill known as the Promotion of Orderly Internal Politics Bill which was introduced in Parliament by the Minister of Justice. The purpose of this Bill is to cut off all outside funding for the Churches of South Africa and the Church representatives saw this Bill as a serious threat to the effective work of the Churches. They are calling for international solidarity in opposing the passing of this Bill. The Churches fear that they will be turned into National Churches further and further cut off from the worldwide Church --from solidarity and support. Please write directly to the South African government or contact the South African Embassy in your country to protest this new Bill. Visits by ecumenical delegations to the Embassy would be extremely effective.

