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IN THIS ISSUE

**Popular Religiosity** is intimately connected with respect for the integrity of creation. Fr. Lovett makes a plea that the richness of past creative living, enshrined in the language and tradition of a people, be seen as the soil in which the gospel must take root. This is the final article which we are presenting as a preparatory reflection for the forthcoming SEDOS Seminar on Evangelization and Popular Religiosity.

The article of Fr. Paul Parathazham analyses the findings of a national survey on Catholic priests as part of the process of preparing a new **Charter of Priestly Formation for India**. The decision of the Bishops to commission such a study is a genuine example of episcopal leadership in their courageous determination to try to get the facts. It could be a model for Church leaders anywhere.

"**Racism Awareness**" was developed by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious for use in the U.S. We have adapted it slightly for SEDOS Bulletin readers as we believe that it could be a helpful tool for use in international institutes and specially perhaps in houses of formation.

We considered it opportune to publish an abridged version of Dr. David Kerr's **Personal Pilgrimage with Islam** delivered at Selly Oak Colleges, which he kindly forwarded to us. The address was given on the occasion of his departure from the CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIAN - MUSLIM RELATIONS, with which he had been associated for fifteen years. His story is a timely reminder of the profound importance of dialogue in mission. We quote from his concluding paragraph:

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"Placing myself humbly and searchingly in this Franciscan tradition I firmly believe in mission, but not in the sense of taking truth to an imagined-hostile Islamic world. No, rather in the sense of discovery - solely with the purpose of discerning what therein the Holy Spirit is bringing to perfection, in the sure conviction that I have of God as known by faith in Jesus Christ, that where the Holy Spirit is, so there the mystery of God is active in creation and salvation. For this task of discovery I prefer to use the term "dialogue", though I do not shrink from the word mission for, in this sense, it is dialogue".

His address is heartening in these difficult days of misunderstanding and conflict swirling around the publication of Rushdie's controversial book. And we believe his respect for dialogue is an inspiration reaching beyond the confines of Islam - Christian relations.

We bring to your attention **Selected Studies** made by members of SEDOS available in SEDOS Documentation Centre.

And there are important **Events, News** and some **Book Notes**.

### COMING EVENTS

#### EVANGELIZATION AND POPULAR RELIGIOSITY

RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR: VILLA CAVALLETTI  
APRIL 11, 6.00 p.m. - APRIL 15, 2.00 p.m.

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#### HAITI UP-DATE

SEDOS SECRETARIAT - TUESDAY MAY 2, 1989; 3.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.

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#### NEW FORMS OF LAY MEMBERSHIP IN MISSIONARY INSTITUTES

SEDOS SECRETARIAT - TUESDAY, MAY 2, 1989; 5.15 p.m. - 7.00 p.m.

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Continued on p. 107

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## POPULAR RELIGIOSITY

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Brendan Lovett, SSC

'Humanity's current predatory relationship with nature reflects a man-centered world view that has evolved over the ages. Almost every society has had its myths about the earth and its origins. The ancient Chinese depicted Chaos as an enormous egg whose parts separated into earth and sky, yin and yang. The Greeks believed Gaea, the earth, was created immediately after Chaos and gave birth to the gods. In many pagan societies, the earth was seen as a mother, a fertile giver of life. Nature - the soil, forest, sea - was endowed with divinity, and mortals were subordinate to it.

The Judeo-Christian tradition introduced a radically different concept. The earth was the creation of a monotheistic God, who, after shaping it, ordered its inhabitants, in the words of Genesis: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.' The idea of dominion could be interpreted as an invitation to use nature as a convenience. Thus the spread of Christianity, which is generally considered to have paved the way for the development of technology, may at the same time have carried the seeds of the wanton exploitation of nature that often accompanied technical progress.

Those tendencies were compounded by the Enlightenment notion of a mechanistic universe that man could shape to his own ends through science. The exuberant optimism of that world view was behind some of the greatest achievements of modern times: the invention of labor-saving machines, the discovery of anesthetics and vaccines, the development of efficient transportation and communication systems. But, increasingly, technology has come up against the law of unexpected consequences. Advances in health care have lengthened life-spans, lowered infant-mortality rates and, thus, aggravated the population problem. The use of pesticides has increased crop yields but polluted water supplies. The invention of automobiles and jet planes has revolutionized travel but sullied the atmosphere...' Time, January 2nd, 1989, pp. 17-18.

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(The following is Part I of Fr. Lovett's article. It begins by referring to the influence of the 'Enlightenment' mentioned in the above quote. The term refers to an era coinciding roughly with the 18th century when, mainly in France, Britain and Germany, philosophers and scientists thought of 'Reason' as the key to understanding the Universe. The mentality produced by this way of thinking has persisted widely and the author shows how it has affected peoples' religious view of life. He refers too to the devastating consequences of simplistically interpreting mankind's dominion over the earth as related in Genesis, also mentioned in the Time quote. The author questions the assumptions of those who consider *their* religiosity as superior to **popular** religiosity).

## THE PREJUDICE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

It is very nearly impossible to find a piece of writing on popular religiosity that does not manifest a note of condescension. This is true despite the fact that writers are divided into passionate defenders of popular religiosity and equally passionate detractors. The passionate defenders speak in moving but patronizing terms of safeguarding the faith of the simple faithful: the passionate detractors write off as stultifying any religious symbolism which falls outside their own limited range of comprehension.

Both sides share what I shall call the prejudice of the Enlightenment in regard to all that preceded that particular historical movement or fell, subsequently, outside its scope of influence. Since a crucial moment in the development of this particular ideology was the value set on book-learning, and since learning and education generally come to be reductively identified with schooling, all those whose consciousness has been shaped by schooling easily assume that what they have learned in school is unquestionably superior to, infinitely truer than, that understanding of things with which 'the unschooled' have to manage.

The main reason why the presumption should be re-thought is that the most important part of anybody's learning owes nothing to the modern institutions which we call schools, colleges and universities. I include within this most important part of what we know, of course, people's religious understanding of life. Nobody ever became religious through schooling.

Secondly, what schools have had to impart to people over recent centuries - the basis of our professional hubris - has been a very limited kind of knowledge, to do primarily with a quantitative appropriation of our world which easily led to technological mastery without facilitating in the least people's grasp of the qualitative implications of such knowledge or such mastery. To the extent that people were schooled to pay more attention to what the school had to impart to them than they paid to their own experientially gained knowledge and the understanding mediated to them by the community, they were harmed.

## A NEW EVALUATION

Recent official Church documents reveal a new evaluation. They have come to realize that faith is expressed in people's religion in a form that is historically concrete, social and cultural. The practices directly express people's fundamental concern for meaning in life, suffering and death and help to give coherence and sense of direction to life. What this can result in is a harmonious well-balanced form of human existence which could well be envied by the schooled élites who, while seeing themselves as more developed, lack either the cosmic, natural feel of life or the historical-prophetic dimension, or both. Where people effect this historically concrete, social and cultural integration of religious value in their own way, it can lead to - "a harmonious form of existence which has been deep, experiential, satisfying, enjoyable, embracing life's most intimate realities, material and sexual, and without any repressive Manichaeism or dualism. At the same time life has been structured, committed, liberating and critical".

This is not to say that there is no place for proclamation of the

gospel, or that people should be just left to themselves. It is an insistent plea that the richness of past creative human living, enshrined in the language and traditions of a people, be seen as the soil in which the gospel must take root, the soil without which it cannot come to fruition in liberated human beings. It is to recognise that only people themselves can effect this creative transformation of their meanings. It is to recognise that the message of Judaeo-Christianity is a message articulated in limited historical form which, if it be presented as the whole truth, must be detrimental to at least some dimensions of human growth. And, in fact, any proper study of the Judaeo-Christian traditions in their historical realization will reveal orientations which have led to imbalance.

#### A FEW EXAMPLES

To give a few examples, the biblical commitment to a transcendent personal monotheistic concept of deity with severe prohibitions against any worship of divinity resident in nature had the effect of shrinking the previously pervasive presence of the divine throughout the natural world and constellating it in a strictly transcendent mode. The very purpose of Genesis was to withdraw Israel from the Near Eastern tradition.

Secondly, the redemption experience became the dominant mode of Christian consciousness, further diminishing attention to creation experience. While a general sensitivity to the natural world and to cosmology survived down to the medieval period, during the 14th century after the Black Death, an overwhelming commitment to redemption controlled the Christian experience. From then, down to our own times, creation has been a non-topic for theological reflection. Nature gradually disappeared from Christian consciousness.

