IV. PROCEEDINGS
NOTES ON ITS DYNAMICS

Rev. Fr. Aloysius Fernandez, Organizing Secretary

What is BISA III all about?

Some of the participants expect a seminar on development; others told me that it has nothing to do with religion; yet others that they required a break from their heavy schedule back home.

I will let the dynamics of the seminar as they progress respond to these expectations.

The framework within which the seminar will operate is the field of relationships between Religion and Society, or rather the interaction between those two systems in the Asian context. The first day will be spent on broadening our vision to include the countries of South and South East Asia which are represented here. We start therefore with an Asian Panorama to which the countries represented will react. This will also serve to involve each country from the start.

Stage I “Towards a New Society” will help us to analyze the societies that are represented here, all of which have basic common characteristics. Tools of analysis will be provided for a deeper study into the mechanisms that operate within society and especially between Religion and Society. Alongside, the theological reflections will take off from the findings of these analysis and help towards building a vision of a new society according to the plan of God working in history.

Stage II “The Church in the service of the New Society” will help us to analyze the type of the Church that exist in our countries and the type of Church that should exist in the context of our analysis of society in Stage I. We will go deeper into the role and function of the Church in society, try to reinterpret the horizontal and vertical demands of the new vision of society and relate accepted concepts of Church, authority, community, sin, law, love, evangelization and justice within the new role that is expected of the Church in the service of a new society.

All along we will work together towards evolving a strategy based on our new understanding of the Church and Society and the roles that religion and religious actors play in society. Strategy of course can be evolved at various levels: Asian, Regional and Diocesan.

METHODOLOGY

BISA III is a process. It is far more important to yield to its dynamics than to attend all its sessions. This demands from us regular participation and an openness to the dialectics of a constantly changing situation.
The framework of our meetings is the inter-action of religion and society, a constant dialectics even though we may not be fully aware of it. The methodology used in BISA is also a dialectic between exposure and group reflection or rather exposure to reality with an analysis of it from which will start our reflections in the counter of God present and working in history.

We need an analysis of society because the mechanisms that operate within society, and the relations of power are no longer clear; one needs, more scientific tools to perceive these relationships.

There are also several myths propagated by a consumer society which projects an image of a society that is good, beautiful and one to be sought after, when in reality this is not true; these myths have to be exposed.

Lastly, coming as most of us do from developing countries, where disparities are great and growing, we tend to throw up a psychological camouflage that allows us to live without a constantly nagging conscience; this is a defense mechanism and is, in a way required for us to live in such disparities; but this camouflage has to be blown away if we are to get down to deep and relevant reflection or existing society in order to work towards a new one.

The tools of analysis with which we will be provided can be utilized by us in our own situation to understand it better and plan effectively and relevantly.

The exposure will take several forms. We will visit life situations; situations which help us to see more vividly the results of the working society around us. We will come in contact with persons in whom the injustices of our society are most vividly seen. We will not only report on these situations; but go deeply into the mechanisms that operate within society to produce this type of society characterized by growing disparities.

It is not sufficient to conceptualize these causes of injustice; we must try to identify ourselves through a serious attempt at becoming one with the persons subject to these mechanisms of injustice operating not only within one country but also between one country and another. This is where our friends from the more developed nations of South Asia and Australia can help us.

Another exposure will be to youth, workers and community organizers of Kuala Lumpur; a section of society not yet entirely socialized; many of them claimed to have found Christ outside the Church, there is no longer a crisis of faith but a crisis of hope – in the institutional Church; has it the capability to play its prophetic role in society? Will it constantly remain subject to the demands of an unjust society? These are some of the question we will have to face.

Yet another method of exposure is the study of the documents of various Bishops Conferences present here. This will help us to understand the ideology behind their statements, help us to relate this ideology to our actual work to the Gospel and Vatican II.
True these exposures are not adequate, but we have to work under certain constraints; more radical exposures which would helped us not only to observe and analyze but also to experience would have been preferred.

We need a steering committee which will reflect the participants reactions during the earlier stages and then gradually take over the dynamics of the seminar.

One thing I can promise you a full programme; the methodology used will build up pressure to a certain degree; we must go through this process – slightly painful perhaps but necessary to give birth to a new vision. Many of our concepts will be challenged in this interaction; the deductive method to which we are accustomed and our models and patterns of operation will be put to the test.

Let us then be opened to this process which the dynamics of the seminar will generate, let us put aside our defensive mechanisms and expose ourselves to the process in full confidence that the Spirit of the Lord can guide us through.
ORIENTATION

Reflections on a Diocesan Plane (Archbishop Henry D’Souza)

I am one of the participants. I shared with you some loud thinking. This is not a lecture but only a “loud-think”; it therefore carries the limitations of a personal experience, un-reflected and somewhat hesitant.

I would start with the sociological analysis of Dr. Oommen. The basic common factor in the reality which we have been examining and to which we have been exposed is disparity. Yet disparity is part and parcel of human nature – no two persons are equal. The wide gaps in the disparity are the cause of protest and the base of injustice. The young people who spoke to us on Sunday so feelingly were concerned with these gaps in disparity – such that so many had no life chances due to economic disparity; had no voice in their future due to power disparity; had no acceptable life-style due to status disparity. So far we are all together. All of us can accept this analysis and mildly regret the existence of these disparities; click our tongues in empty sympathy and perhaps resign our – challenge – the challenge of the liturgy of Sunday – “You have to do more than that”.

The sociologist tells us that our response can be basically three fold with variants of one or the other, or a mixture of all three.

a) I can react with my defences up after all God did not make us equal; we are doing much already; in fact our social services are improving and so on basically such a reaction wants to keep the “status quo” and is afraid of our position being threatened. “This is the constructive reaction.

b) Or I can start in a large or small way to do something to help groups of people or individuals or even villages to climb the ladder – cf. Nalini’s talk yesterday – our development programs: We have taken reformist reaction.

c) Or I can attack the system itself – cut the disparity at the very root (e.g. Bishop Sauphin’s action against bonded labour).

I then set myself to examine the images of the Church reflected against the above analysis. I see myself then in varying ways in any of these three situations: conservative reflected in the Established Church Image – a Church holding wealth (or at least security) power and status; a Church having a number of institutions, services and personnel; a body where “vested interests” – legitimate vested interests – can be many.

I also see this same Church begin to reflect images of reformed activity, Parish councils and Priests Senates share powers; colleges, schools become more democratic and begin to open their services to all classes of people; programmes of development and reform get started.

I get hesitant about the radical image. True here and there this image is emerging. But can I take this radical stand. The Bishops of Brazil took such a situation: “We want to invite the men of our country to a true conversion…to a radical change of their entire lives – individual and collective under the guidance of the Holy Spirit”. In very clear terms they
go on to condemn “the economic and social structure prevailing in our country as based on in justice and oppression, and we are in a situation which is neither human nor Christian”. Therefore they conclude with a radical option “No other route is open for the oppressed than a socialization of the means of production”. The radical option. Is such possible for me?

I have recalled the above in my thinking aloud in order to situate my personal reaction and in order to share more intelligibly my own thoughts in this matter. At the diocesan level, the bishop is almost his own master. The local bishop of the local Church has great freedom to do what he wants – respecting of course the sensitivities, feelings and desires of the people he serves.

In this balance – my own freedom and the sensitivity of the people – I can imagine three avenues of action-oriented thinking, reflecting in some way the three categories of images as well as the three responses of the sociological analysis. Let me explain:

(a) Part of the inheritance of every bishop is the establishment. He has a bishop’s house, he has institutions, he has a way of life style; he has a method of procedure.. these he inherits.

Perhaps I can go down each of these and see whether the image projected is what we could like to project in view of what BISA III has been telling us, and of the new in sights we have received. I believe that caution will be the bye word with a measure of courage. Some elements could perhaps change fast, e.g. my method of procedure – if it is autocratic, I can start sharing my powers. Or if the institution is diocesan, I can give it new goals and objectives without much interference from outsiders. For others I may need to take people along, to move more slowly and so on.

I leave all this to further quiet reflection.

(b) Another portion of my diocesan domain is the plans I have. Some of them are inherent in the very present structures – as seeds moving to flower. A dispensary will grow into a hospital – a school to a college and so on. Some are in my priorities – in my spending of money and in the use of my personnel. I could examine how these plans not yet executed, but in the process of completion fit into the thoughts of BISA III. I can be wary of the “unintended results” of which Fr. Volken spoke. I can watch out lest my good intentions result in disastrous consequences. (I recall a seminary built barely 10 years ago using up thousands of dollars and built in the old style, unadapted to the modern thinking of seminar formation) Some of these plans may therefore be assessed and disasters avoided.

(c) The third part of my thinking would be the new challenges of reality, which I have not observed so far, but which have been clarified for me these days. I mean the reality of the world, of the “non-church”, of the life situations in which I spend my ministry and which make up my human activity (I say “unredeemed”, as it does not share my concern and to it Christ’s love does not relate) needs my attention. All these things were therefore before, but now they are “signs”, i.e. they begin to speak to me. I may not be able to read them or to discern what they are saving. Perhaps I shall have to read books on sociology, perhaps I shall have to study more about them. But one thing is certain I cannot remain INDIFFERENT to them. I can of course react to them
with some reformist solution 9 as development projects, model villages) – I can also take more radical stands. I don’t know – I am not so sure what I can or may do.

I have shared my thoughts with you. It has been a “loud-think”. I trust that I have not presumed too much on your kindness in asking you to listen to me. Thank you.
ORIENTATIONS

IMPLEMENTING BISA III AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Preliminary Remarks.

This paper presupposes the points made by Archbishop Henry D’ Souza on “BISA III and Diocesan Action” and presents some personal reflections at a midway stage of BISA III when various proposals have not yet been sufficiently digested and conclusions not crystallized. The dynamics has to go on. The present paper is of a tentative nature.

1) Working at a national level

It is necessary to be utterly convinced of the need for planning together at the level of the National Bishops’ Conferences without this, individual Bishops are unable to get a national perspective. Moreover, a person attempting to break through can appear a deviant. His freedom of action too is inhibited by joint decisions after they are arrived at. It is important, therefore, that the correct perspective brought to bear right at the level of national planning. The Bishops attending BISA III, although perhaps not fully representative of the various Bishops’ Conferences, are yet the official representatives of the Conferences concerned and consequently are in a position to initiate discussions with their Conferences. It is proper that each Bishop should make structural changes in his Diocese where necessary. But something more than a change of structure within the barque may be necessary. A change of course, a rechartering in mid ocean may be necessary. For this the entire crew has to work together. There is no alternative to planning at a national level. What has been said above regarding Bishops’ Conferences applies also, due proportion guarded, to the Conference of Major Superiors.

2) Possible Strategy

In the course of BISA III itself while in Malaysia, the national groups should discuss and plan together. On returning to their respective countries these groups will have to meet, discuss, plan together and be a permanent leaven. Other Bishops, priests, Religious, etc., will have to be conscientized. As the Asian countries influence one another greatly (even in the political sphere: e.g. similar policies on immigration, visas for missionaries, control of schools, etc.) BISA III national groups should keep regular contact with one another and also with F.A.B.C. This solidarity will facilitate exchange of experiences and also be a source of strength.

At the level of the Conference of Bishops, existing surveys, statements and studies (viz. National synod resolutions) can be taken up for updating and implementation. Problems will have to be identified and priorities worked out (viz. Only a few dioceses will have tea estates: but the question of workers – in coconut estates, fibre mills, fishing centres, factories – will be common to all dioceses, and should be tackled by all Dioceses together).

3) Possible options

(i) Any system that is intrinsically tied up with atheism would be ruled out.
(ii) Similarly any system that is idolatrous (making a God of profit motive) is equally ruled out.

(iii) Respect will have to be shown for the pastoral exigencies that the Bishops face. For example, sudden and violent changes – perhaps involving the deployment of a large number of priests and Religious on entirely new ventures – would not be helpful.

4) We have to take note of the signs of the times: action should be geared accordingly.

(a) Concern for the poor and underprivileged is definitely one of these signs. The assistance that the Church hitherto gave (orphanages, hospitals, schools) seem to be inadequate: in some instances, they unintentionally help perpetuate misery. On the assumption that the major questions of the day are settled on the political plain, the Church is called upon to make options in this sphere. Our part of the world seems to be moving towards a socialistic pattern of life. The Church may not ignore this development not merely with the hope of finding a "modus vivendi", but with a desire to discern whether God has a message for the Church through these events.

(b) The Church is called upon to do all it can – particularly in these our times – to defend the dignity of man and his fundamental rights.

(c) More than ever before, God is calling his ministries to a personal conversion of heart and mind and to an utter commitment to Him and his brethren. The option has to be not for the spirituality of the hair shirt and the sacristy (granted these have their value) but for an ascesis of personal involvement with the poor, possibility of being misunderstood by others including ones own co-workers, and most sure conflict with the privileged classes. There does not seem to be a midway for the priest in his parish, the Religious in his community, the Pastor in his Diocese, and the Bishops in National Conference.
LECTURE NO. 1

Tuesday, 4th November, 1975

ASIAN PANORAMA – LECTURE No. I
BISHOP J.X. LABAYEN, O.C.D.

(Challenge – Response)

I. INTRODUCTION.

My task this morning is twofold: first, to present you with a broad sweep of the brush a panorama of Asia. I intend to undertake this first task by highlighting the salient features of the immense landscape that Asia is. Second, to articulate the challenge of the Asian situation and to indicate what response the Church has made. I feel this second task will not be complete if I did not reflect on the Church’s response and raise some questions. This paper is meant to elicit some other responses from the different groups that are participating in this BISA III.

II. PANORAMA OF ASIA

1. As we look at Asia, the first feature that strikes us is its teeming masses. Asia is nearly two billion people, almost two-thirds of mankind. These masses are in majority poor, under-nourished, scarred by disease, war and suffering.

2. The next striking feature of Asia is its youth. Nearly sixty percent of its people are below twenty-five years of age.

The young people of Asia have characterized themselves as idealistic, aware and concerned, impatient and restless – even rebellious – in the face of social and economic conditions, of political structures in their countries, which cry out for urgent reforms and bold transformations.

Governments have, by experience, become conscious of youth power. Think of the overthrow by the youth of Sigmund Rhee in Korea, the flight of Kittikachorn out of Thailand in the face of social pressure executed by the youth. Think of the assault of the Presidential Malacanan grounds by the youth, prior to martial law in the Philippines; of the youth uprising in Sri Lanka in 1971 that was quelled by the bloody bath of some 10,000 young people by conservative count. Think finally of the student demonstrations in Japan, here in Malaysia, and in other Asian countries.

As a result, the Government has adopted repressive measures to quell agitation by the youth and has passed preventive measures by police surveillance, legal restrictions and precautions. We have the case of the recent restrictive police measures taken by the Malaysian Government in the wake of the youth demonstration in Sydney on the occasion of the visit of Tun Razak of Australia.
3. A third salient feature of Asia is the diversity of its cultures, religions, histories and traditions which, at the same time, are among the oldest in the world. In this context, Christianity is considered Western, foreign and associated with Western domination and colonization.

1. A fourth feature that is characteristic of Asian societies is its dualism – a vestige of feudalism. On one hand, there is the ruling and dominating class. On the other hand, there is ruled and dominated. Also a striking contrast is seen between the urban and rural setting.

2. A fifth very striking characteristic of Asia is that it has been the field contested by the two great ideological powers of the world today: capitalism and communism. Countries and peoples have been divided as a result; North and South Korea; in a not too distant past, North and South Vietnam; Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and the mainland.

   Capitalism seems to be losing ground. Socialism, on the other hand seems to be more and more the trend. Mao-Tse-Tung and his red book have caught the fancy of the youth. The tenets of Maoism are persistently propagated by a powerful radio station in Peking.

   Most roads today appear to be leading to Peking. Recently, both Malaysia and the Philippines found their way to Peking. Even the U.S.A. have a frequent call on Peking. However, capitalist Japan seems spread and push its economic invasion with success.

   The imperative exists of maintaining a balance of power among the three great powers in Asia: China, Japan, and Russia.

3. In the last few years, a fourth power still has made its presence felt in Asia: the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC), particularly the Arab countries. This new development affects especially the Asian countries where Muslims are present. The Philippines has its own share of the Arab influence in the present distributed Christian-Muslim relationship in Mindanao.

4. Finally, governments tend to be totalitarian: e.g. Korea, Philippines, Malaysia, India. Civil liberties are curtailed and suppress. People’s participation is excluded.

   This panorama does not pretend to be exhaustive.

III. THE CHALLENGE

1. In the face of population explosion on one hand and poverty on the other hand, is population control a grave and urgent problem? If it is, how do we look at the issue of priority between population control and world justice, an issue which came out strongly at the last Bucharest Conference. Peking betrayed some embarrassment at finding herself in the same camp with the Vatican upholding the priority of justice in the world.
What do we think of the methods of population control which are practically imposed with moral pressure by governments, either through subtle or overt legislation, or through a system of efficiency rating? Must the Church take a stand and speak out?

2. How do we look at youth power today? Is it something to be suppressed or something to be valued and properly channeled? In the drive of youth for social change where do we place ourselves? Can the youth find in the institutional Church a place for their dreams and vision of the society they would like for their tomorrow?

3. Social change brings us face to face with the two ideological powers: capitalism and communism. Are we to make an option for one or the other? How do we take the statement that both capitalism and communism are atheistic and dehumanizing? Which of the two comes closer to the ideal Christian society? Is there a third option?

4. In the light of the ancient and diverse cultures and religions on one hand and the reaction of Christianity as western and foreign on the other hand, what steps must we take to come up with a truly local Church?

5. The communes of China are presented to be responsive to man’s aspiration today to quality and participation. The communes underline common responsibility and people’s participation and power. They entertain the ideal of a classless society.

Christianity seems to have its own version of a classless society in the basic communities (“Comunidad de base”). These communities challenge and question our present parish and diocesan structures as vestiges of feudalism. How do we react to these basic communities?

IV. CHURCH'S RESPONSE

The Church has responded to the needs of peoples in various times and various places. This response has given birth to her various Apostolate: the schools, hospitals, orphanages, old people’s homes, welfare, promotion of justice, etc.

Sociology has sharpened our awareness of the social meaning and social effect of our presence and activity in society. Consequently, many questions have been asked regarding some of our Apostolate. I present some of these questions:

(a) The school is a tool of society. It is meant to produce the man who will fit in the society. The school therefore has the function to keep the “status quo” of the social system. If the social system is oppressive, then the school system reinforces and perpetuates the oppression. Where do we stand in our Apostolate in school.

(b) The hospital likewise has been questioned. What is the ratio of the sick among the poor who are brought or come to the hospital? My calculated guest is that a small minority darken with their shadow our hospitals. If the majority of our poor do not benefit from our hospitals who does? Our institutional Apostolate in schools and
hospitals may have contributed to the Church’s image or being closely linked to the service of the rich and the middle class. If so, what do we do about such Apostolate in the light of our professions to be the Church of the poor?

(c) The Church is a complex reality and a mystery of which one aspect is its institutional character. The question has been raised whether the Church is meant to mind the institution at the expense sometimes, on account of the institution, of her service to men and of promoting full human development (Populorum Progressio, No. 21) and Justice in the World. Allow me to quote here Cardinal Kim of Korea.

“The fundamental problem for the Church today is precisely to be able herself to manifest to men in a way that is convincing that Christ is really and truly the way, the truth and the life whom they seek. But this will be only possible if the Church herself lives the reality of Christ with a fidelity and a transparency which will make of her an authentic “signum magnum credibilitatis”.

Otherwise we will always be condemned by Gandhi’s word of reproach: “Christ I like, but Christians I dislike, because they are unlike the Christ they profess to follow”.

In our day the very appearance of an ecclesia pro se ipsa, rather than an ecclesia propter homines et mundi vita is no longer permissible. The Church must live for the life of the world, but even this is not enough: before men she must be visible as wholly given for the life of men. In every part of the world this demand is made of her. But in Asia it is made with a special insistence, and raised with a special urgency: for in a true sense the future of mankind is at stake here, among the great masses of mankind, where nearly three-fifths of men live today.

Allow me to recount a brief story. Some years ago, a fire broke out in the middle of the night in a very poor segment of an Asian town, where the communists had been working for some time. The Catholic Church and parish house were located not far from the fire. But no one came out from there to lend a hand during the fire. But men, women and children of the vicinity – mostly the communists of the neighborhood – began forming the human chain and the other groups which carried water to the site of the fire, too far from the roads to be reached by the fire-engines. A small incident, not of very great importance, if you will, but it spoke volumes. How would the people of the district react when, the following Sunday, the priest preached beautiful words on loving one’s neighbor?”

(Cardinal Kim: Talk delivered at the PIME CENTRO MISSIONARIO, Milan, 25.10.1974)

These questions are not exhaustive. They are asked here to give us an idea of what questions are being asked today of the Church.

Here the groups take over.
Questions & Comments on ASIAN PANORAMA

Bishop Julio X. Labayen, OCD

1. **WHAT** we do is not much the issue today as **HOW** we do it.

2. **How can we make Christianity relevant in Asia today?**

   The face of Christianity in Asia is foreign. The challenge that faces us today is to present a new face of Christianity, given this prejudice. Perhaps, for a while, we will have to cover the face of Christianity, which is prejudiced against, with the face of humanity, being one with all men, And, in the process of being fully human, will be born the new face of Christianity.

3. **Can you spell out what you mean by “Comunidad de base”?**

   The key to understanding this is to ask: “What is the base? “ The way it is understood by those who promote this concept is this: Let us look at our social setting. We notice the following:

   There is: (a) a dominating class which has assumed and arrogated to itself:
   
   (power
   (possession
   (knowledge

   There is: (b) the “Base” which is characterized by the opposite:
   
   (deprivation of power
   (deprivation of possession
   (deprivation of knowledge

   The dominating class, besides all its advantages, has the prerogative of formulating ideologies, of dictating, of distributing the goods of the community.

   The “comunidad de base” tries to correct this distinction between the two classes since both belong to the same society. It attempts to answer man’s aspiration today for equality and participation, both of which are two forms of human dignity and freedom. This aspiration points to a classless society which the “comunidad de base” seeks to bring about by sincere dialogue between the two classes of people in view of a corrective. The values of the dominating class are Gospel non-values: money, power, prestige. This state of affairs raises questions about the structures of our parishes that promote these values and perpetuate the class society. New structures have been designed in an attempt to respond to man’s aspiration to equality and participation, e.g. Senate of priests, Pastoral Council, Bishop’s Synod.

4. **Some think that the opposition between Capitalism and Communism is more between extreme Capitalism and extreme Communism. Is Capitalism intrinsically bad?**
Perhaps we can add this question for our consideration: Is Communism intrinsically bad?

Private property has been held legitimate by the Church always. But how do we look at it in the light of Pope Paul documents now? He says that private property is not an absolute but a relative right.

Positions are changing. The Vatican has been making overtures to establish relations with Peking....

5. Is totalitarianism intrinsically bad? In the case of Asia, is it valid?

Let the group react to these questions in the workshop.

6. What is freedom? Is it a capitalist term?

For workshop.

7. You spoke of covering the face of Christianity....

I shall answer by asking another question: What is the face of humanity? Our own concept of development has evolved. Our vision before was one of material well-being: sky-scrappers, cars, radios, and TVs. After ten years, those who attended PISA (Priests’ Institute of Social Action) in Hong Kong, now think in terms of justice in the world. This goes along the line of the concept of total salvation, which is a biblical concept; not only redeem the soul but the whole man, his society and the whole cosmos. We have to save men not only from sin from human evils (disease, hunger, injustice, hatred, oppression, etc); not only dispense grace but help men bring about human blessings (justice, brotherhood, friendship, love, etc.); not just to get man to heaven but to consider him as God’s partner in bringing about the total transformation of God’s creation – new heaven and new earth (Rev. XXI).

8. Remark: people with different backgrounds put different meaning under the same words, for instance, salvation.

9. Youth power: how far is it the result of vested interests of certain parties? Are they manipulated?

There are situations in which youth has reflected a genuine motivation for justice. It is a fact, on the other hand, that youth can be manipulated by different parties. Sometimes there is pressure from a group or even individuals. But youth reactions have been, in later years, the manifestation of an immense frustration.
REACTIONS TO ASIAN PANORAMA

I. INDIA (PRESENTED BY BISHOP HENRY D’ SOUZA)

The group from India reflected on the Asian Panorama as presented by Bp. Labayen. It was agreeable that the panorama was valid in its broad perspectives for the Indian Scene. We found in our country the same challenges to life and the church-challenges posed by over-population and under-development, a constantly growing population that nullified every achievement in the economic field. Challenges posed by youth and youth power in a country where over 50% of the people are below the age of 25. In this land of ancient cultures and rich heritage, Christianity appears foreign, although it has roots dating from the death of Christ. The “haves” and the “have-nots”; the rich and the poor; the caste and non-caste divide India disproportionately so that only small proportion of the people possess most of the wealth of India. Into that field, communism and capitalism are vying with each other to hold sway with the first traces of totalitarianism emerging in the present Declaration of Emergency.

Into this broad perspective, our reflections demonstrated a real variety of nuances. India had a dualism and feudalism long before the colonial era. Its caste system engendered and perpetuated a society of haves and have-nots, of rich and poor. The colonial rulers were happy to use these existent situations to reinforce their own values. The enlightened and upper caste were soon absorbed into the colonial situation. Systems of education and progress helped to keep this difference and to accentuate it even further. Independence brought a chance. This blatantly capitalistic society gave way to new formula—much proclaimed and heralded “the Socialist pattern of society”. Under this formula, rajas and princess lost their crowns and their purses; landowners and zeminards surrendered their fiefdoms and lands. While ostensibly this measure and slogan “socialistic pattern of society” was a rallying point for fairer distribution of the wealth of the country. There soon emerged another form of ‘raja’, ‘prince’ and landowner. The MLA’s and MP’s and owners of industry and their satellites became more powerful than the erstwhile “haves”. The gap between the rich and the poor grew even greater.