Then there is the Christian emphasis on the spiritual nature of the human over against the (alleged) physical nature of other creatures. While I do not think that all of these orientations of Christianity, even when taken collectively, are responsible for the devastation of our world over the last few hundred years, they certainly contributed to the devastation.

My point in bringing up all these shortcomings of the tradition is to insist that it is only the balanced richness of a receiving culture whose relationship to the earth was not so alienated that could have corrected the imbalance. In other words, people's own religiosity was the necessary corrective to the destructive orientations of the tradition. No amount of refined theological study within the alienated tradition could have effected the cure, nor can it do so today.

In ordinary usage 'people' are the commonality as distinct from, if not opposed to, ruling cliques or endowed élites. My argument so far has been that such a distinction cannot ground an automatic value-judgment in the field of religiosity, such that the religion of the élites could ever be presumed to be more authentic.

POPULAR RELIGIOSITY

'Popular religiosity' is a term invented by persons who clearly think that there is another kind of religiosity to be found somewhere in the world. Presumably, they have their own religiosity in mind. It is worth raising a question about this. It is, I think, arguable that people are confusing levels of articulation or reflection on faith with the fundamental reality of faith itself.

I believe simply that there is no other kind of religiosity than people's religiosity...religiosity of people, and I find the suggestion that the religion of a particular class of people could ever be judged superior to that of another class an absurd suggestion.

There are, of course, institutionalized practices of religion. And there is such a thing as the religiosity of people whose categories of understanding and expression of faith are very heavily shaped by institutional reality. Priests, religious and theologians, and the few who read theological books and hear a lot of sermons probably fall into this category. But if there is only people's religiosity, how does one determine how one person's religiosity is better than another person's? There may well be ways of doing this but what I am suggesting at this point is that invocation by one group of the category 'popular religiosity' in reference to another group is definitely not one of the acceptable ways.

Insofar as authorities in the Church are tainted with the ideology of professionalism, they may be tempted to see themselves as being more truly religious than others, seen in a descending scale at the bottom of which would be those unfortunates who have absolutely no contact with them or with their institutions. This, like all temptations, is to be mightily resisted.

The pertinent question is: what are the limits to which any People can share in a clerically conceived Christianity? The obvious difference between the priest's and the people's religion should not be contrasted too quickly in terms of the superior and the simple.

- end -

Ref. Columban Intercom, February, 1989, Vol. 11, No.2  
Dalgan Park, Navan, Co. Meath, Ireland.

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## CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN INDIA: REFLECTIONS ON A SURVEY

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Paul Parathazham

(We are grateful to Eugen Nunnenmacher, SVD., for this comment on Fr. Parathazham's article - Ed.)

The following article seems to be of special interest because it presents a number of features that appear significant beyond the particular framework of India.

1. The very decision by the Indian bishops to commission such a study has to be valued as a genuine act of foresight and willingness to tackle a difficult problem. They courageously employ all the means, including methods offered by the social sciences, that promise to be of some help towards a clearer view of certain situations. Unfortunately, such approaches are still met with occasional reluctance on the part of church leaders who are not fully convinced of the usefulness of quantitative procedures as meaningful stepping stones towards the solution of complex qualitative problems.

2. These Church leaders, by soliciting such contributions indicate that they do take the human dimension seriously enough to insist on searching for a solid foundation for any priestly service. They go beyond rather abstractly conceived training programs by investigating, also, on an empirical basis both poles of reference involved: the persons in formation or already formed and the people actually ministered to. This is theologically and pastorally correct and is somewhat remarkable. Priestly formation sometimes tends to be based almost exclusively on theoretical principles or well established traditions, without sufficiently considering an important number of contingent circumstances including the viewpoints of the Christian community to whom the priest ministers.

3. The summary presentation of this inquiry leaves a number of questions as well as answers still open to further evaluation and interpretation, but the practical relevance of certain findings and their potential implications for decision making processes cannot seriously be doubted. The obvious divergence of perceptions and expectations concerning important points of the priestly image among seminarians, clergy and lay people requires a critical review of the actual situation and a continuous search for improvement in future formation.

4. Although in every concrete case problems and preconditions may differ and the immediate applicability of the process in the present study may be limited, yet this type of scientific approach to specific aspects in a particular church context might serve as a helpful model, or at least as an encouraging example, for other areas of the world where similar trends could be identified and should be dealt with for the benefit of a sound ecclesiastical development. In many countries with high scientific standards such studies have been undertaken already years ago, but in some other places there is not only a lack of trained specialists in this field but also a certain lack of awareness of the need for sociological methods. The example of this study confronts mission institutes and church authorities with the burden as well as with the opportunity to promote the training of such specialists and to value the use of sociological processes.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Commission for Clergy and Religious of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India recently undertook a national survey on Catholic priests as part of the process of preparing a new Charter of Priestly Formation for India. The decision to conduct a nation-wide scientific survey was prompted by the belief that priestly formation, to be relevant and effective, must take into account the expectations and perceptions of the whole Catholic community. The principal aim of the study was to gather such data and provide an empirical basis for the discussions and reflections on the principles and priorities of priestly formation in India. Only the major findings are summarized here.

## 2. METHOD

First, a brief word about how this survey was conducted. The unit of analysis is the individual Catholic. The Catholic population of India was divided into five groups: laity, seminarians, priests, bishops, and religious women. The total sample size for the study was approximately 14000: 6000 lay people, 1900 seminarians (all students of theology) 300 priests, 3000 religious women, and 120 bishops. The overall response rate for the study was excellent nearly 99.8 percent (5888) for laity, 89 percent (1685) for seminarians, 71 percent (2050) for priests, and 61 percent (73) for bishops. The lay respondents were interviewed (in fourteen different languages) by a trained team of investigators. The seminarians, priests, and bishops were given questionnaires to fill out either in person or through mail. (Fr. Paul Parathazham, who conducted the survey is a trained sociologist - Ed).

The main questionnaire focused on three major areas: expectations about priests, perceptions of priests, and some debated issues regarding priestly ministry. The questionnaire for the bishops, priests, and seminarians contained an additional section on priestly formation.

## 3. IMAGE OF THE PRIEST: EXPECTATIONS VERSUS PERCEPTIONS

The main objective of the study was to compare and contrast the expected image with the perceived image of the priest. With this in view, the survey listed sixteen qualities a priest may be expected to have and twenty functions a priest may be expected to perform. The respondents were first asked to rate on a three point scale how important it is for a priest in India today to have these qualities or perform these functions. Then they were requested to indicate what proportion of the priests they have known possess these qualities or perform these functions.

### A. QUALITIES

Let us first look at the qualities that are deemed most important for a priest today. According to the laity the five most important qualities required in a priest in the order of importance are: faithfulness to the vow of celibacy, obedience to the bishop or superior, holiness of life, being devout in the celebration of the liturgy, and being learned in religious matters. According to the seminarians the five



top-rated qualities are: not discriminating on the basis of caste or colour, holiness of life, practising what one preaches, willingness to forgive, and being an unselfish person. The priests' list of the top five qualities is the same as that of the seminarians with only a minor difference in the order of importance. The priests put holiness of life first and non-discrimination second. According to the bishops, the five most important qualities for a priest are: holiness of life, faithfulness to celibacy, practising what one preaches, being an unselfish person, and being devout in the celebration of the liturgy.

Detachment from material possessions, simplicity in life-style, and openness to valid criticism are among the lowest in importance according to all the respondent groups.

The pattern of expectations is, for the most part, consistent within the subgroup in the sample. For example, among the laity, male and female, young and old, literate and illiterate, Northerners and Southerners, have by and large similar expectations about the qualities required in a priest. The same is true of the seminarians and priests.

However, there are significant differences in the pattern of expectations between the subgroups in the sample. The laity, and to a lesser extent the bishops, attach greater importance to faithfulness to celibacy, obedience, and devoutness, as compared to the seminarians and priests. In contrast, the seminarians and priests lay greater emphasis on qualities like non-discrimination and unselfishness. They attach relatively less importance to faithfulness to celibacy, obedience, and devoutness. The laity, unlike the clergy, also accord high priority to learning in religious matters as a quality required in a priest.