While government had abolished untouchability; had legislated land reforms; advised participation of labour in management; it was still a capitalist society with just a change of hands. Laws were difficult often impossible to implement. The rural poor and oppressed class allowed their inherent fatalist attitudes to accept this as their “Karma” or fate.

In this context the reflection was that India was trying to change society with outmoded tools. All its structures were the relics and heritage of a capitalist past; its school and systems of education were geared to maintain the “status quo”; its commitment to the free press, free enterprise, personal liberties, and free competition was unable to bring about radical change. The rich grew richer, and the poor poorer. The gap widened and the choice lay between either anarchy or revolution. In that context came the declaration of Emergency. The western press has decided to label it as totalitarian. The Indian view would be that it is a controlled democracy, or a capitalist socialism/destined to allow
growth under control and a fair distribution of goods with freedom of competition. There was little time to assess thoughts and to indicate the Church’s response to the situation.

The church has been at the service of the people of India. It is regrettably true that the image it projects is apparently western and alien to the real needs of the people. Yet... is the image true to reality? Many of our schools and hospitals are deep down in the villages. Statistically it can be shown that the Church in the village is at the service of the poor – in its number of institutions, hospitals and personnel. The image of the church which is flashed on the non-christian world is drawn from the urban context. The big institutions in the cities are the reason for the assessment that the church is for the rich. What can be done to rectify this apparent image and to make it tally with the real image?

Besides the image, there were values to be examined. Even in the service of the poor, what values were we imparting? Are we not perpetuating an individualistic, competitive and selfish ideology? Helping the poor to become rich, the have-nots to have-and to continue the old order? Without seeking to change attitudes and the value systems? How to do so without changing the type of education and structures and without bringing in new skills was the problem.

One important aspect of the Asian panorama of urgent consideration in India is the wide and rich religious cultures of the land. This calls for greater adaptability in the liturgy and para-liturgy- and a wider acceptance and respect for the deep philosophies and mystic prayer-life of the people. When millions have nourished their souls in the readings of their scriptures and saints still continue to use these books for their growth in God, the Church has to be open to the discovery of the Spirit therein. There was a feeling that the Official Church was chary and closed to such exposure.

In the limited time available participants voiced the need for a greater trust in youth. The alienation of youth was a distressing factor – it appeared that the Church was governed by old people (at least in mind) for old people. The negative attitudes of church leaders only accentuated this problem.

One more thought was for the oppression of the Italian women and the need to liberate them. In this context the role of religious sisters can be very crucial.

II. Bangladesh – Presented by Bishop Michael Rozario

Geographical Position

Bangladesh came into existence as East Pakistan in 1947. Province of Bengal in India was divided into two and the Easter part because of its Muslim majority became part of Pakistan and was called East Pakistan. In December 1971, this East Pakistan became an independent country, called BANGLADESH.

Population and Area

It has an area of 55,000 sq. miles with a population of 78 million, about 1,360 people per sq. miles. About 85% Muslims, 13% Hindus, 2% people of other religion. Number of catholics is only 130,000 about .16% i.e. 1/6 of one percent.
Position of the Church

Christianity in Bangladesh was brought in by the Portuguese missionaries in 17th century. The new converts at the beginning were completely separated from the surrounding community and perhaps, were settled in small colonies near the missions. At Baptism they were not only given a Christian name but even their family name or surname was changed. That is the reason why the old Christians in Bengal have names like Gomes, Costa, Periera, Rozario, etc.

This separation from the local community and the complete change of names had far reaching effect. Christians were to some extent alienated from the local community and gradually came to be identified as followers and collaborators of the Europeans, as supporters of ruling European powers. This mentality persists even today in the minds of many people. Christianity was seen as an extended arm of colonial powers under the guise of Religion. This is one of the reasons why they local Church is not yet fully accepted as local community of the soil, and is very often suspected to be still linked with the colonial powers, is not fully trusted by many high officials. This is one of the reasons why even the works of mercy and charity are often interpreted to have an ulterior motive.

This is the position in which the Church in Bangladesh finds herself.

Position of Christian Community

Conversion to Christianity from the beginning till now has been mostly from the poor, illiterate and oppressed class, very often from the people who were at lowest rung of the social ladder. As a result lack of self confidence, even inferiority complex, especially among the tribal people, is not uncommon. On the other hand paternalistic attitude of priests, brothers, and sisters in the past, has created a mentality of depending on the Church for everything.

Consequently lack of leaderships, lack of feeling personal responsibility for the welfare of the Church and for the Community as a whole is very evident.

In recent years people have come to realize the value of education and many have studied in the University and got degrees but no Christian, even today, hold any high or responsible position in the policy making committee of the Government.

Though there have been one or two political leaders in the country, their contribution has been very limited because they had been associated with Congress Party in a Muslim Pakistan.

Right now there is no active political leader in the Christian community.

Religious State

Till recently, Bangladesh as part of Pakistan was a religious state. A consequent result was that the Christian Community had an attitude of self defense, to guard its rights, a close knit community thinking mostly in terms of its own interest, enclosed in its own ghetto.
But since liberation movement of 1970-71 the Christian community as well as the thinking of the Church leadership has undergone a perceptible change.

Liberation movement had a common cause for all, i.e. emancipation from economic exploitation and domination of West Pakistan, through partial autonomy in East Pakistan. This movement brought the Christians as well as Hindus and Buddhists out of their Ghettos and they joined hands with the Muslims and began to fight together for the common goal. Due to the hard attitude in Islamabad, the movement of autonomy turned into a movement for complete independence.

During the army crackdown in East Pakistan in 1971, hundreds of people Hindus, Muslim, Christian gave their lives. About one million people were killed during this liberation movement for the Independence Movement.

Pakistani Army killed three of our priests, a Santal, an American and an Italian. One sister was killed by a mine. We lost two other priests after independence, killed by miscreants.

When the liberation movement was picking up its momentum in 1970, Bangladesh was hit by a severe cyclone. About 300,000 people were killed. This was the time when CORR came into existence. At the time CORR was founded for relief and rehabilitation of the cyclone affected people. But the following year in 1971 we were faced with a huge problem of displaced persons due to the crackdown of the Pakistani Army. Between 9 to 10 million people went to India. About 6 million people were floating in the country, who had lost everything but could not go over to India.

The Church through her welfare organ, CORR (Christian Organization for Relief and Rehabilitation) began helping these floating helpless people. Hundreds of people were sheltered in our parishes. Priests, brothers and sisters and even our lay people gave shelter to people at the risk of their life. This was the time when heroic acts of charity were performed even by many ordinary people. Many laid down their lives for the country. Three priests, an Italian, an American, and a Bangladeshi were killed by the Pakistan army. A sister was killed by a mine. Many of our young boys gave their lives in the liberation struggle.

During the nine months of brutal repression of Pakistan Army, CORR-CARITAS was one of the few effective organizations in the country giving shelter and food to hundreds of homeless people.

After the war the country was faced with gigantic problems. The whole infrastructure was wrecked by the Pakistan army during the liberation war. 276 major highway bridges were destroyed, over 300 railway bridges and culverts were destroyed. About 200 vessels were sunk or burned in the harbor or in the inland waters clogging harbors and many inland waterways. All ferries (over sixty) were sunk. Over 1.56 million houses destroyed, about one million people killed, nine million refugees came back from India. There were already 6 million displaced people within the country. 300,000 bullocks killed or stolen, 1 million handlooms destroyed or stolen which had supported 10 million people, 25% railway locomotives and wagon destroyed, 50% trucks destroyed or cannibalized, the whole telecommunications and telephone system wrecked, not one single aircraft left, none of the air field serviceable, the Government administration was totally disrupted.
Though the Bangladesh Church had practically no material resources at their disposal to come to the aid of the country at this hour of need, yet the Bishops through their relief organization, CORR drew up a thirty million dollar plan for relief and rehabilitation. Thanks to the members of CARITAS Internationalis, other voluntary agencies and the individual donors. CORR was able to get this money and help out the people.

While the Church was engaged in the massive programme of relief and rehabilitation, she was also undergoing or change of attitude towards the whole method of helping the helpless.

All of us came to realize that more handouts will not help the people to improve their economic condition. Consequently all CORR projects were orientated towards development, self-help programmes, Test Relief Work and Food for Work programmes, through which people could learn to stand on their own feet.

Education extension was given a more prominent role in CORR so that the participants in any project could analyze the situation they are in, the problems they face and find the best possible solution in their particular situation.

CORR took the initiative to organize to organize and co-ordinate with the aim of mutual co-operation all the voluntary agencies working in Bangladesh. Already a perceptible good result has been achieved in mutual understanding, in sharing the experiences of each other, in avoiding the duplication of same work in the same area, in getting maximum result from minimum input.

CORR is trying to bring in a change in the economic system which affects the poor farmer directly. In All CORR projects the land owner gets only 1/3 of the crops rather than ½ of the crop which is the general practice in the country. The Government has agreed to follow this principle in all the projects of voluntary agencies. Someday, we hope, the Government will make it a law of the country. Though small, it is a concrete effort towards the change in agro-economic system where the cultivators are the worst sufferers.

**Apostolate:**

The aim of the apostolate is gradually tending towards the salvation of the whole man, rather than just saving the soul. The idea of human and integral development is being put into practice by the workers in the catechetical fields. Along with direct evangelization, pre-evangelization work is also taken up in many places.

**Health Service :**

We are running hospitals, dispensaries, but along with these we have began a programme of health service. Under the supervision of Sisters, health workers are taking care of children under five years of age, teaching the people about sanitation, health care, and nutrition, vaccinating them against cholera and small pox. Mothers before and after child birth have a chance to get proper advice and care. We are planning to gradually expand our programme of health service to as many places as we can.
Education:

We are still very much engaged in formal education in the existing system of the country. However, we have started in some places vocational schools, agricultural oriented classes in some schools, adult education, home economics for girls, sewing and handicraft centers, an on going education programme in all development projects.

Awakening:

In 1974 under the guidance of the Fathers from E.A.P.I. of Manila we had a seminar for all the priests of Bangladesh for one month in Dacca. Practically all the priests had taken part in it. The seminar opened the eyes of many to see their life, work, apostolate from a new perspective and has given a new incentive in the work of the Church in Bangladesh.

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III. THAILAND – PRESENTED BY FR. JOSEPH EK THABPING

The Political Situation:

The factor dominating the situation now is a political one. Since the change from the Absolute Monarchy into Democracy in 1932 Thailand has been mainly under military regime with few and short intervals of civilian government. Only a few times were elections held, thus political freedom has been limited. All military explained that this was for the good of the people, but usually they ended up with benefits for themselves.

The economic plan up to the present emphasized greater productivity, which has turned out to benefit the rich more than the poor. Another stress is on security – to prevent communist infiltration.

The turning point of the political situation was the overthrowing of the “Three Tyrants” in the struggle led by the university students – the success was also due to the support given by the people and the majority of military personnel. Youth power emerged at that moment and is felt right up to today. During the interim government of Mr. Sanya, full freedom was given. The university students took part in various demonstrations, demands, protests, etc. Another power that made its voice heard during this regime were the factory workers and the farmers whose land was unjustly taken over by the rich. The propaganda of ideologies, particularly of communism, was allowed openly, in public speaking, printing of books, etc. Much confusion and problems arose but the interim
government did not consider it their duty to solve these problems. They set themselves to finish the draft of a new constitution and arrange for general elections.

After the general election in which no party received the majority of votes a coalition government was formed. The people felt that it was not representing them, and this led to much mistrust. Furthermore the persons in authority were very often those of the previous government of the “Three Tyrants”, and the structure of administration did not change. The people accused the government of being capitalist – working for the benefit of the rich and not for the poor. All the government activities were suspected, even the most important one which was the land reform. They managed to survive and solve minor problems. The people did not believe that the government by itself could be changed. At the moment the main ideologies – capitalistic and communistic groups are trying to gain the support of the people by propaganda – one condemning the other, hoping to be influential in government later. This is the situation the Church in Thailand finds itself.

The Church

In the past the Church in Thailand took a peaceful attitude in face of the problems. The Church tried to help the poor but at the same time tried to avoid hurting the rich. She avoided participating in troublesome situations and preferred in their face to remain silent.

After the change two years ago, the Church also realized that she had to take an activity part in helping to solve the problems of society. She took an interest in the activities of the students, the farmers and the factory workers. Though this is just the beginning, the Church has been active in encouraging the activities of the youth, and the grouping of the farmers and the workers. While co-operating with the activities of these groups the Church was planning a far sighted action by stressing on education of leaders – the youth – laymen- sisters- brothers- priests and Bishops attended various seminars.