Gap between Expectations and Perceptions Do the Catholics in India perceive in their priests the qualities they expect? The findings of the survey suggest that perceptions, for the most part, do not match expectations. It would not therefore be an exaggeration to say that the qualities the Catholic community values most in a priest are generally not observed in most priests today.

No respondent group gives a "very good" rating to the priests on any of the sixteen qualities listed in the survey. The laity have the most favourable perception of the quality of life of the priests. They do not rate them "poor" or "very poor" on any of the qualities. The seminarians, in contrast, do not give the priests a "good" rating even on a single quality. In general, the priests get relatively high marks for unselfishness, patience, willingness to forgive, and non-discrimination. They are given relatively low rating on holiness of life, simplicity, impartiality, courtesy, practising what they preach, and openness to valid criticism.

The gap between expectations and perceptions is largest with regard to holiness of life, one of the qualities generally deemed most important for a priest. Holiness of life ranks first or second in expectations, but last or second last in performance rating for all the four respondent groups. Compared to the clergy, the laity rate the priests relatively low on faithfulness to the vow of celibacy, a quality which they consider the most important for a priest. Perceptions belie expectations also with regard to consistency of preaching and practice, and

impartiality and fairness.

## B. FUNCTIONS

There is consensus across the board on the three most important functions of a priest. They are: fostering unity in the parish, teaching the Christian message to the faithful, and promoting the spiritual welfare of the people. Other functions which receive generally high rating are: promoting people's participation in the liturgy, promoting communal harmony, working for the welfare of the poor and the oppressed, and giving helpful advice in the confessional.

Trying out new things in the church, undertaking socio-economic projects for the welfare of the parish, helping the poor by promoting their rights are among the lowest in importance as functions of a priest. It is interesting to note that while working for the poor and the oppressed is accorded generally high importance as a priestly function, all the three concrete modes of working for the poor indicated in the survey questionnaire - namely, social work, social service, and socio-political action - receive very low rating as functions of a priest. This seems to suggest that while a priest is generally expected to work for the welfare of the poor and the oppressed, there is as yet no clarity in the minds of the Catholics as to how a priest is to exercise the so-called "option for the poor".

Positive Correlation between Expectations and Perceptions Unlike in the case of qualities, there is a strong positive correlation between expectations and perceptions with respect to the functions of a priest. In other words, in the performance of priestly functions, the priests of India, by and large, live up to the community's expectations.

The four respondent groups are very similar in their rating of the priests on the performance of the functions listed in the survey. The priests get the highest marks for preserving unity in the parish and maintaining communal harmony. The priests are also generally perceived to be doing well in handling common funds responsibly, working for the spiritual welfare of the faithful, and teaching the Christian message to the people. They are, however, rated very low on organizing the poor to fight for their rights, reaching out to Non-Christians, helping the poor by providing food, clothing and shelter, and trying out new things in the Church.

Consistent with the pattern observed earlier, the laity have the most favourable perception of the priest as a functionary, and the seminarians the least favourable perception.

## 4. YOUNGER VERSUS OLDER PRIESTS

So far we have dealt with the Catholic community's perceptions of the priests as a whole. Since it is likely, however, that the people perceive the older and the younger priests differently, the survey also sought to elicit comparative perceptions. Since the younger priests are the beneficiaries of a revised, post-Vatican II formation programme, people's perceptions of the younger priests vis-a-vis the older ones may

help to assess the relative merits of pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II approaches to priestly formation.

The survey questionnaire listed fourteen qualities and aptitudes, and the respondents were asked to indicate whether, in their opinion, the younger or the older priests were superior on each of these qualities and aptitudes. The laity in general clearly have greater appreciation for the older clergy than for the younger clergy. On six of the fourteen items, the laity rate the older priests superior; on another six, they see little difference between the younger and the older ones. Only on two of the fourteen qualities do the laity find the younger priests superior to the older, namely, sociability and willingness to change.

However, if we examine the views of the educated and the uneducated laity separately, a somewhat different picture emerges. The educated laity have, in general, greater appreciation of the younger clergy than the older ones. The college educated laity, for example, find the younger clergy superior on eight of the fourteen items. Like the educated laity, the clergy too, particularly the seminarians and priests, give higher marks to the younger priests on most of the qualities and aptitudes. However, it is very significant that all the respondents, the clergy and the laity, the educated as well as the not-so-educated, consistently rate the older priests much superior on what are generally perceived as key qualities of a priest: namely, holiness of life, faithfulness to celibacy, and practising what one preaches.

## 5. SOME DEBATED ISSUES

The study also canvassed the views of the respondents on a number of debated issues concerning priestly life and ministry. I would like to highlight some of these findings.

Married Priests Should the priests be allowed to marry? While almost all the bishops and the overwhelming majority of the laity say "no", about one-fourth of the priests and seminarians say: "yes, the priests should be allowed to marry". Should married men be allowed to become priests? Nearly one half of the priests and more than one-third of the seminarians are in favour of married men being ordained priests. The overwhelming majority of the bishops and the laity, however, oppose it. Should women be ordained priests? While the bishops almost unanimously reject the idea, about 20 percent of the laity and priests and 30 percent of seminarians welcome the idea.

Priest Members of State Assembly Is it right for a priest in India to contest an election to the state assembly? Thirty-nine percent of the laity, 44 percent of the priests, and 58 percent of seminarians think that it is right for a priest to contest an election. The bishops are unanimous that it is wrong for a priest to do so.

Priests' Involved with Small Fishermens' Rights Not too long ago, a few priests participated in a practical agitation which had as its professed aim the protection of the rights of the fishermen. Were they right in doing so? Seventy-one percent of the lay people, 74 percent of the priests, and 85 percent of the seminarians approve of the priests' involvement in the "fishermen's

struggle". Two-thirds of the bishops disapprove of it.

## 6. PERSPECTIVES ON PRIESTLY FORMATION

A number of direct questions about various aspects of the formation they received were asked of the priests, seminarians and bishops. We shall look briefly at some of the findings which might help us to identify possible problem areas in priestly formation today.

The majority of the priests, seminarians, and bishops agree, at least somewhat, that "all things considered they can honestly say that the training they received prepared them adequately to meet the task and challenges of priestly ministry". As far as the intellectual formation is concerned, the majority agree that they "benefited much" from the study of philosophy. With respect to theology, however, the majority think that the theology they were taught was "largely irrelevant to the pastoral needs of India today". Further, not even a third of the respondents feel that the seminary formation gave them "a deeper understanding of India and its culture".

The Spiritual Formation they received in the seminary was found to be inadequate by about half of the priests and seminarians. Paradoxically, 43 percent of the seminarians say that the seminary formation in fact dampened their enthusiasm for the priesthood.

Emotional Growth Fifty-eight percent of the seminarians, 55 percent of the priests and 40 percent of the bishops aver that the emotional growth and maturity of the seminarians were largely neglected in the seminary formation. Again, 60 percent of the priests, 48 percent of the seminarians, and 44 percent of the bishops state that the seminary did not place sufficient emphasis on developing human qualities in the seminarian. One out of every two seminarians today feels that his seminary lacks a healthy community spirit.

Structured Formation More than 60 percent of the priests and seminarians and nearly half of the bishops feel that "the seminary formation was so rigidly structured that there was little room for critical thinking and creative expression". About two-thirds of all the respondents are of opinion that "the seminarian lost touch with ordinary people and their problems".

Fifty-two percent of the seminarians and 37 percent of the priests feel that they entered the seminary at too early an age. About three fourths of the priests and more than half of the seminarians report that after joining the seminary they never seriously reconsidered their decision to become a priest. One out of every eight students of theology today regrets his decision to join the seminary.

As for the programme of studies, Sacred Scripture, moral theology, and pastoral theology are rated very high in importance by all the respondent groups. The study of Indian philosophy and of the regional language also are ranked high in importance by all. Western philosophy is deemed least important. Canon law, social sciences, and diaconate ministry also are generally accorded low priority.

## 7. ISSUES THE STUDY RAISES: SOME REFLECTIONS

We now turn to some of the implications of these findings for priestly formation and priestly ministry in our country.

First of all, the study provides a number of insights about what kind of a priest the people expect today. Admittedly, the kind of priest the people expect is not necessarily the kind of priest they need, or for that matter, the kind of priest India needs today. Nevertheless, it is clear that a formation programme that is indifferent to the expectations of the people runs the risk of turning out priests who may have serious adjustment problems in their ministry.

(1) Conflicting Expectations The survey reveals that with regard to the kind of person a priest ought to be, there are today divergent, even conflicting, expectations within the Catholic community. As might be expected, all are in agreement that a priest must primarily be a holy person. But all do not seem to agree on what it means to be a holy person. The lay people seem to understand priestly holiness chiefly in terms of faithfulness to celibacy, obedience to the bishop, devoutness in celebrating the liturgy, and being learned in religious matters. None of these qualities, however, feature in the priorities of the seminarian, the priest of tomorrow. To him a holy priest is one who does not discriminate on the basis of caste, colour, or sex, who practises what he preaches, and who is forgiving and unselfish.

Which of these two interpretations of holiness is theologically more sound is perhaps a moot point. From a sociological point of view, however, the existence of conflicting expectations about priests does not augur well for priestly ministry in India. The priest is the leader of the Christian community. He will not be able to exercise his leadership with any measure of effectiveness unless the people accept him, unless they see in him the qualities they expect.

(2) Conflicting Perceptions A second problem the study undercores is related to the way the lay people perceive their priests today. As observed earlier, the lay people in general perceive the priests favourably, much more favourably than the seminarians and even the priests themselves. However, when we analyze the educated laity's perceptions separately, the picture that emerges is certainly cause for concern. The following table presents some comparative data on the perceptions of the educated versus the uneducated laity.

### Laity's Perceptions of Priests by Education Level

MOST PRIESTS ARE...	<u>uneducated</u>	<u>educated</u>
holy persons	52	13
good preachers	52	9
courteous	49	12
devout	63	33
fair and impartial	45	11
simple in life-style	44	12
faithful to celibacy	53	26
give helpful advice in the confessional	61	30
able administrators	50	14

	<u>uneducated</u>	<u>educated</u>
democratic	41	11
obedient	63	24
promote spiritual welfare of faithful	58	29
learned in religious matters	66	46

The trend in the data is clear and consistent. By and large, the people who accept and respect the priests today are the uneducated, not the educated. In other words, the priests of today seem to have failed to provide leadership to the educated laity. If the seminary training, which lasts a decade or longer, succeeds only in forming priests whose appeal is limited largely to the uneducated, is there not perhaps something fundamentally wrong with the thrust of our formation programme? The survey data do not support the popular perception that the educated are generally less "religious" than the uneducated. This problem is likely to worsen in the future. As an older generation of largely uneducated Catholics is replaced by a younger generation of mostly educated Catholics, the ranks of those who accept and respect the priest's authority will steadily dwindle.

#### SEMINARY FORMATION

(a) Freedom of Choice When we look at the data on priestly formation proper, what strikes one first is the question of freedom. As observed earlier, more than half of the seminarians and 37 percent of the priests feel that they joined the seminary at too early an age. This seems to amount to an admission, if indirect, that when they entered the seminary they were not quite aware of all its implications. On the other hand, the majority of the priests and seminarians also state that after joining the seminary they never seriously considered leaving the seminary. Apparently, once they got on the priesthood track, they just went along. One out of every eight theology students (12.5%) says that he regrets his decision to join the seminary. Reliable statistics about the dropout rate among the theology students in India are not available. But it seems obvious that one out of every eight theology students today does not voluntarily discontinue to pursue the priesthood. The drop-out rate is evidently much lower than 12.5 per cent. The implication is clear as well as disconcerting: there are in our seminaries today a good number of candidates who regret their decision to become a priest, and yet, for reasons best known to themselves, are unwilling or unable to leave the seminary.

(b) Personal Growth Further, while in the seminary the seminarian does not seem to have the freedom to grow. As noted earlier, 61 per cent of the seminarians state that the seminary formation is so rigidly structured that there is little room for critical thinking and creative expression. And fifty per cent of the seminarians complain that the seminary does not allow them enough freedom to be themselves, free from undue fear and inhibitions. Clearly, one of the most difficult challenges that face those who are charged with the responsibility for priestly formation today is to ensure that the candidates to the priesthood enter the seminary in freedom, that in the seminary they grow in freedom and that they finally embrace the priesthood in full freedom.

(c) Relevance of Formation Another issue the survey highlights is the question of the relevance of priestly formation. The majority of the priests (59%) and seminarians (55%) say that the theology they were taught is largely irrelevant to the pastoral needs of India today. About two-thirds of them think that the seminary is so sheltered from the mainstream of life that the seminarian loses touch with ordinary people and their problems. Further, two-thirds of the respondents also feel that the seminary education failed to give them a deeper understanding of India and its culture.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The findings of the survey are, no doubt, significant. But, in a sense, even more significant is the Indian bishops' decision to conduct this survey. This is the first time the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India commissioned a nation-wide scientific study before drafting a policy document. This seems to signal a welcome shift towards data-based policy making in the church of India.

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Ref. Vidyajyoti, Vol L11, August 1988, No.8

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## RACISM AWARENESS IN MISSIONARY INSTITUTES

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Leadership Conference of Women Religious

### WHO IS A RACIST

"All white individuals are racists. Even if a white is totally free from all conscious racial prejudices, she or he remains a racist, for she or he receives benefits distributed by a white racist society through its institutions. National and international, institutional and cultural processes are arranged as to automatically benefit whites, just because they are white. It is essential for whites to recognize that they receive most of these racist benefits automatically, unconsciously, and unintentionally."

Education and Racism, Nat. Educ. Assoc.

Introduction: For greatest benefit we suggest that you distribute this tool to your congregational members.

Ask them:

1. To make a personal response
2. To discuss their response with a few other congregational members
3. To discuss their response with person(s) of other cultures (preferably someone in your congregation where possible)

Then:

Provide a total community opportunity for corporate discussions.

### I. RACIAL AWARENESS: SELF-IDENTITY

- 1) Identify yourself (in terms of your membership in a gender, race, class, ethnic or religious group).
- 2) Describe your earliest recollection of an awareness of self-identity (in terms of: (a) gender, (b) race, (c) class, (d) ethnic identification or (e) religious identity).
- 3) List one positive and one negative attribute which society has ascribed to your gender, race, class, ethnic, or religious community.
  - a. Describe one experience where you felt affirmed in your workplace because of your gender, race, class, ethnic or religious identity.
  - b. Describe one experience where you felt oppressed in your workplace because of your gender, race, class, ethnic or religious identity.



c. Describe one experience where you felt oppressed in your Congregation because of gender, race, class, ethnic or religious identity.

d. Describe one experience where you felt affirmed in your Congregation because of gender, race, class, ethnic or religious identity.

e. What were the most common feelings from these experiences?

1) What enabled you to feel powerful?

2) What caused you to feel powerless?

## II. RACIAL AWARENESS: ATTITUDES TOWARDS OTHERS

1. What are your most common feelings when you are exposed to people and situations different from yourself?

2. List your feelings in the order that you thought of them. Try to define your strongest feelings as specifically as possible.

3. As you were growing up, what was your family's attitude toward other racial groups?

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) open and friendly  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (b) indifferent  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (c) prejudiced and unfriendly

4. Has your attitude toward other racial and ethnic groups changed from that of your family? If yes, explain in what ways.

5. How does your attitude toward other racial groups compare with the views held by your friends?

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) same  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (b) slightly different  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (c) different  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (d) very different

6. Which one of the following items do you feel now has the greatest influence on your attitude toward the racial situation in the country or community where you are today?

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) your upbringing  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (b) personal philosophy or religious ideology  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (c) news media, commentators, or writers  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (d) special friends  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (e) other

7. Have you had honest discussions on racial issues with people who have views differing from yours? What did you learn?

8. Do you subscribe to or read newspapers and magazines written by or about people of other cultures? If yes, which publications?