The priorities we have started to act upon already are:

a. The youth – formation of leaders and associations
b. The family – developing a sense of Christian love and community.
c. The workers – education to help them face problems with Christian principles (we are at the very beginning).

Other points are co-operation and sharing of resources. This has been initiated by sharing Thai priests with dioceses that have only foreign missionaries. Thailandization is also one of the major concerns to be worked out more seriously.

Our hope is that we will be able to meet the challenges of the preset time in an appropriate way.
IV. MALAYSIA – PRESENTED BY FR. A. SELVANAYAGAM

Population:

Made up of Malays 49%, Chinese 37%, Indians 11%, others 3%. The Chinese, Indians and others may be classed as immigrants. In the past the races lived separately and from time to time there has been racial tensions and clashes.

Government:

In 1995 the first elections took place. Alliance came into power (three racial parties joined together). In 1957 we had independence. In 1963 Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak joined Malaya to form Malaysia. Singapore was forced to break off a short time later.

Economy:

Until independence in 1957 the wealth went to England. Since independence the stress has been on economic development and on lifting the economic status of the Malay community. Gradually the poor of other races were thought of in projects like FLDA (Federal Land Development Authority) Though in theory the government may say they are opening up for all races the Malays get the greatest share and this causes frustration.

Malaysianization:

All top posts where possible, are occupied by Malays and the greater part of all job opportunities are given to them. Even in the Church it is increasingly difficult for any foreign missionary to enter.

Islam:

Is the national religion. It is well propagated through the mass media and material benefits are given to those who embrace Islam.

National Identity:

A strong effort is being made to forge a national identity which is more pro-Malay. This pro-Malay attitude and the religious bias does not help in forging a national identity.

Capitalism and Communism:

Emphasis is on economic development has created a capitalistic system broadening the gap between the rich and the poor. This situation has also created fertile ground for the growth of communistic ideologies among the poor.

The Youth:

In this situation the youth, especially the educated, are exerting their power for a just society. At times they are even manipulated by the communists… etc.
ASEAN:

Association of South East Asian Nations – a brain child of Tun Abdul Razak, was also created to establish a game of peace, neutrality and non-alignment.

What is the response of the Church to this situation:

- The attitude has been cautious and non-committed.
- The Church identified herself with the middle and upper middle classes and not with the poor.
- The Church entered more into Social Welfare work which made the poor more and more independent.
- Some have begun to realize that the Church is missing the point if it does not identify itself with the people and help them to bridge the gap between religion and life. There is also a realization that the Church must not encircle around the Christians only. Seminars etc., are being organized to make all realize the real situation and need.
- There is a need to conscientize at the grass root level as well as at the upper level.
- There is also a growth to be self reliant financially.
- Many accept communism as something imminent and are asking “How shall we be prepared to welcome them if they do come?”.

V. PAPUA NEW GUINEA – PRESENTED BY REV. FR. KURTS.

In September 1975, Papua New Guinea achieved full political independence as a sovereign power, and soon after joined the United Nations Organization in its own right. PNG’s head of State is the Queen of England; the Governor-General, Sir John GUISE; and the first Prime Minister, Michael SOMARE. The Parliament is modified Westminster, with only one chamber.

The country is being given a socialist bias as is evident from the Government’s Eight Point Improvement Plan, which proposes the following: more control by Nationals over the country’s resources; equality; decentralization; the promotion of small businesses; self-reliance; equality of women; the right of the Government to assume control of businesses when necessary.

The country’s population is about 2.5 million, 90% of whom owe some allegiance to one or other of the Christian Churches. Of these Christians about 40% claim some connection with the Catholic Church. This high percentage of Christians has to be viewed against the pioneering role of the Christian Churches in education the pre-Christian religion of the people was animism.
There are 15 Catholic dioceses with 16 Bishops only three of whom are indigenous. There are about 30 indigenous priests in the midst of several hundred foreign priests.

After some years of preparation right from the grass-roots level, in May 1975, the National Assembly of the Self-Study of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea voted to choose the five concerns which were the biggest ones of the Catholic Church in the country, and the Assembly marked the following ones:

1. We are the Church: Why is it that many people do not feel that they are the Church?

2. Marriage: There are many problems that have come up about marriage in Papua New Guinea.

3. Catechists: many of the people of the Assembly felt that we still have to support this work of the catechists to make it stronger. The catechist is really the man who brings the Good News to all people in the village.

4. Church Workers: There are different kinds of people in the Church who are doing Church work. But then work is not clear. How can we do this work of the Church in a better way?

5. Priests and Seminaries: We still do not have many Papua New Guinea priests. What can we do, so that we get many of our young men to become priests?

The people of Papua New Guinea are Melanisian, speak 700 different languages and have rich diversity of cultures. Politically this endangers strong centrifugal forces of an enduring kind. Even now the copper rich province of Bougainville is attempting to secede; and has in fact declared itself to be the independent Republic of the North Solomons.

Health Services in which the Churches have been and still are substantially involved at all levels have resulted in a decreasing infant mortality and a rapidly increasing life expectancy. With the numbers of children rapidly increasing, there are large numbers dropping out from school; a rush to the cities and town; growing unemployment; and rapid social change. At the same time the campus of the University of Papua New Guinea has been said to be the most pacific in the world.

To supplement the policy of rapid localization several hundred Filipinos have come to the country to work on contract. With them they have brought their rich Catholic faith and practice, and they will soon be served by two Filipino priests.

The nation is agricultural, and as such is rich in copra, coffee, cocoa, tea, timber, rubber and fish. In addition there are big mineral deposits. There is comparatively little industry. More and more of the imported industrial products come from Japan. In this context a news item from Geneva, in today’s Malaysia New Straits Times (4th November) is relevant: “The oil-poor developing countries are as hard hit by the higher prices they must pay for the products of the industrialized nations, as by the higher cost of petroleum”. Examples of such imports are steel, chemicals and fertilizers.
Papua New Guinea has replied on massive Australian aid to help it balance its budget. (In
the Church, Australian Catholic Relief has helped and continues to help generously, as
also does Misereor). Australian Government aid seems destined to decrease. In the long
run this could be beneficial for it could force Papua New Guinea to realize that in terms
of dollars, she is not an affluent nation.

VI. AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND – PRESENTED BY FR. HEALION

Today for a few minutes, Australia and New Zealand will practically come to a standstill.
The reason – to listen to the richest horse race of the year – the Melbourne Cup. I just
mentioned this, as it says something about our countries.

We decided to follow the points made by Bishop Labayen in his Asian Panorama, and
comment upon them as they were applicable or not our countries. I think you will see
some differences, but also subtle similarities.

People:

As distinct from Asia, the outstanding feature of both Australia and New Zealand is that
they are sparsely populated, and that the population lives in a relatively few urban areas.
Australia’s population is 13 million - continent the size of U.S.A. and New Zealand
107,000 square miles 3 millions. Both countries are pastoral. New Zealand having 55
million sheep and 12 million cattle.

Both countries have majority European, descent population with minority indigenous
peoples – Aborigines in Australia and Maoris in New Zealand.

Since the world war 1939-1945 both countries have had policies of Government assisted
immigration. A basic premise of this policy has been discrimination in favour of
European descent people, sometimes called the “White Australia” policy. This has altered
in the last couple of years, but now discrimination from countries with a coloured
population is based upon qualifications. Only those with very high qualifications and
skills required by Australia or New Zealand are permitted entry. This contributes to the “
brain drain” of developing countries. New Zealand has allowed several thousand Samoan
people to permanently emigrate to New Zealand in the last few years, so much now
Auckland is the largest Polynesian City in the world.

Another aspect of people, is the wide-spread voluntary desire to limit the number of
children. The average family is around 2.1 children. Voluntary contraception, sterilization
and abortion are being sought; so much in New Zealand there is strong pressure being
brought to bear, for the Government Welfare Social Security Scheme. Children are
regarded as financial liabilities.

Youth:

Education for children is compulsory from 5-15 years. Tertiary education in Universities
is available for those who pass the exams. A growing feature are the large increase in
number of Institutes of Technology where various trade and technician skills are taught.
The Catholic Church has a parallel education system with primary and Secondary Schools.

“Youth Power” in our countries is not a threat to the authorities. They have economic power of spending, which is manipulated by massive advertising in the mass media. They are seduced away from real human issues and concerns by the seductive wiles of consumerism and fashion.

They are also neutralized by the promotion of leisure time activities, which are regarded as the most important part of life. In New Zealand there has been set up a Government Ministry of Sport and Recreation, with a budget this year of $6million. They have been running a special programme the last few months called “Come Alive” which people are persuaded to join in some leisure time activity.

In both countries, the present Governments have lowered the voting age to 18 years – possibly with the hope of diffusing youth power.

Diversity of Cultures:

The majority population in both countries are English descent. Both countries have indigenous peoples – Australia, the Aborigines -1% and New Zealand, the Maoris 9%. Both have in the last year or two been more outspoken in promoting their rights as minority groups. The Aborigines, set up a “tent embassy” in Parliament Grounds to publicize their cause, and the Maoris have recently completed power to utilize for the “public good”. They have also set up a “tent embassy” in Parliament Grounds.

Since 1950 with the government assisted immigration, there has been an influx of people of mainly European origin and this has enriched the cultural life of the countries. So much so, that in Adelaide, for example there is every Sunday mass in 12 languages.

But the fastest growing ‘religion’ in both countries is ‘no religion as entered on the census forms.

Dualism:

The most important form of dualism in our countries is the separation of life and religion. It is the main criticism of the youth leveled against their elders. We also have a fatalism subscribed to by all ages – life is not good, but nothing can be done to change it. How often have I heard “What can I do? Nothing”…

Conflict between Capitalism and Communism.

This is not a real issue – rather its conflict between Capitalism and Socialism. Both countries have at present socialist oriented Government who have been in power 3 years after many years in the political wilderness. But neither country really opts for socialism, because private enterprise is still publically praised.

The newspapers make much of the danger of Communism in the Trade Union Movement. But I do not think this is real threat – although other Aussies or New Zealanders may disagree.
To me, most union leaders, are in fact capitalists in their own way. While the Governments still provide the consumer goods to the extent they do- colour T.V. sets, cars (New Zealand has 1,200,000) then they will be too busy paying off hire purchase debts.

**Totalitarianism**

This is not an important issue at present, although there are signs that if conservative elements gained power, many people would support harsh police methods to stamp out stirrers, etc.

In Australia, the Government has set up the Australian Assistance Plan, whereby local communities are encouraged to identify their own needs, to try and meet these with their own resources, and they will if need be, be assisted by Government funds. In New Zealand the Government is attempting policies of Regionalism and decentralization, as well, if you have a complaint, by writing to the Prime Minister, you can get an appointment to meet him in a couple of weeks.

In the Church, the majority of people are still fixed in the traditional values of religion – a personal and individual spirituality and for the Church to keep “religious subjects”. Traditional structures – the geographical dioceses and parishes are still regarded as priority for placement of resources and people.

So often, it seems the Church is responding to the symptoms of human needs in a consumer, materialistic society, rather than examining the causes of human suffering and initiating changes. Our people do not suffer from material poverty, but are suffering from a spiritual poverty.

The Church has been a significant motivator in the growing awareness of and movement towards Asia, which is taking place in our countries. Both Governments are now committed to increasing overseas aid. The Churches efforts in education of the needs of peoples and the missions in 3rd world countries especially through the Lenten campaigns have been significant.

The question – How we as a Church are doing good? Is only being asked by a few individuals and small groups. But there are signs of the beginnings of awareness of many of the Church.

**VII. PAKISTAN –BY MGR. BONAVENTURE PAUL**

**Background:**

I suppose you are all aware of the long existing struggle between the two majority communities (Hindus and Muslims) of undivided India, which led to its division in 1947 and the creation of two independent countries namely Bharat (India) and Pakistan. At the time of its creation in 1947, Pakistan was primarily an agricultural country. Industrialization came up in the course of years. This situation or development
encouraged or forced many people to move from the rural areas to the cities. This migration had its consequences on the moral and socio-economic values of our people.

In this new set-up, the Christian Community is a minority. It is a minority not only in the number but particularly in outlook. I feel that the Church has not made sufficient efforts nor laid sufficient stress in order to help our people change this attitude. I feel that the Church failed to show and encourage our people to integrated themselves in the life style of our country. Our whole set-up for our system of schools, hostels, hospitals, dispensaries, etc. which ran parallel to either Government or private institutions aggravate this situation and made of us a special class. This set-up made our Christians very much dependent on the Church. Further, this increased the discrimination against our people, which already existed due to their social standing, as most of our Christians are either Haris (tenant – farmers) or Sweepers.