### III. RACIAL AWARENESS: CHANGE AWARENESS

Yes    No

- |       |       |  |
|-------|-------|--|
| _____ | _____ | 1. Have I aggressively sought out more information in an effort to enhance my own awareness and understanding of racism (talking with others, reading, listening)? |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Have I spent some time recently looking at my own racist attitudes and behavior as they contribute to racism around me?   |
| _____ | _____ | 3. Have I reevaluated my use of terms or phrases that may be perceived by others as degrading or hurtful?  |
| _____ | _____ | 4. Have I openly disagreed with a racist comment, joke, or action among those around me?   |
| _____ | _____ | 5. Have I made a personal contract with myself to take a positive stand, even at some possible risk, when the chance occurs?                                       |
| _____ | _____ | 6. Have I become increasingly aware of racist TV programs advertising, news broadcasts, etc?   |
| _____ | _____ | 7. Have I realized that people are trapped by their own school, homes, media, government, etc., even when they choose not to be openly racists?                    |
| _____ | _____ | 8. Have I suggested and taken steps to implement discussions or workshops aimed at understanding racism?   |
| _____ | _____ | 9. Have I been investigating political candidates at all levels in terms of their stance and activity against government practices which are racist?               |
| _____ | _____ | 10. Have I contributed time and/or funds to an agency, fund, or programme that actively confronts the problems of racism?  |
| _____ | _____ | 11. Have my buying habits supported nonracist shops, companies, or personnel?  |
| _____ | _____ | 12. Is my school or place of employment a target for my educational efforts in responding to racism?   |
| _____ | _____ | 13. Have I become seriously dissatisfied with my own level of activity in combating racism?  |

14. How do you respond to the demands of change?

- |                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| _____ (a) easily change       | _____ (d) usually resist |
| _____ (b) question it         | _____ (e) withdrawal     |
| _____ (c) follow the majority |                          |

15. What are some actions you can take to begin the conversion process in yourself to combat/undo racism?

Congregation Inventory

1. What do you perceive as the dominate culture of your religious congregation?
2. What cultural image do you project in your vocation literature?
3. What cultures are represented in the geographical areas where you reside and/or minister?
4. Does your congregation work with persons of different cultures?
5. For approximately how many years has your congregation been involved in this (these) ministries?
6. What types of national or local ethnic events do you participate in or celebrate?
7. How many of the persons of other cultures in our vicinity or ministry have been invited to congregational celebrations?
8. How many have been invited to become members of your congregation?
9. How many are currently members of the congregation? Do you feel this is a good representation?
10. What cultural (racial/ethnic) groups are represented in your congregation?
11. How did the peoples of these cultural groups get to know of and enter your congregation?
12. What gifts did they bring with them? What of these gifts have you assimilated into your congregation?
14. What internal structures (lifestyles) will have to be adjusted in order to truly welcome women/men of other cultures into your congregation?
15. Are persons from various social and ethnic cultures hired in professional positions in your institutions?
16. Do persons from various social and ethnic cultures sit on the boards of your institutions?
17. What types of projects initiated by racial minorities does your congregation support through its investments?
18. What investment criteria has your congregation established to restrict investments in companies known to be pursuing profitability at a cost to racial minority groups.
19. What are some actions you can take to begin/advance the conversion process for the members of your congregation in regard to racism?
20. What are some actions you can take in your institution to change structures that will address the question of racism?

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## A PERSONAL PILGRIMAGE WITH ISLAM

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David A. Kerr

*(The following is a slightly abridged version of the valedictory address given by Dr. David A. Kerr before his departure from the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian - Muslim Relations at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, England. Dr. Kerr was associated with the Centre for fifteen years. He is now at the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian - Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary Connecticut, USA).*

Allow me to follow the suggestion of some trusted colleagues that I might share something of my own experience of trying as a Christian to come to terms with people of other faiths, and with Muslims in particular, for this has been my primary ecumenical concern over these fifteen years in Selly Oak. It is with reluctance that I speak autobiographically, and I trust you will not count it immodest. It just happened that on leaving school I fortuitously took up the study of classical Arabic and Islamic studies.

Islamic Civilisation Three years as an under graduate at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London University utterly changed whatever course I may have expected my life to take. For through the study of Arabic a mind thus far formed on the standard principles of European civilisation, Eurocentrically construed, was opened to the brilliance of another civilisation: that of Islam, extending from its historic origins in the Arabian peninsula to incorporate vast regions of Asia, Africa and Europe in what I now perceive as having been a more truly ecumenical culture than anything achieved by Christendom until modern times, an ecumenical culture which far excelled the culture of Europe through many centuries, and one upon which the latter was heavily dependent philosophically, scientifically, artistically and economically through the Middle Ages and beyond.

The Enlightenment is one of our contemporary concerns and rightly so as Christians are challenged, not only in the West, to re-examine the relationship of modern Christianity to it. But let us not forget that the roots of the Enlightenment lie in significant part in the interaction of Islamic humanistic philosophical tradition and western Christian intellectual development.

Polemical Caricature The second thing I discovered, which all but shattered my confidence in my culture, was the character of most Christian theological response to Islamic civilisation in the medieval age and in modern times. The English Roman Catholic scholar, Norman Daniel, exposed the crudity of Latin Christendom's polemical caricature of Islam in the religious propaganda of the Crusades and identified an immorality which continues to this day in the subculture of the West. Daniel's major book, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image*, (1960), has become seminal to my understanding of a pernicious element in the European Christian mind, and it was the book which first stirred my sense of Christian obligation to try to root out

this evil from the soul of western Christianity. To speak thus may sound presumptuous, but let me emphasise my conviction that polemical characterisation is as seriously a cancerous malignancy in the polemicist as it is maligning of the polemicised: equally dialogue helps us avoid false witness against ourselves as well as against others.

Imperial Manipulation It was another Christian, George Antonius, an Orthodox from Palestine, who dealt the other intellectual and moral body-blow I sustained at the London School of Oriental and African Studies. His incisive account of the Arab Awakening disclosed to me the brutal underside of British imperial history. I discovered erstwhile school-boy heroes to have been little more than unprincipled manipulators of other peoples' predicaments and hopes. Patriotism is fundamentally flawed when it errs into imperialism, and I began to discover myself as a child of post-colonial Britain compelled to criticise much of the tradition which the nation holds dear, and in which the Church in its overseas missions was largely though not always uncritically part. Nowhere, I fear, was the history of this colonial-style involvement more complex, nor the consequences more tragic than in the Middle East, the contemporary conflicts of which region provide us with a daily reminder of the point I am making.

Muslim Hospitality My third formative experience at London University was the friendship of Muslim students. Only vaguely at the time did I sense the crises through which they were passing: not only as overseas students in what so many experience as this unfriendly land; but yet more profoundly in the often-merciless interface between, for many, a traditional Islamic orientation and the highly-charged scepticism of secular western "Islamic Studies". What impressed me in the School of Oriental and African Studies, and continues to impress me today, is the quality of hospitality such students were yet able to extend to those who, like me, were interested in Islam, however wrong-headed or crazy our ideas about it may have seemed to be! In my time in Birmingham my experience of Muslim hospitality has been deepened and enriched. In recent years I have received invitations to speak publicly in the mosques, particularly at the time of festivals and anniversaries.

Cragg's 'Call from the Minaret'. Hospitality is of the essence of dialogue and no one who is familiar with the writing of Dr. Kenneth Cragg will be surprised when I confess to having been immensely attracted to the spirit of his approach to the study of Islam, most decisively expounded in his *Call from the Minaret*, first published in 1958 since when it has secured its reputation as a book which has influenced a generation. He subtly underlines the harsher judgement of the great French Catholic Islamicist, Professor Louis Massignon who drew a striking analogy between what he knew to be historic Christian inhospitality toward Islam and the sin of Sodom (Genesis 19). As, in these days, we discuss the appropriate nature and extent of Christian hospitality to peoples of other faith it may be a needful discipline for us to reflect upon this analogy.

Second Vatican Council Massignon, it is said, was of direct influence upon the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council who urged the Church to explore a new relationship with Muslims, as with Jews, in the Conciliar document *Nostra Aetate* promulgated in the mid-60s. Albeit in cautiously-phrased expressions the Council enunciated the Christian-Jewish-Muslim relationship in terms of a kinship of faith,

nurtured in common acts of piety and through a shared commitment to struggle for justice and peace in human society. In effect it presented a trajectory for interfaith dialogue, a dynamic pattern which encourages Christians to relate with other faith communities as participants in the same providential history to which the Bible testifies and of which the Church is called to be a sign.

The publication of the *Nostra Aetate* coincided with my studies in London, and retrospectively I want to say that it was this which determined my future course. I felt compelled to come to terms with Islam, or else cease to be a Christian. So, by the time I graduated from the University of London Islam had become for me a profound theological challenge, not in the negative sense of something which called for rebuttal, but positively as a way of understanding God and of ordering society which stimulated me to maturer reflection upon the nature of my own faith and ethical commitment. In short Islam called for my theological interaction as a Christian.

The Scriptures Some would argue it was not the wisest action to go to Oxford in search of a way through this problem. My tutor, Professor George Caird, taught me much of what he understood about the Bible. The Bible, he used to emphasise, is fundamentally concerned with the people of Israel, a light among the nations, the case study of faithfulness and faithlessness of a particular people and God's merciful dealings with them. It is not a universal blue-print for all humanity, though it most certainly provides a message of universal significance and application.

Certain strands of Biblical thought confirm the dynamic reality of faith and wisdom outside Israel, from which Israel must learn; other strands condemn the pernicious practices of other nations which, in its own errancy, Israel all-too-frequently emulates against the promises and judgement of God. But the Bible nowhere attempts to give a theological account of other religions. While it certainly reflects upon aspects of Jewish piety, it is not, a theological text-book of Judaism. It provides theological resources for Christianity, but nowhere gives theological account of the Christian religion which therefore can only be held to be "Biblical" in a certain sense; and it has no definite light to throw upon the particularities of Islam unless we understand the concept *islâm* in its primary Quranic sense as the essential meaning of all divine revelations: peace through our active obedience, or submission, to God who is the Source of peace (*al-Salâm*). It is not irrelevant, perhaps, that Professor Caird was one of the official Protestant observers at Vatican II.

Peace - the Gift of God What then is the spirit of Scripture? In terms of the New Testament I discern it in the principle of peace as Jesus Christ would have expressed it in the Hebrew word *Shalôm*: not peace merely as the absence of war, but as the gift of God, the relationship into which God creates all human beings, in which he sustains us in nurture and guidance, bringing us to salvation in this life and beyond. Jesus bids us, as recorded by Mathew in the Sermon on the Mount, to share this peace in a greeting or salutation which does not recognise frontiers, as the peace of God knows no bounds (Matt. 5,47-48). Later in the Gospel of Mathew Jesus instructs his disciples to greet all whom they meet in peace, in the hope of drawing from them an equivalent response (*axios*: worthy, in being of equivalent character). I believe this response is to be found both in the Qur'an and in the Prophet Muhammad's own insight that to greet with peace those whom you

know and those whom you do not know is part of faith. Dialogue is a way of expressing and living such greeting.

The Reform Tradition With these simple but profound Biblical bearings, and Islamic hopes, I pursued my quest in Oxford by turning to the theological traditions of my own Reformation confession of the Christian faith. Its origins in the 16th century, needless to say, filled me with apprehension for this was an age of Christian thought when controversy determined that doctrine was couched in polemics. Luther and Calvin saw little value in Islam other than as an instrument by which God, through the Turks, chastised a faithless Church - a point reinterpreted by modern secular historians to mean that the Turkish Muslim advance into 16th century Europe significantly aided the success of the mundane forces of the Reformation. But what struck me in Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion is the similarity between the shape or contours of his theological system and that of Islam.

Mystical Tradition It was Professor Zaehner who introduced me, an awkward Calvinist, to the mystical theology of Christianity and Islam. This was not the mysticism which is foolishly caricatured as beginning in mist and ending in schism, but a mysticism seriously and deeply concerned with the experience of the immanence of divine transcendence, and with the corollary practice of ethical sobriety.

**"Is the Qur'an the Word of God? "Of course it is"** Professor Zaehner held in the final article of his life: for the Qur'an is to the Muslim not as the Bible but as Christ to the Christian, and by it the Muslim may rise to the same and ultimately unspeakable mystical experience and knowledge of peace with God as the Christian can through Christ. Zaehner knew this by experience, his own conversion to the Catholic mystical tradition having been aided by his painstaking study of many of the great Persian Sufi poets. And like them he held experience as being an authentic way to real knowledge of God.

Confessional Agnosticism? There were and are moments, I confess, when I feel utterly disorientated to the point of confessional agnosticism, so vast is the "fresh world of ideals" which peaceful interfaith dialogue opens to us. In Oxford, however, it was my good fortune to move for doctoral research under the calm but magisterial supervision of Mr. Albert Hourani. Without ever dissuading me from my theological quest, Mr. Hourani gently steered me to the relationship between Christian and Muslim religious communities in Syria and Lebanon. For three years of research, and later as a B.B.C. journalist and broadcaster I was engrossed in the political history and contemporary problems of the Arab world, and the role of religion therein. The triumph of Lebanon in its earlier existence as a multi-religious state standing over-against monolithic forms of religious and political ideologies, be they Muslim or Jewish, has been followed in recent times by the tragedy of Lebanon, sacrificed to the particularities of others in their struggle for power.

Dialogue I admit to being far from clear as to how any of us involved in interfaith dialogue in the West, can respond to the challenge that dialogue is naive and irresponsible. The comfortable clichés of old-time liberalism have had their day. The socio-political contexts of dialogue vary so greatly from one part of the world to another, and

what is possible in one place may not be so in another. I firmly believe that we have a God-given opportunity for dialogue in this country and elsewhere in Europe and North America, which, to forego, may be tantamount to a sin against the Holy Spirit. But as we proceed I am equally clear that we must pay close heed to the real fears which many Christians in the Middle East and parts of Africa and Asia hold with respect to their encounter with Islam. To fail in this would be to confirm their suspicion, and their increasingly articulate charge, that western Christian concepts of dialogue are naive and irresponsible. Nowhere is this problem found more critically than in the context of Israel/Palestine.

Christian - Arab It was while I was living in Lebanon that I met one theologian who was able to articulate lucidly what it can mean to be a Christian Arab, to live and profess Christian faith integrally as an Arab within a predominantly Muslim society. His name is George Khodr and he is the Bishop of Mount Lebanon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Antioch. Khodr's departure point is nothing less than the sacred mystery of the Holy Trinity. About the Trinity he taught me in existential terms to avoid the error against which so many of the eastern Patristic Fathers warned: not to suborn any one of the three "persons" of the Trinity to any one of the others - in contradistinction to what Easterners see as the Western Church's inherent subordination of the Spirit to the Son and even the Father to the Son.

Khodr propounds a co-equal, not hierarchic concept of the Trinity. While upholding the real unity of the Godhead, he construes it dynamically. Hence the Holy Spirit is free to roam wheresoever it/she/he wills - outside the Church of history as much as within; and wheresoever the Spirit is operative, the fullness of the Godhead is proleptically present in mystery, in the inseparable activity of creation and salvation whereby God graciously brings all creation and all human beings to perfection.

Khodr's concern as an Arab is to affirm the open, inclusive truth of Trinity against what he sees to be the exclusivising tendency of western Christianity where the acknowledgement of truth is, to his mind, legalistically bound to the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. Equally his vocation as a Bishop is to celebrate this truth eucharistically within the heartlands of the Muslim world, and thereby to search out and affirm that which is of God in the historic and contemporary experience of Muslims. The mission of the Church, in Khodr's sense, is to be spiritually affirming of the truth of God he expects to find in Islam, not in spite of Jesus Christ but because of the nature of God the Holy Spirit.

Khodr observes that "the mystics of Islamic countries with their witness to suffering have lived the authentic Johannine agape" and affirms that "it is Christ alone who is received as light when grace visits.... a Muslim reading his own scriptures".

Professor Louis Massignon held similar views which he more thoroughly substantiated in his life-long researches into Islamic mysticism. It is telling that when, towards the end of his life, Massignon was ordained, it was into the priesthood of the Melkite (Greek-Arab) Catholic Church of the Middle East.

Islams Challenge It is this same theological orientation which I try to follow in my own approach to understanding the life



and ministry of the Prophet Muhammad, the majesty of the Qur'an, the piety of Muslims and their on-going struggle for justice in human society which often opposes the most dynamic movements of contemporary Islam against the vested interests of western capitalism. Hence, at this stage in my pilgrimage, I feel bound to say that Islam is something which I - and I shall be bold to say the Church as a whole - need in order that we may understand more of the fullness of the source and object of our Christian faith, and correct doctrinal distortions which have fragmented both our Christian unity and our wider unity with peoples of other faith traditions. To quote Bishop Khodr one last time:

"The plenitude of Christ may be veiled in history by human sin. Men may fail to see the Church as the bearer of the power and glory of its Lord. What is visible is very often far from a pointer to the Kingdom of God. But God can, if He pleases, send witnesses to those who have not been able to see the uplifting manifestation of Christ in the face which we have made bloody with our sins or in the seamless robe which we have torn by our divisions".

Viewed in this light Muslims are not our enemies but our friends in faith, with whom we can faithfully cooperate in the common search of justice and peace in a troubled world. Of one thing I was and remain sure. As a Christian I know myself to be in the debt of Islam; my theological understanding of Christian doctrine has been shaken by Islam; more importantly my faith has been strengthened by Islam - and if faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit, I have found its hospitality within the Islamic tradition as much as my own.