After the break-away of Bangladesh, there is a broad awakening of identity among the masses in Pakistan. Lectures are being given, seminars are being conducted on the culture of Pakistan. The different Provinces namely Sind, Punjab, Baluchistan and North Frontier are crying out for recognition as linguistic units. Pakistan, after a disappointing experience with the designs of its Islamic ideology, is visibly looking for an alternative justification for its existence. This, I feel, is the God sent opportunity given to the Church of Pakistan to establish its identity, a chance to the Church should take up with both her hands. The Church cannot and should not remain behind. We are now faced with the challenging words of Christ, “You know to read the face of the sky, but you cannot read the signs of the times”.

Fortunately, we are being helped to read the signs by the policy of our Country:

1. Land Reforms:

These reforms have opened the eyes of many. Instead of the Church buying land in order to re-settle our Christian farmers as she did in the past, we now encourage and help them to either take land on base or purchase it on an installment basis. However, we do realize that our people do need help. This is now done via Agricultural Co-operatives, Agricultural Revolving Funds, Agencies for the purchase of fertilizers, seeds etc. Our aim is to help these Agricultural Co-operatives to become self-supporting as soon as possible and to run without the guided help of any Church Administration. This will not only take away the image of the rich Church as most of our people think the Church is, but will also help the Church to find its true identity.

2. Nationalization of Schools:

I do admit that by the nationalization of Schools the standard of Education is not the same as when the Schools were administered by our Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters, nonetheless I do feel that if the Church desires to play a role in the formation of her communities, to help our people to integrate in the life-style of our country and not remain a special class of people, she has to submit herself to the standard of education as prescribed and aspired by the Government. However, it must be emphasized that although we subscribe to the nationalization were the result of individual initiative and interest. The laity were not sufficiently consulted or taken into these Projects. They were ignorant of the Diocesan
policies and plans. Efforts are being made to get the full involvement and participation of
the people.

The conclusion of this seminar in broad outlines:

Caritas Pakistan should direct its efforts towards:

A change of mentality concerning the life style, the dignity of man, the dignity of work,
rights and duties of all men and women, social awareness, customs, sanitation, hygiene,
family planning ad home budgeting. This should be brought about through the broad field
of Education towards Social Justice modeled on the life style of Jesus Christ, the
Liberator.

It was also recommended that Caritas Pakistan be well structured at all levels to work
with other Churches, Agencies and the Government.

Seminar on the various forms of Ministries (February 1975)

The deliberations of this Seminar has still to be finalized by the Hierarchy of Pakistan
(April 1976) However, I would like to place before you some of the conclusions that we
i.e. Diocese of Hyderabad (SIND) have arrived at, after having held discussions, at
various levels, on the deliberations of this Seminar.

a) The inadequate service that we are able to render to our people due to the shortage of
adequate personnel oblige us to appoint Sisters of full-time pastoral workers. This
obligation is further increased as the Sisters are not only willing but are also qualified
to our people.

b) Our catechists should not be just glorified servants, but trained to be our responsible
co-workers and recognized as such. Their specific role should be spelt out.

c) According to the existing customs and mentality of our Tribal people:

   (i) Full-pledged Ministers from among these people should not be obliged to the
       law of Celibacy.

   (ii) Marriage laws should be modified in order to help them to participate fully in
       the Sacramental life of the Church.

Conclusion:

The crisis that the Church of Pakistan is facing from factors both from within and without
focuses our Church, as the suffering Christ. Like Christ, we have been beaten and
stripped. We hope that with the help of your deliberations we, like Christ will be able to
prove and to show to those around us that we are indeed the Sons of God, worthy to share
in His Risen and Glorified Life.
Brief notes of this nature run the risk of being an over simplification. However, certain salient features may be mentioned.

Background:

1) Sri Lanka (Ceylon) gained her independence in 1948. The dominant party at that time was the U.N. P. (United National Party). It consisted mostly of an westernized elite. Its thinking patterns were capitalistic. Then emerged the S.L.F.P. (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) It was less westernized, socialistic, and mostly made of persons newly conscious of power. There were also leftist groups of different degrees of Marxist persuasion. These were not powerful.

2) Since 1948, the two bigger parties came into power almost alternately. The real change came in 1956 when the S.L.F.P. came into power in a landslide victory. It has been said that this victory “killed the left movement in Ceylon” it certainly gave non Communist socialist option to people who were disenchanged with the right. The change of governments by ballot also reflected a growing political maturity of the electorate.

3) Legislation: In recent years, some far reaching legislation leading Ceylon to a socialistic pattern of life has been enacted by the S.L.F.P. Land Reform (each family can have a maximum of 50 acres; excess lands taken over by Government) ceiling on income maximum of Rs. 2,000/ per mensem – and a sliding scale, ceiling on houses (a house for each child in the family; others taken over) company estates taken over; Legal Administration system simplified, participation by people in political life (Jamalha Committees, workers Councils, etc). a great deal of social welfare legislation. The rehabilitation of youth after the youth insurrection of April 1971, and the abortive experiment with Poya Holiday instead of Sunday are also worthy of note.

A price had to be paid: in some areas civil liberties have been affected. Press censorship and excessive powers given to political authority cause concern. Yet, Sri Lanka remains essentially a free country under the rule of the law. The insurrection of April 1971 radicalised the thinking of many persons and prepared men for radical legislation. They felt that unless something drastic were done, things would erupt in a worse form.

Some Reflections:

(1) Especially since 1956 there has been a growth of political and social consciousness of people. Now the people are alert about their Governments. The essential point to note here is that people could be educated for reform and change.

Who were the agents of change?

It is not fair to judge one age by another. We are also not fully aware of all the pressure at the time. Yet, it would be an exaggeration to say that the Church gave a dynamic leadership. Often the agents of change were outside of Church structures: politicians, intellectuals and youth.
At the same time, the thinking of the Church grew. It is still in the process of growth. The Church today is definitely not identified with the rightist as, say, in 1956, 1960 and 1965. The Catholic vote according to their free and independent choice.

The Bishop’s retain in the freedom to bless what is good done by the Government, and also to speak out when wrong is done. There is an undoubted growth in the Church.

(2) Ceylon’s experience with the leftist parties has been interesting. They have been drawn into the democratic – parliamentary system. This has tended to prepare them for the exigencies of the democratic process of possibility or rejection by the people, necessity of using constitutional methods to come into power. For 20 years, the leftist parties in Ceylon have been associated with the government by means of “no contest pacts” retention of certain portfolio’s etc.

(3) A bulwark against Communism seems to be given to people – even the poorest – land as their own. Once they have an interest in their own property, they would not like to opt for a system that does away with all private property. It is interesting to note that the leftist parties wanted all excess lands taken over to be owned and controlled by the Government rather than given over to the people even in small blocks.
SHARING OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

BY BISHOP SAUPIN (DALTONGANJ, INDIA)

LECTURE NO. 2

(The diocese of Bishop Saupin has a population of Hindu-Muslim and tribal groups and is situated in the Southern section of Bihar). The Church in India is two thousand years old. The Gospel message was proclaimed by St. Thomas, the Apostle. Due to historical factors the community remained a very small one confined to the south – mainly Kerala.

The modern missionary apostolate was inaugurated with the coming of the Portuguese and the apostolic efforts of St. Francis Xavier. Isolated attempts were made to enter into a deeper dialogue with the very developed Hindu religion and culture, but by and large the missionary preaching of the gospel was confined to the dispossessed or those on the fringe of society. The Churches of the Latin rite have the bulk of their faithful from these groups. The large areas of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andra, Bihar, ad Assam have Christian communities belonging to this sector of society.

The missionary thinking and historical compulsions under the British colonial rule gave to the developing Churches in these areas institutions of service, educational, health and social, that had as their prime purpose the service and building up of the local Christian communities so that our Christians would in time enter into the main stream of Indian life and participate as responsible citizens in the decisions at all levels of civic and political life. While granting that our Catholic institutions also educated and served non Catholics, it must be admitted that due to the existing historical compulsion they were intended for the Catholic community.

Hence, making a critical evaluation “post factum” without intending any disparaging criticism, the Church in India today finds itself with certain structures and institutions ill adapted for the dynamics of change and development in India of today. I say this for the following reasons:

1. Most of our institutions, educational, health and social are inward looking, i.e. at the service of the local Christian community.

2. These institutions are running to government institutions and those of other similar agencies as ours – the various denominations and other religious and philanthropic trusts.

3. Because of restrictions imposed by the State, our institutions are more conformist than creative and dynamic catalysts in a developing society.

4. Because of these service institutions, the Christian communities, by and large have not been educated to take on the wider and deeper involvements in civic and political life to which their Christian vocation calls them.
5. The pressures and compulsions of the local Christian communities which are receiving services from the Church, restrict the freedom of the leaders of the Church towards the aggiornamento called by Vatican II, “Progressio Populorum”, “Pacem in Terris” and “Mater Et Magistra”.

6. A fair percentage of our institutions, especially in the north, but also present in the south, cater for the well-to-do, for those who can pay high fees in order to be educated in them, who pay big sums for medical treatment in our hospitals. Even our Social Institutes cater for those who have broken away from the masses of the dispossessed. Thus, these institutions into which much of our resources go in personnel and money, in the present context of India, cater to the affluent society which constitutes the 15% - 20% of the people in India. In other words in the context of the current social structure of society, we help to perpetuate the “status quo” of an unjust society. This is a harsh reality which the Church in India has again and again in various seminars and studies clearly articulated.

Religious congregations, diocesan and regional seminars, and just last month the National Advisory Council to the Catholic Bishops Conference of India have all pleaded for the necessity of the Church to reach out to the poor and to rural India.

7. The ecclesial structure of the parish and diocese with their territorial limits and traditional institutions of service tend to limit the Churches' involvement in extra parochial and diocesan concerns, leave alone national concerns.

8. Finally, because of historical compulsions the religious orders tend to live and have their being in set forms of service in response to set needs of the Christian community.

I must admit that all this is an over simplification of a very complex situation, but I submit that this is basically the situation as it appears to me. The Church of God, which as a salvific mission fulfill, is on the fringe of society.

Christ came to give eternal life and the Church represents the mystery of God among men. How is it fulfilling its task? Again due to historical compulsions, India, the land of deep spiritual experience, with a soul thirsting for the divine, is set upon a path of secularization and practical atheism. The government using technology and planned development is trying to reach out to the masses – many of whom live below subsistence level – in order to build up a just society of equal opportunity and equitable distribution of the national wealth. The government is faced with “population explosion” and is taking certain measures that are contrary to natural law, leave alone divine law. In all this the Church is marginal, a silent onlooker, an organization, a minority concerned with its survival and identity.

All this might give the impression of a pessimistic and gloomy picture, but, as has been mentioned before, there is a positive stirring of the spirit and a sense of hope and mission which has been clearly articulated. The question is “What are we doing about it?” and that is where I would like to share with you some of my experiences and concerns in planning the apostolate of my diocese.
Practical experiences

1. **Evangelization in the strict sense** – Christ interpreted to the local situation.
   
   (a) Evangelization and social justice.
   
   (b) Theology of physical identification or incarnational presence.
   
   (c) Dialogue in its time sense – culture of the people.

When I was appointed to the diocese I was new, having taught in College for seven years with little contact outside. I realized I was a novice. My first duty was to get to know the area. I made a vast tour of the area, visited the parishes and the different institutions.

I went from the parishes and the different villages and lived with the people and listened to what they had to say. I had come with a certain background – and theological training. I moved among the people as one who was there to learn their pattern of thought, their needs and their culture. I discovered that a basic injustice prevailed. The people mortgaged their work for money. I wanted to get another picture. I used youth power and youth idealism.

During the College holidays I got the youth to go out and live and move among these village people. I gave them one ideal – “You are to do as other Christs”. They moved out and brought me back tales on injustice. Other social workers went out, sisters, brothers, priests and brought back more detailed information. I reflected and tried to get them to give me suggestions on what they felt it was best to do.

We dialogued, discussed, prayed. They lived with the people. What the people ate they ate, when there was nothing to eat they tightened their belts, thus showing physical identification.

We tried to take up the needs in Court but the Court instead of being an institution of justice seemed to be involved in injustice. We took the matter to a higher level and wrote to the papers. The Catholic papers gave it wide publicity at centre and state level.

The government made an all Indian survey and were horrified to find that in most states there was the system of mortgaged labour. Now the government has passed a law but to make it more effective a whole new machinery has to be set up.

These people have no way of getting money except through their labour. To break the vicious circle we paid them through the help of Caritas for four months to help them work for their own land during the peak agricultural season. Seventy ploughs from seven villages moved into the fields that had been unjustly acquired to show possession.

We used the secondary schools students to move out over a block of 90 villages and we presented their findings to the government.

I am only one person in my sphere and I realized I must enter into spiritual dialogue with the local people. A Bishop has only as much power as he has personnel. One priest felt the need to give incarnational presence. He is now working with sisters and secondary
school students, with a tribal group living in the interior of the forest – the SANTHALS. They moved from their own security into the insecure life of these people. They learnt their language and their customs. They are there to learn. There is developing here, a whole new liturgy. It is not only socio economic but the people see through the lives of this priest and sisters and students how it is possible to live a full Christian life in their environment. More and more of the youth are looking for an experience like this.