Dialogue or Conversion Interfaith relations take long to build and mutual confidence comes slowly and not without difficulty. A critical, often unspoken question which belies the difficulty is that of purpose: after all is said, is it not one's purpose to convert?... to win Muslims to Christ?... to plant the Church within the Muslim community. I know there are many Muslims who fear this, others who work for the same goal in relation to Christians, and some fellow Christians who think this is the point of dialogue construed as a means to the end of conversion. The tension is real, and I shall conclude this address by dealing with it head-on. I am the child of a missionary family: my grandparents left a small town in Scotland for China where my mother was born. But notwithstanding his and my own commitment to mission, I suspect it was my grandfather's healthy scepticism which first raised in my mind questions about conventional missionary theology and practice, and the same scepticism I now espouse after long and careful study of the history of Christian mission to Muslims.

There is time only to give two reasons for this scepticism. The first is less directly concerned with the impact of western Christian mission on Islam than upon the indigenous Churches of the Middle East: the appalling confusion which I have seen western missionaries, first Catholic and then Protestant, to have caused within the Orthodox Churches of the Middle East, both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, exposes a profoundly anti-ecumenical consequence of western missions and questions the conventional wisdom - that the modern missionary movement arose from and itself generated, Christian ecumenical concern.

But I am also sceptical of the way missionaries have so readily perpetuated the polemical Christian view of Islam. There are of course certain important exceptions like Bishop Cragg.

The Franciscan Tradition In continuity with the missionary tradition we can choose either to perpetuate its polemical aspect or to advance its irenic, conciliatory, searching aspect. Most continue to opt for the easier first choice which I abhor. But in opting for the second choice which I admit is the way of a minority, I am not without hope. For the oldest missionary rule in the book is that, quite literally, which we find in the 13th century rule of St. Francis who, in the heat of the Crusades, instructed the early Franciscans in the mode of peaceful presence among Muslims, without argument, and with the expectation of spiritual martyrdom, at least, if a friar was called to preach: not, I hasten to add, because Francis expected brutality from the Muslim (indeed he enjoyed the hospitality of an Egyptian Muslim Sultan), but because he knew that Christ Crucified cannot with integrity be preached but by one who is prepared to identify spiritually, perchance physically, with His death. Need I more than remind you that it was in the spirit of St. Francis that many Franciscan theologians, from Bonaventura onward, developed a spiritual theology in which they saw the whole universe and human history as a book in which the Trinity can be read on every page.

Placing myself humbly and searchingly in this same Franciscan tradition I firmly believe in mission, but not in the sense of taking truth to an imagined-hostile Islamic world. No, rather in the sense of discovery - solely with the purpose of discerning what therein the Holy Spirit is bringing to perfection in the sure conviction that I have of God as known by faith in Jesus Christ, that where the Holy Spirit is, so there the mystery of God is active in creation and salvation. For this task of discovery I prefer to use the term "dialogue", though I do not shrink from the word mission for, in this sense, it is dialogue.

And as a way of expressing a purposive relationship of faith with the Muslim, I experience dialogue as bringing about our mutual conversion, each of us being turned yet more profoundly and radically to God.

(The complete text of Dr. Kerr's address is available at SEDOS on request).

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## SELECTED STUDIES BY SEDOS MEMBERS

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We believe that there are a number of studies done by SEDOS Members which can be of significant help to other SEDOS Members. We want to draw your attention to them and share them with you.

### MISSION COORDINATORS

These documents will be helpful to institutes that are exploring the possibility of creating a position or secretariat for cross - cultural mission animation. The SEDOS Secretariat has contacted a number of institutes and is expecting to have more of these types of documents available.

**Description of the Mission Coordinator - SND.** This one page document includes role, responsibilities, qualifications, working conditions, and accountability for a full-time Mission Coordinator at the Congregational level.

**The Purpose, Composition, Responsibilities and Activities of the International Mission Council - OFM.** 3pp.

According to its mandate the International Mission Council is "responsible for analyzing the dimension of missionary evangelization in the order's charism and its application in today's world. It is charged with the responsibility of promoting inculturation of the Gospel and Gospel values. It encourages in a practical way the assimilation and application of the documents of the Church and the Order pertaining to liberating evangelization and to justice and peace. It promotes ongoing missionary formation". This is a clear and well-thought-out document.

**The Role and Function of the General Secretariat for Missionary Evangelization - OFM.** 4pp. This document pertains to the responsibilities of a full-time Secretary. It also spells out the relationship of the Secretariat to the International Mission Council and the General Council.

### LAY ASSOCIATES

**Dossier on Lay Associates and Missionary Institutes - CICM.** This sixty page document examines the various types of affiliation between missionary institutes and lay associates/members. Contracts between a number of institutes and their lay associates are included in the Appendix.

This study would be helpful to Superiors General, General Councilors and Mission Coordinators.

## PLANNING

### **Provincial Priority - Setting. From Dreams to Possibilities.**

This packet produced by the Notre Dame de Namur Sisters introduces the process of priority - setting on a provincial level. It includes the phases of priority - setting, World and National Assumptions, Imaging the Future, a well developed and relevant questionnaire, a liturgy, a finished version of one Province's Priorities.

This packet would be useful in preparations for Provincial Chapters and for new Provincial Teams.

## MINISTRY

### **Guidelines for the Regular Evaluation of Ministries - SND.**

Texts and questionnaire. 16pp.

**Evaluation of Mission Presence - MM.** 2p. Questionnaire format.

**Evaluation of Ministries - MM.** 2p. Questionnaire format.

**Reflection, Search and Dialogue - SND.** 16pp. This booklet encourages Ministry Evaluation in the context of the Congregational Mission Statement and the Provincial Priority Statement.

**Coordination** by SND Ministry Core Group. This Report contains the mandate of the Ministry Group, the process used for developing a mission statement; the process for setting up a clearinghouse for Ministry Opportunities and a 7 page summary of a book on discernment: "Weeds among the Wheat" by Thomas Green, SJ.

These documents would be helpful in preparation for Provincial Chapters and for Provincial Leadership Teams.

## MALE LAY RELIGIOUS LIFE

**Brothers in the Church Today: Probing the Silence** by Bruce H. Lescher, CSC. This reflection examines both the historical and post-Vatican II understanding of the brothers' vocation. According to Brother Lescher the task for brothers in the contemporary church is two-fold and the first step involves a critical analysis of brothers' present marginalization from both official ecclesiastical power and popular consciousness. Only when this has been explored can the promise of an exciting new theology of male lay religious life be realized.

This reflection is not for brothers only but recommended reading for priests and women religious as it addresses the relationship between the three.

## JUSTICE AND PEACE

**Corporate Public Stance** - MM Office of Social Concerns. This four page document gives the definition of a public stance as well as specific examples. It also describes the three types of corporate stances.

This document would prove helpful to Congregational Justice and Peace Coordinators and General Councillors responsible for justice and peace animation.

N.B. A document entitled **The Role of the Justice and Peace Coordinator in the Congregation/Society** is also available in the documentation centre.

## GENERAL CHAPTERS

**General Chapter Mandates Inquiry.** This thirty page study undertaken by the Research/Planning Director of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit was done in consultation with sixteen congregations of men and women. The topics covered include: discernment and election of the superior general and council; types of administration undertaken by leadership; organization of the General Council and staff; finances; methods of visitations and General Chapter arrangements.

Excellent material for congregations preparing for General Chapters.

## POPULAR RELIGIOSITY: BACKGROUND READING

Over the past few months SEDOS Bulletin has contained a number of studies in preparation for the Seminar - EVANGELIZATION AND POPULAR RELIGIOSITY. These are listed for your convenience.

Enang, Kenneth. "Salvation, an African Experience"  
SEDOS Bulletin, 88/No.8 (September 15, 1988) 283-292.

Sahi, Jyoti. "Eve: The Ecological Voice of the Earth"  
SEDOS Bulletin, 88/No.9 (October 15, 1988) 309-313.

Maldonado, Luis. "Popular Religion: Its Dimensions, Levels and Types"  
SEDOS Bulletin, 88/No.9 (October 15, 1988) 318-324.

Prien, Hans-Jürgen, Dr. "Popular Piety in Latin America"  
SEDOS Bulletin, 88/No.11 (December 15, 1988) 383-387.

Nebel, Richard. "Christological Aspects of the Ancient Mexican-Christian Popular Piety in Modern Mexico"  
SEDOS Bulletin, 88/No.11 (December 15, 1988) 388-393.

Amaladoss, Michael, S.J. "Popular Religion, Some Questions"  
SEDOS Bulletin, Vol. 21, No.2 (February 15, 1989) 49-57

Lovett, Brendan, SSC. "Popular Religiosity"  
SEDOS Bulletin, Vol 21, No.3 (March 15, 1989)

Lederle, H.I. "The Charismatic Movement - the ambiguous Challenge"  
MISSIONALIA, Vol. 14, No.2 (August 1986) 61-75

"Popular Religions" is the title and theme of the November, 1988 issue of Pro Mundi Vita Studies. Popular religions are examined in the African, Asian, Latin American and Western contexts.

Popular Religiosity among the **non-poor** in the prosperous North or First World will differ from that in other parts of the world where entire populations are involved in the day-to-day struggle for survival in the midst of poverty, oppression and even civil war. Thus as background reading on the ideology underlying popular religiosity in the North we recommend the following two articles on the **Prosperity Message** which appear in Missionalia, Vol.15, No.2. (August 1987). This ideology started in the U.S.A. and is spreading in South Africa. The main tenets of the Prosperity message are: it is the will of God for people to prosper or succeed in every area of life, the atonement of Christ includes provision for deliverance from sickness and poverty as well as from sin and God's covenant with Abraham inherited by the Christian believer, includes a promise of material prosperity. Have these tenets of the Prosperity Message influenced Popular Religiosity in the U.S.A.?

Anderson, Allan, "The Prosperity Message in the Eschatology of Some New Charismatic Churches" pp.72-83.

Mofokeng, Takatso, "The Prosperity Message and Black Theology: A Response to Allan Anderson. pp.84-86.

## **ECUMENICAL PRAYER SERVICE**

AT ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, VIA NAZIONALE

MAY 16, 5.00 p.m. - 7.30 p.m.

IN PREPARATION FOR THE W.C.C. CONFERENCE ON

MISSION AND EVANGELISM

SAN ANTONIO - MAY 1989

The Meeting will begin with a discussion on the theme of the Conference and conclude with an Ecumenical Prayer Service from 6.30 p.m. - 7.30 p.m.

## **NEWS**

### **PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION: WOMEN AND MEN**

SEDOS organised two sessions as a follow-up to the Annual General Assembly Seminar on Partnership. The sessions took place at the SVD Generalate. Paul Parijs, CICM and Matilda Handl, OSB introduced the topic at the February 21st session; Finbarr Murphy, FSC and again Paul Parijs, CICM at the March 9th session.

The two meetings, facilitated by Sean Fagan, SM enabled the participants to share experiences of actual partnership in mission situations, to record advantages and difficulties and to examine possibilities of formation for partnership.

### **DOING THEOLOGY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

Albert Nolan, OP addressed a capacity audience on this topic at a meeting organised by SEDOS and the Justice and Peace Commission of USG/UISG. The Meeting was held at the Generalate of The Brothers of the Christian Schools. Fr. Nolan described what "Doing Contextual Theology" meant illustrating his thesis by examples from the contextual theologies of the Greek Fathers who were monks; Augustine's concern with the fall of the Roman Empire; the Scholastics who were schoolmen; the Neo-scholastic theology of the 19th century - 'Manual-theology', the current theology of Europe and North America preoccupied with secularization.

These were "their contexts" said Fr. Nolan "They are not mine!" He went on to examine the concerns of contextual theology in South Africa today. In the second part of his address he dealt with the question "How can I teach people to do contextual theology?" One starts from life rather than ideas, from practice rather than theory and from context. He illustrated this process by examples. The full text of Fr. Nolan's talk will be made available.

BOOK NOTES**SIGNS OF CONTRADICTION**

There was a time, not so very long ago, when young people who joined missionary institutes were seen as heroes and heroines, admired and perhaps envied. Few could have foreseen that in their lifetime the missionary would be a sign of contradiction on a vast scale, not only the religious or clerical missionary but the laywomen and laymen who associate with them in preaching the good news. For the good news is anything but good to many. The appearance of a booklet *QUESTA VITA CHE NON POSSIEDO\** - a short account of the life and assassination of Padre Tullio Favali of the Pontifical Foreign Missionary Institute in Italy (PIME) reminds us that today no less than in previous generations missionaries are prepared to give their lives for the gospel - the ultimate price of their willingness to be signs of contradiction.

Writing about Fr. Favali, Fr. Fernando Galbiati Superior General of PIME notes: "Tullio Favali joins the list of sixteen other members of PIME killed in their mission work - a list that challenges all of us about our willingness to be at the service of the Kingdom even to death".

Reading this booklet reminded me of the celebration of Mass organised by the Latin American group at the SEDOS Seminar on **THIRD WORLD THEOLOGIES** in April 1986. Each of the approximately 100 participants was given a postcard-sized photograph of someone who had been assassinated for the gospel in Latin America. We were invited to place these around the altar at the offertory of the Mass. The photos represented the gifts of the lives of those women and men, sisters, brothers, priests, lay women and men. On the back of each photograph was the name of the person, the date of their assassination, how they were killed and the reason why they were killed.

Tullio Favali would have fitted in well in this company. Why was he killed? We quote from the PIME booklet. "He was killed on April 11, 1985 in the barrio of la Esperanza in the comune of Fulanan in Mindanao, Philippines, by a para-military group of government forces who wanted to make an example of him to other priests and to all Catholics involved in the defense of human rights in the region".

Another work, *SOGNI E SANGUE NELLE FILIPPINE: Diario di un Missionario\**: the diary of another PIME Missionary, begins on August 7, 1972 and ends on November 21, 1986. The diary recounts the long agony of the Philippines, the assassination of Tullio Favali and hundreds of others and ends with still "another assassination" on the last page.

**INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

*I PERCHE DELL'UOMO E LE RISPOSTE DELLE GRANDI RELIGIONI* - a book by Pietro Rossano who worked in the Secretariat for Non-Christians from 1965 to 1982. He dedicates his work to Sergio Pignedoli "his unforgettable President at the Secretariat and to the many many non-Christian friends whom he had the joy of meeting in Japan, India, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Lebanon, Israel, Iraq, Iran, Siria, Egypt,



Libia, Tunisia etc. etc. This is a mature and serious study. Mgr. Rossano, like so many others, records how dialogue and respectful contact with other religions not only removed misunderstandings about these religions but also deepened his understanding of his own Christian faith.

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\*Geremia, Peter. SOGNI E SANGUE NELLE FILIPPINE: Diario di un Missionario. Bologna, Editrice Missionaria Italiana, 1988. Pp.443, It. lire, 20.000

Rossanno, Pietro. I PERCHE DELL'UOMO E LE RISPOSTE DELLE GRANDI RELIGIONI. Milano, Edizione Paoline, 1988. Pp. 133, It. lire 10.000

The text of the 30 page illustrated pamphlet QUESTA VITA CHE NON POSSIEDO: Padre Tullio Favali missionario del PIME, assassinato nelle Filippine, was first published by the Centro Missionario PIME as a supplement to the August 1985 issue of Mondo e Missione.

## ECUMENICAL STUDIES PROGRAMME

PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY  
OF SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS IN ROME  
FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

Objectives The specialization in ecumenical studies is an ecumenical formation programme: Its objectives are the preparation of formators in ecumenism, of directors of diocesan or regional/national ecumenical programmes and/ or offices, and the ecumenical education or continued education of clergy, religious and laity. It offers basic courses and seminars in ecumenism and a systematic study of those particular issues which are at the centre of the ecumenical dialogue. The programme is open to students from any Christian confession.

Degrees Students who have completed their undergraduate work in theology may enroll in the Master of Arts programme (2 semesters) or in the Licentiate programme (4 semesters). Students who have obtained the Licentiate in theology, may enroll in the Doctoral programme.

Auditors are admitted. They can attend the classes of their choice. A certificate may be obtained for the courses attended.

Registration. Dates of registration: October 1 to Oct. 31 and February 1 to Feb. 15. The programme is offered on the graduate level during a 2 years (4 semesters) cycle. Some seminars are offered on the undergraduate level.

COORDINATOR of the Department:  
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00184 Rome, Italy.