Another strict form of evangelization is a dialogue with the Hindu religion. We have one priest and one Catholic with a number of non Christians who go around using bhajans and the scriptures of the people and giving the latter a full Christian interpretation. We feel that in time they will ask for baptism.

2. **SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

   a.) Community building through socio-economic involvement (against caste distinctions – religious divisions)

   b.) Education through co-operatives at the level of the people.

   c.) Co-operation with government and other voluntary agencies for this socio-economic education.

I like to give my people scope for development as they are led by the Spirit. I am there in the capacity of leader and for spiritual discernment.

Some sisters moved out into a rural area 14 to 15 miles from the nearest parish. They set to work instructing the uneducated girls for marriage. They have now received a request to do the same in another Muslim and Hindu village. The Sisters came to ask advice from me on what they should do. I advised them “Do not ask me, but enter into dialogue with your people and see if you are called to this wider apostolate”. The result is, that at this present moment they are moving into this village.

We have taken a typical Hindu society in an area that made others ask “why do you choose to work there?”. We have a community project. Now, after one year we can see that through it the people are being drawn together.

Amongst simple people we have started simple co-operatives. Formerly these people went to money lenders to get money to buy food. With 400 rupees we have been able to buy food products which the people eat during the months of June, July and August. Now the people borrow from their own bank in kind and return in kind – we are at the grass root level.

We are also in close collaboration with the government educating the people in good scientific agricultural experiments.

3. **SOCIO-HEALTH:**

   a.) Public health in co-operation with the government.

   b.) Public health through the hospital.
c.) Hospital for the people.

In certain area we have entered into collaboration with the government to educate village personnel to care for the sick. We use the personnel of the village and no outsiders have been called in.

In another area a very conservative group of Sisters from Kerala moved in. It took them time to get accustomed to our life-style but now they are very open. In two villages the infant mortality rate is down to almost nil. The children are healthy because of the nutritional programme. Every house has a well. The result is that now about 10 villages are asking for similar facilities. Is a message coming across? – we are bringing people to a consciousness of their own dignity and this is evangelization.

In yet another area we have a hospital. (In India the hospitals are like those in any other place in the world, spick and span, especially the Sisters hospitals). One Sister works with a few nurses. The relatives come to live in with the patients. They cook for the patients. In this type of hospital class distinction disappears and all join together to help keep the place clean. All castes and creeds live the same life and the atmosphere is very homely. The hospital cannot accommodate all however. Sister moves into the villages with a team of social workers and the services are at the home level.

4. EDUCATION

   a) Complex and neighborhood
   b) reaching out to people in need.

In one area we have entered into collaboration with all the schools of the area. Through this a new thinking has come to the diocese. We feel responsible for all the children of the diocese and not only the children who come to our missionary schools. Our teachers now go out to the other non missionary schools and their teachers come to our schools. There is therefore a Christian influence in all schools.

Every venture has its dangers. Certain things we have been accustomed to do we will have to renounce and come into the area of insecurity and allow the creative Spirit of Christ to work. I have found youth tremendously responsible and responsive to this pattern.
1. Introduction

Today we have had a panoramic view of the forces at work in South and Southeast Asia and a kind of impressionist picture of each country in that area. We saw that there are lights and shades in these pictures. This is how I understood the presentation: there is poverty and undernourishment but also heroic efforts to solve the problems; there is the dualism of affluence and wretchedness of the dominant and the dominated, of religion on one side and life very little influenced by religion on the other. There is the further dualism of two major ideologies: capitalism and communism, each trying to woo and win Asian countries for itself, with the resultant conflicts. There are both totalitarian and democratic tendencies. Youth revolt because they are manipulated by interested parties or because they are themselves convinced of the worthiness of a cause. Secularism is growing but religious traditions remain strong. Openness to spiritual values and practical atheism are found side by side. There is courage, idealism and willingness to take risks; and there is discontent, selfishness and racialism of different shades. We see a movement towards unity, a search for a global society, search facilitated by many technical tools which tend to make the world a neighbourhood.

2. What do we in all this?

   a) Inability to open up to “the other” in what is different in race, religion, culture, etc. There are gaps in our societies, walls in our minds and hearts which fragment the human family.

   b) Inability to put personal values in the centre. Things and systems seem to dominate.

   c) Lack of horizon of a wider vision of life, of a sense of meaning and direction. Even when religion has a goal, there is much passivity, an inability to involve ourselves in the problems of history.

   d) Insufficient capacity for solidarity. Some barriers are created by society but also we have a one-sided approach instead of a comprehensive approach: the earth, for instance, is to be approached as a friend, to be enjoyed and loved and contemplated, and not just mastered and used.

In this situation, the Church is hesitant, unsure of how its specific message and charism can go along with what is happening in a fast changing world. As Christ’s disciples, we ask ourselves: what attitudes are we to take, what role are we invited to play, what involvement is demanded of us by God and His Christ and the teeming masses of Asia?
3. Three possible approaches

Historically, three tendencies have appeared in the Church, though often in a mingled and confused fashion:

a) To support that status quo, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly. We do that because as disciples of Christ, we stand for peace and order, we want to avoid hatred and divisions. The Church is an agent of reconciliation. It cannot approve of revolution resulting in confusion and bloodshed. We do not want to offend anyone. We stand for love, mercy and compassion. We want to serve all, including the rich. We do not approve of class struggle. We also want to be realistic. We know that Christ said: “The poor are always with you and you can always serve them.” There can never be a heaven on earth. Hence, we would take to relief services and programs of modernization.

b) Indifference to political, economic and social realities. It is true, political, economic and social realities are important, but with our eschatological approach and with eyes fixed on the “beyond”, we can live in any political situation. We are pilgrims. The eschaton is the reality against which everything on earth is relativised and renunciation is recommended. Faith can be lived in any condition. There is sharp distinction between the secular and the religious, the natural and the supernatural. Besides in the past, when the Church worked in collaboration with imperial and colonial powers and policies, the social dimensions and demands of the Gospel could not be proclaimed. To do so would have amounted to courting destruction for mission and Church.

c) The third approach: the Church is concerned for life here on earth, for men and women, for the shape and quality of life and of relationships between individuals and groups. It has a stake in economic and political life for it is there that God’s kingdom becomes concretely realized. The Church is now trying to project the pattern of a society which is more human.

There are 3 different models:

i) A few dominate the group and enjoy the bulk of the benefits of the toil of the masses.

ii) All support the group which tends to be impersonal and oppressive.

iii) The Gospel does not spell out the technicalities of an ideal society. But the Gospel has a dream in which each man is a centre and others deem it is their privilege to relate to this centre in love and service.
No one is marginalised but everyone is recognized and honoured. Each one orbits around each one. This can be illustrated in the Old and the New Testament. But before indicating the Scripture passages, I would like to make clear that, if each person is a centre and a goal, he is also a man for others. It is a community of persons for persons. That community can be described as a circle of friends, a family of men. Each one has to be open to the other and to God: I cannot be open to “the other” without being open to “THE OTHER” as well. The “vertical” dimension is built into the “horizontal”. The two commandments stand or fall together, just as in Jesus, man and God are accepted or rejected together.

4. The historical dimensions of Christian faith and life

For us historical existence and historical action are of supreme importance. Earthly realities and time are God’s creation and the place where His Kingdom comes. On the earth and within history, the Son of God lived a truly human life. We believe in the resurrection of the flesh and we celebrate the sacraments, that is, we meet God and take His saving action in the very heart of earthly, material realities. History is our task; it is built up through our decisions and choices and the quality of society we create. By building history we build ourselves, and become more human or less human according to the quality and direction of the history and society we make. It is important to dwell in this historical character of the Christian faith, for religions have always shown a tendency to move away from life and its harsh realities into realms of ritual worship and abstract spiritualities. The movement of biblical faith is always in the direction of life as we know and live it here and now. Religions also have exhibited a tendency to move away from man and concentrate on things, laws, traditions and systems, while biblical faith stands these religions on their head in order to concentrate on man whom God loves.

The sense of history involves a sense of movements and change. We can grow or decay; history can progress or regress; mankind can become increasingly on our corporate decisions, and on the kind of society we shape and live in. Our responsibility is great. And the kind of quality of the society we make and the decisions from which it springs are closely bound up with the coming and growth of the Kingdom of God on this earth of ours.

In sharing history, therefore, and in shaping our own concrete destiny we are in partnership with God. It is a mistake to think that He alone is the actor and that we are mere recipients. If we are his daughters and sons He would expect us to be co-creators along with Him. It is important to remember that all His gifts are also our tasks; it is essential, as Garaudy insists, to defatalize history. Providence is not fate, and in the Christian vision there is no providence of which we are not part.
In history and in the Christian faith, man is central; all the rest is for man-in-community: economics, politics, ideologies, religions, liturgies, churches and everything else.

In our historical response to God there can be endless variety according to personal and cultural differences. An acceptance of and openness to pluralism is part of the sense of history which is essential to the faith. Each period of history and each cultural group will have its own faith. Each period of history and each cultural group will have its own pace and rhythm and manner of developing from within and structuring itself in response to the Word of God.

Finally let us observe that our life is not something angelic and in the air. We are part of this earth just as the earth is part of us, and we cannot relate into fellowship without expressing ourselves in visible and tangible ways.

5. **Scriptural background for Christian Social Concern**

(a) Acts II, 42-47 and IV, 32-35: the faithful assembled to listen to the apostles, to pray, to break bread, to pool their economic resources and share them. We have here the picture of shared faith-life expressed in and realized through shared Eucharist, issuing into economic sharing. A radical endeavour to see to it that nobody among them was needy. For this reason “they were held in high esteem”. The reason was not the prospect of an imminent parousia: that would rather have led to renunciation. What led precisely to sharing was the memory of Jesus, the mind of Jesus as they had understood it.

(b) II Cor. VIII and IX reveal a perspective of free sharing of every kind of wealth. “The aim is equality; as Scripture has it, “the men who got much had no more than enough, and the man who got little did not go short”. (VIII, 14f.)

(c) Eph 2 speaks of a new man, a new humanity which Jesus shaped by bringing down dividing walls and building the community of God on earth across all divisive frontiers of religions and nationalities.

(d) All this goes back to Jesus and is tooted in His memory.

i. A community dimension is seen in Jesus’ concern to build friendly relationships: through the many fellowship meals, the command that the disciples should give the hungry crowds something to eat themselves, the teaching about forgiving seventy times seven, measureless love for the neighbor, the needy and even the enemy, the significant word about the Second Mile, the invitation to give and never to grab, etc.;

ii. A community-building activity is disclosed in Jesus’ way of relating to people across social and religious frontiers and walls: He gives recognition to outcasts, tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners; He gathers His disciples from among the common people, the “sinners”; He honours and acknowledges the faith of non-Jews, the roman soldier, the tan woman, etc.; all to the chagrin of holy people, to the shock of His own friends, to the hostility of the leaders of His people.
iii. His idea of God’s community is hinted at in His refusal to be the approver of a closed club or exclusive sect; the use of His name and His power for the well-being of men is not restricted to any group, it is nobody’s monopoly; see Mk IX, 38-41.

iv. Did Jesus change structures? Did He challenge them? Or left them as He found them? That question is bound up with Mark’s question to which his Gospel is the answer; Mark’s question is, “How did Jesus Who revealed God and did good to people and was meek and humble, come to be hated, rejected and murdered? The answer begins with Mk II, 1-3, VI, builds up to VII, 23 and culminates in the Passion narrative. Jesus revealed a new point of view, a new understanding of religion and society, stood for a new value system, built new kinds of relationships, undermined old structures and traditions and value-sets and released new forces into the stream of human history. Men in command at the moment were alive to the subversive character of what Jesus said and did, and so that had to suppress Him. The Sabbath was a structure, strong and ancient, and the symbol of a whole complex of socio-religious establishment. Jesus shook this by repeated violations of the Sabbath and by declaring that the whole establishment was for man and not the other way around. Other traditions like washing before eating, observance of fasts, offices like the priesthood or the scribes, avoidance of contact with non-Jews and sinners, all received from Jesus similar cavalier treatment.

v. The primacy and centrality of man, of the human person, of the human community stands out in all this, and marks the specific trait of what Jesus was creating. The Sabbath is for man; and reconciliation with a grieved brother has priority over ritual worship in the temple. See Matthew V, 23, which is quite a startling statement.

vi. Finally there is community in the whole idea of the Kingdom, of the Eucharist, and of the Church.

(e) From Jesus we could go back to the Prophets and to the whole Old Testament tradition.

i. Read Micah III, 1-7, injustice and a situation of atheism are presented as inter-related.

ii. The call for social justice in Amos, Micah, Isaiah. “Let justice flow like a stream.”

iii. Without justice and care for people, religion is futile: Is. 58; Jer. 7

iv. The exodus, which is the redemption of a group, the establishment of a community, the embodiment of a corporate covenant in land an in nationhood, but a land to be shared and never grabbed by a few.

v. The provisions for social justice and a fraternal community in Deut.

6. The call of the Church to embody and project a new vision of society, proclaim and illustrate its values and implications in its own life.
QUESTIONS FOLLOWING THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
“THE NEW SOCIETY – ITS CONTEMPLATIVE DIMENSION”

BY FR. RAYAN

1. How do you explain in your theology the principle of blind obedience?

Answer: Let us begin with the distinction between obedience and submission. Obedience is to truth, submission is to power. This is a necessary distinction overlooked too long. Obedience cannot be blind; it is a way of responding to God, who is Light which illuminates and reveals and calls us to walk in the light. He gives us light and truth in our hearts, in our conscience, but also in history, in relationships and in nature. We come by it through faith, through search and experiment, through comparison of notes, through controversy and clash of opinions, through mutual aid and correction. We come by truth in parts, sparks appear, join up and leap into a flame, and flame begins to grow, or also to flicker or to dim. Our part is to be open to the truth wherever and however it appears, and to keep searching together. As for submission to power, it can become oppressive and dehumanizing. Sheer blind obedience is no idea of Ignatius who was much more of a humanist than some traditions make him appear.

2. Is truth subjective or objective?

Answer: The subjective-objective distinction is valid for science and theology, for the study of things and for dealing with ideas. It cannot apply to the sphere that is specifically human. In the world of the human, in love and friendship and religion, truth is personal, interpersonal and relational. “I am the TRUTH” said Jesus. And God is TRUTH. This personal truth goes in the measure in which the relationship develops.

3. Such a personalistic approach can lead to individualism and be destructive of good and can become a problem.

Answer: (a) The personal implies mutual openness, and is therefore essentially social and anti-individualistic. The personal and the social or communitarian are two poles of one reality. We cannot have the one without the other. Quite the contrary, then, of what you fear is the truth.

(b) For the rest, we may recall the fact that from the 13th century downward the West has had a religion of objective truth, accurate definitions, stringent laws and much submission to power, however this has not prevented, but rather aided, the development of Reformation, in the worship, spirituality and morality of the Churches, in the rationalism of the 18th century, in the rise of capitalism – all of which have been destructive of much good in the world.
4. Is not personal truth also subjective? And can personal truth be measured as objective truth can be?

**Answer:** (a) Personal truth is subjective not in the sense in which it is opposed to objective, but in the sense that we are the subject or author (relationally) of personal truth.

(b) Personal truth cannot be measured as objective, scientific truth can be; but, over a span of time, my friend and I can sense a contribution has been made to the growth of personal truth in the world and in history.
Theological Reflection
“Towards a Theology of the New Society “

Fr. S. Rayan

Questions following the p.m. session on 7th November, 1975.

Question: Evidently the Kingdom is not confined to Christianity, it is also in other religions?

Bishop Labayen: The Kingdom of God is not confined only to Christianity but it is a reality also in other religions. By dialoguing with the other Asian religions we discover in them the SEEDS of the WORD. In dialogue with them we will perceive in our own faith certain insights that we would not see if we did not dialogue. They will reveal to us certain things. If we relate to them we can learn from them. We are beneficiaries of them.

Father Rayan: It is not only in other religions that God is operating, but in human history. It is in history that God meets man, revealing and communicating himself to man. His Kingdom is coincident with history. The various religion are signs of the Kingdom of God. God is in all of them. Basically they originate in the touch, self-gift, of God. Israel is a special sign in religious history. The revelation culminates in Jesus Christ, the final and full revelation of the Kingdom of God. Because of him the Christian group is more clearly aware of the total mystery and is conscious that the world has been redeemed in Him. It has the revelation of the MYSTERION, hidden from the beginning but finally made and proclaimed in Jesus Christ. An aspect of Evangelization is the communication of this knowledge.

Question: In dialogue with other religions we come to understand that the Christian religion is a beneficiary of the other religions. Could you explain?

Reply: Ref. Ad Gentes 22 – theological reflection must be promoted in various cultural contexts. That will yield new riches hidden in the recorded words and deeds of God. In Christ, God’s mystery is manifested. In history Jesus Christ is limited but in the resurrection he transcends His historical limitations, becoming in the totality of history. Various groups in history at various times will have different experiences and thus realize and open up for us new depths of the mystery. New riches of Christ will become more fully expressed in space and time, in various epochs in diverse cultures.

Comment: You emphasized the centrality of man. I think it would be more correct to say the centrality of the God-man.

Reply: It actually comes to the same. God is the Alpha, the Omega, the Centre. The New Testament emphasizes that it is in Man that God meets man, namely in Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus identifies Himself with mankind. Jesus declares ‘As long as you did it to the least of my brothers, you did it to Me”. See the centrality of man in teaching like “The Sabbath id for man”; ‘leave your gift before the altar and go first
and be reconciled with your brother’; ‘The new commandment is that you love another’; to say you love God while not loving your brother is to be a liar’. In the Bible, all God’s saving action is centered on Man.

**Bishop Labayen:** I would refer to Gaudium et Spes No. 22. The function of the Incarnate Word is to bring to full light the mystery of man. “The truth is that only in the history of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man find meaning”.

**Question:** Is this not utopia? And is it not only a few who will reach fulfillment?

**Father Rayan:** (a) This is utopia, for it is unattainable by us alone and is precarious. But God makes the utopia possible and enables us to achieve it. In partnership with God it can be realized.

(b) Each man is a centre, but a centre which relates to the ultimate CENTRE, God. Each human being is a value and end in himself, not to be used for some other end, but to be loved for his own sake. In every act of true love every man reaches God who is LOVE, who is the End. The final achievement that is for all.

**Question:** Grace is God’s friendship given to me. Accepting grace means sharing with others. When there is existing inequality in society there is little for the poorer man to share. How then can we say that friendship is sharing?

**Father Rayan:** God loves us in the WORD. We are offered His friendship and we are able to answer to it personally. The basic form of this sharing I called honouring one another and then I proceeded to say that this basic honour is justice. It must be expressed in bodily realities. This great love may become embodied in small services.

**Question:** The presuppositions of your that all the people in the world should develop all their possibilities. I am wondering if this is necessary? If this is advisable? I have the impression that we are pointing towards a very materialistic development. Won’t we lose our spiritual values?

**Father Rayan:** (a) I have been speaking about honor and friendship. Are these material values?

(b) The difficulty rests on a supposition that material wealth naturally and necessarily leads to loss of faith. This is not true. The earth with all its richness is God’s gift to us, so is our capacity to produce wealth. It is only unshared wealth, selfish wealth implies and leads to unbelief. In a society of friends more wealth would mean greater sharing and an abundance of love, of faith, of the experience of God.
DESCRIPTION OF SITUATIONS IN OUR COUNTRIES CORRESPONDING TO THE SITUATION WE SAW IN MALAYSIA

REPORT OF GROUP I

We began with question 1 of the questionnaire and a few gave brief descriptions of situations in their countries corresponding to the situation we saw in Malaysia: the plight of the aboriginals in Australia, the situation of the tea plantation workers of Bangladesh and the condition of the immigrant workers in Germany. Coming to India we discussed broad issues, abandoning the format.

1. Image of richness of the Church:

In South India many Christians and even the Church are plantation owners and some priests are plantation managers. The Church has big property holdings and supports big and prestigious buildings and projects. The Church seeks security through business holdings, but thereby stands on the side of the rich. The rich image alienates the masses. Decisions concerning money are made without the participation of the poor. We hear of the idealism of youth but in Sri Lanka even the younger clergy have a higher standard of living and more creature comforts than in the “old Church”. The religious have a higher standard of living than the diocesan priests or the people. The Church even spends much money on conferences to solve the problems of the poor.

2. Correctives for the image of richness:

(a) Local support of the Church: If foreign aid were removed, it would perhaps be a blessing. Some voluntary efforts in this regard have been made. Though local support is difficult to attain, the people are generous and we should trust them more. In tribal areas, the people not only give property but also erect simple Church facilities themselves. In one diocese the property belongs to the people, but it was pointed out that this property belongs to the people, but it was pointed out that this hornet’s nest of lawsuits and conflicts in actual practice.

(b) Simplicity of life style: Instances were given of priests living with the poor and being supported by them. It is hard to break out of our life styles, because we always have security, for one thing. In Australia some dioceses have introduced equal income for all priests (the minimum adult wage), and in Germany priests share with their mission brothers out of their excess income. Perhaps the best procedure is to train our new seminarians in more simple life styles.

(c) Sharing of building and services: big buildings often contrast with poor surroundings, but the Church can do things for the poor neighborhood, e.g. sink tubewells. An example of a free school for slum children in a city college was given to show how buildings can be used out of hours. Our residential
existentialist remarked that we must rethink all our services. We can perhaps have a far wider impact through other programmes, e.g. adult education for awareness and civic responsibility. Maybe we should let government do more in the handling of services, as is done in Malaysia, where the Church doesn’t do economic development. Rather it trains people to become aware of their own needs and problems and of the possibility of government to solve them under prodding. The dilemma of more buildings for the training of personnel arises, but it was pointed out that the Communist influence spreads without any buildings.

(d) New types of education and new uses of teachers: Government has taken over mission schools in many countries and they always deteriorate. One tendency is to fight for schools or to continue some prestige schools as models for emulation. The other tendency is to give up schools voluntarily and being free of the responsibility of running them to turn to more influential programmes, perhaps within the schools. Many sisters are working in the government schools, even in 100% Buddhist areas of Sri Lanka. Perhaps more brothers and sisters would be attracted to the teaching vocation if we broke away from the traditional type of schools. A final point, little developed, was that development should not only be for people but for priests also (including Bishops and Archbishops).

By: Rev. Father Richard W. Timm

REPORT OF GROUP II

I. Causes for the disparities which exist in our countries

(a) Disparity and injustice in the cities – due to large, unwieldy numbers moving in for better prospects – poor people exploiting other poor people, poor attracted as they do not have to pay rent.

General causes for injustice and disparities obtaining in the country.

Lack of resources and general income.
Lack of planning (perhaps intentionally to retain the status quo).
Unwieldy population. High rate of illiteracy (85%)
Decision makers at every level, belong to one class and are alienated from the mass.
Selfishness or corruption in the government sector.
Selfishness of the poor.
Indebtedness on the large-scale, not only due to poverty but also drunkenness and the practice of spending much money on social functions.
Education being too general and not job-oriented.
Fatalistic, parochial attitude of people affording an excuse for governments political leaders.
Racial, cultural differences and resultant animosities.
Laziness of the people.
Free-enterprise advocating the law of the jungle ‘survival of the fittest’
The dilemma of countries which while professing to be socialist which working within capitalist structures.

II & III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Earlier attitude to the situation</th>
<th>Present attitude to the situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helplessness, paternalistic</td>
<td>Hope – rethinking with the people not for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectators with a feeling of self-justification</td>
<td>More involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complacency</td>
<td>Socialistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capitalistic</td>
<td>Person oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project oriented</td>
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</table>

By: Miss Anita Fernando

Report of Group III

Eleven of us made the trip to Batang Berjuntai under guidance of Fr. Selva. We left Cheras at 8.00 am and returned at 4.30 pm. We reached Batang Berjuntai at 9.00 am. Father Selva has parish of about 3,000 Catholics scattered among the rubber and oil palm plantations. During the course of the day we visited the rubber and oil factories and the houses of the labourers.

Observation on the workers of the oil palm estate:

20,000 acres of the oil palm supply the raw materials for the extraction of oil in the factory. An average of 2.5 tons of oil are produced in an hour.

Personnel:

The personnel involved in the estate are the Manager, Superintendent, the clerical staff and the labourers.

Salaries:

We were reliably informed that the Manager and the Superintendent drew salaries running to four figures. The exact amounts were not available. The chief clerk’s salary is US$900.00 per month. He is provided with accommodation fitted running water and electricity. He pays a nominal rent of $2.00 per month. It appears that he hasn’t received any increment in salary for the last 13 years. Information on the salaries of the other clerical staff weren’t available. His Provident Fund was 15% + 15%.

Few months ago the staff had gone on strike demanding a gratuity of 2½ months salary per years service. The strike was called off when the Labour Industrial court started negotiations on the matter.
The workers in the factory received $300 to $400 a month depending on the overtime work done. The workers in the plantation received $150 to $400 per month. The Provident Fund of the laborers is 6% + 7%.

**Housing:**

The officials of the upper strata from the manager to the clerical staff are well housed with power supply and running water etc. The house of the labourers consist of two rooms each and a small sitting room and toilet 1/16 of an acre of land is provided for each worker by the company for cultivation of vegetables.

**Medical Facilities:**

If the labourers are treated in the local hospital the Company pays the bill on certification from the doctor. But it appears the doctors do not readily certify the bills.

**Observation on the Rubber Plantations:**

**Housing**

Each family is provided with one large room in which ten or thirteen people live. The houses are poor and inadequate. There is no incentive to keep it clean. They are poorly furnished. In certain cases only one member works on the estate. The other members of the family may be employed in the town nearby.

**Salaries**

Each labourer receives $3.40 per day (on a daily wages basis). If due to rain or any other reasons he is unable to attend to his duty he forfeits his pay for the day. He is expected to gather close to 21 gallons of latex per day. He received an extra 15 cts for every additional gallon collected. And for every hour overtime he received 65 cents.

The clerk who took us around was paid $400 per month.

Other figures were not available.

**Education**

The children attend the neighbouring schools. Most of them reach the eighth grade. Some succeed to qualify the Matriculation examination. The youngsters are ambitious and wish to continue their studies. A girl expressed her wish to do nursing, and a youngster wished to join the air force. But they weren’t sure how their studies were going to be financed.

The chief clerk is able to spend as much as $100 per child per month for his education. The poor man however could spend only $15.00. It was evident that the parents of the poor children weren’t able to finance the higher studies, unless helped by a philanthropic society.
Trade Unions:

The trade unions have been a great source of solace for the labourers. Their pressing needs have sometimes been met due to their help.

Sport Facilities:

It was observed that the labourers were provided with good play grounds for foot-ball, volley-ball and badminton. These recreational facilities were a healthy feature.

GENERAL REMARKS:

1. The labourers are a depressed class and are extremely poor. They are however happy. Though happy they are ambitious and wish to improve their living conditions. One labourer expressed his ambition to one day build his own house and require 5 acres of land.

2. They don’t take pride in maintaining their houses. One reason being that they have to accept whatever is given them. It is irrelevant to speak of having a house according to their own life style.

3. The Indian labourers appear to be better off here than in their own country. Some of them send money back home from their little savings.

4. The huge profits made from the produce of the estates go out of the country since they are owned by foreign companies. Employees of the upper bracket get a small share of the profits by way of bonuses. But the labourers are bereft of any share. This appears to be crying injustice since the labourers appear to be doing most of the day work. As a matter of fact on this particular day managers of both estates weren’t even presented on the estates.

5. The employees of the upper strata who receive special privileges are hand in glove with the management. Hence they have no sympathy for the poor labourer.

6. Relationships: It is obvious that the Manager and Superintendent don’t associate with the clerks and the clerks stay aloof from the labourers. The classification is taken for granted and none would question it.

The most striking fact of the whole visit was the clear evidence of the lack of recognition of the dignity of labour. Hence the labourer is not given a fair deal.

REFLECTIONS ON GROUP III – VISIT TO BATANG BERJUNTAI.

The group jot down to comparing the condition of the workers in the factories and plantations to the condition of the workers in our own countries. Members from Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh express their views. From what was stated it was evident that there were many points in common. The general poverty, injustice, and sub-human standards do exist in all these countries. The dignity of labour was not valued. In fact, the
condition of the labourers here in Malaysia was even better as compared to the plight of those in most countries. There was therefore little “shock effect” on the members of the developing countries.

As a contrast, the reaction of those from Australia and New Zealand was different. This was the first time they had been witness to such poverty. Hence they were utterly shocked. The conclusion was that many of us have created a psychological shield due to the preconditioning of our minds to the existing situation in our own countries. To view a situation objectively and realistically it was necessary to break out of these shields. It is only then that we could assess the condition fairly and see the injustice existing.

We next studied the causes of injustice confronting the labourers. The causes were (a) Political (b) Social.

**Political:** The Government permitted the foreign companies and private owners to exploit the labourers. Labour laws were either not stringent enough or they weren’t implemented, to ensure just wages and reasonable living standards for the labourers. The government was interested only in filling the coffers of the treasury with little concern for a just distribution of the wealth ensuing from the produce.

**Social:** There are racial distinctions made between Malays, Chinese and the Indians. No remedial measures have been taken. Still more discernible are the social stratification. The labourers have lost their dignity as human beings by the fact that they are ostracized by the upper strata of employees. This fact is taken for granted and hence no one would take steps to rectify the situation.

Studying the general tendency in the Church we see that the Church too is entrenched in this system. By way of example we see that more personnel are involved in work for the elite than for the underprivileged. This perpetuates the unjust social order already existing. It is found necessary to break away from the irrelevant structures existing in the Church in order to sensitize it to the reality of the situation. The group realized the necessity of having at least some “radical” priests and Bishops to lead the way. The fact is that there are even now such priests and Bishops whose influence for good is felt. A question raised was: “Should the Bishop as the leader of the flock take part in these radical changes? Should he initiate them?”

Comparing our present situation with that of Christ’s during his time, there appears a striking parallel. We are restricted and subdued by structures which are outmoded. Christ faced the same problems. The priests, Pharisees and the lawyers of his time were able to spell out the traditional norms and tried to contain Christ and his growing influence. He was in constant conflict with the establishment. Ultimately he broke away completely with the old system. He did not believe in “gradual phasing”. He initiated a truly radical change. In this light what should be the duty of our present day authorities in the Church who are facing the same dilemma?

It is good to note that my letter day movements are not concerned with structures to any great extent. They are fundamentalist in attitude and concepts. They find their life and strength in the direct application of the norms and spirit of the Gospel.

**By:** Rev. Bo Lawrence Manual
REMARKS:

1. The standard of living (housing, clothing, food, etc.) higher in Kuala Lumpur than in cities in other countries concerned (India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh, Pakistan, etc.)

2. Racial tension (Chinese, Malay, Indian) seemed to be very evident. Foreign presence (e.g., business, multinationals, etc.) very strong.

3. Income differentials very pronounced. Thus, the lowest paid teacher was said to get Mal.$580/- per mensem whereas a rubber tapper could make about Mal. $150/- per mensem (rubber helped Malaysian economy!)

4. Workers did not seem to have sufficient insurance against accident, air pollution, etc.

5. Sociologically, there seemed to be excessive exploitation of land (Tin mines near the city, families pushed out).

6. Most of the young men and women who qualified for university education evidently cannot secure places in universities: brain drain and frustration.

7. It was observed that Malaysia might have to think of more socialistic patterns of economy. The Church could do a great deal of good by encouraging inter-racial harmony and social work besides of course preaching the Word of God.

Are situations similar in other countries too?

Except in Australia and New Zealand, in other countries the situation was marked by inadequate salaries, decreased buying power of money, lack of incentive to produce (low prices fixed by Governments for consumer goods; farmers destroying their produce because of high cost of transport, etc., as in Australia and New Zealand).

Identification of Problems

1. Developing countries are at the mercy of the world market. Their products have to be sold cheap but imported goods cost more than before.

2. Political corruption: prices jacked up unnecessarily.

3. Sense of frustration that a breakthrough is not possible. Laziness.

What could be done

1. The Church should not be inward looking. Think also of world problems: priority of our moral imperatives (e.g., attitude towards an unjust war).

2. Encourage healthy trade unionism: encourage collective bargaining, sharing of profits, etc.
3. Give teaching of the Church in social problems by Pastorals, sermons, etc.

4. Church leaders to meet factory owners and workers: bring about understanding.

5. Promotion of human and moral values (e.g. Dharma Vijaya movement in Hyderbad).

**Attitude of Christ**

1. He gave principles to live by: gave primacy to live.

2. He was also a non-Conformist: led Israel out of the religions but to which it had fallen.

3. At the same time, primacy of the spiritual was affirmed. (‘Let the dead bury the dead’; ‘who appointed me judge?’; Apostles turned to prayer and preaching rather serving at the table –Acts.).

**By Mgr. Marcus Fernando**
Questions and comments following the Reports on the workshops on Experiences from Visits on May 11, 1975

Question: I seek a clarification on BRIBES which are so much part of the system – you have to hand out money to get any important work done. Even to get the salaries of the teachers take time, the salaries are withheld. In such circumstances it was mentioned at a seminar, that a bribe is not a bribe – you are justified in giving it so as not to inconvenience others. Is it right to give the bribe but not right to receive it?

Answer: We can look at the issue in two different ways:

(a) Structural Pathology; and  
(b) Personal ambivalence.

Who accepts the bribe? Are we talking about the small clerk? Or is it about top executives?

Most of us are dealing with pretty bureaucrats but the government and most big corporations are using large sums of money for bribes to facilitate their work. The root of this corruption can be traced to the relationships in the system. Even after a country becomes affluent I do not see how we can do away with bribes. We will have to go deeper and ask WHY BRIBE? As long as we have private property it seems we will have bribery. Most of the people who accept bribes are poor persons living on a subsistence level. They need the bribes to supplement their income.

Comment: I have had the same experience but I notice a change since emergency. The people are afraid to accept bribes in case they are found out. The work now is going faster than in the past and minus the bribes.

Comment: Bribery is corruption and bribery is immoral and unlawful and therefore should not be permitted. We Bishops and priests must have courage to stand against it and bear witness honesty and truth.

Comment: Two workshops brought up the fact that they felt the cause of nations like India being backward was laziness. I am inclined to think that rather than saying laziness is the cause we should say the cause is undernourishment. If we had only one meal a day – like the breakfast we have just eaten, how much work could we get through?

Comment: What raised a question to my mind was that in listening to the reports the question of planning came up.
We have structures outside the Church, 
structures inside the Church.

The structures outside the Church have been analysed as unjust. The structures inside 
the Church have been analysed as inadequate. Structure is a thing, a series of 
operations. We seem to forget persons. We are trying to use the existing structures for 
new happenings. I ask the question:

**Question:** Should the structure be changed or should the person be changed?

**Comment:** I believe disparity is a reason for people to get together-to-unite. If they 
unite there is a tendency to do away with disparity. When a labourer mounts the 
ladder he separates from the rest.

**Question:** Have we therefore to change persons or structures?

**Comment:** Some large industrial houses make all their employers share-holders. If there 
are profits they share in the profits. If not they lose. In this set-up the workers are 
tremendously concerned about making profits to the point of being unjust to other 
industries. It’s not a question of the Manager and Supervisor etc. – but the whole 
corporation being exploiters.

**Question:** Is it injustice on the level of the structures? Or injustice on the level of the 
persons? Who needs to be changed?

**Dr. Oommen:** The points raised would need extensive discussion. I do not see a 
dichotomy between structure and persons. Structures are abstract. In any system when 
a change begins it is always initiated by a creative minority. They challenge the 
‘status quo’ – the structure gets transformed when the majority changes. The values, 
attitudes, relationships of the majority have to change in order to bring change in the 
structure. This brings in the question of the process of “embourgeoisment” - the 
‘affluent worker’ – he has not developed a sufficient awareness that although he is 
better off, he is still exploited. This kind of worker is interested in keeping the ‘status 
quo’.

There is a need for doing away with profit-making. One only takes according to his 
needs i.e. not all of us will try to get into organizations in which we get profit.

**Question:** How will this be done? – change the persons?

**Comment:** We have tried to envisage a society close to the idea of Xt., We have spoken 
of justice and tried to analyze society and ask “ Does justice exist?” – our answer
seems to be “NO”. Injustice exists’. The fault seems to lie in property. Property plays a very big role in shaping our relationships.

**Question:** Can you say something on private property?

**Dr. Oommen:** It is a very difficult issue. We have had a whole lot of experiments – even the primitive communities met terrible failure…

In so far as there is a differentiation of labour there is a difference of income. I believe in China the difference in payment between the lowest labourer and upper worker is three times. Ghandi said if you want to belong to the Congress Party spend at least one hour daily in physical labour.

**Comment:** Yesterday the questions seemed to say that Dr. Oommen was imparting the sociological viewpoint and leaving religion out of it. I was surprised that in our workshops in the afternoon we were very interested in what was material. Even the Bishops, our spiritual leaders, entered into this thought. It made me realize that the Church is part of this structure.

**Comment:** I would like to comment on the role affluence plays in neutralizing change. In our country the workers are affluent. They do not see the structures. The structures seem to be hidden by affluence. They do not want change. They have T.V., cars, all they need. I envy your countries because the people see the human values which are lost – In Australia and New Zealand they no longer see the problem. Our people are not aware of their spiritual poverty, of the dehumanizing effect the structures have on them. We have a high suicide rate, a high degree of mental illness. Your people have creativity, - they see problems yet seems to be striving to adapt our way of life.

**Fr. Tissa Balasuryia** We are converging towards the idea that the situation is not so good. The Australians are shocked by the things in Malaysia. We, from poorer countries think it is wonderful here in Malaysia. There is a great value in this reciprocal sharing and criticism – we see more clearly the sinful situation we are living in. We agree on the opportunities for doing good within it. The main cause of our attitude was mentioned. Before we change other persons we must change ourselves.

We say we have been paternalistic, project oriented – apathetic. Are we not also bribed? – in uploading the social structure? Bribery and corruption are not the monopoly of the government. We have to ask ourselves how far we are bribed? Are we also not bribed to maintain the structures? – for not rocking the boat? Religion has always had a tendency to allow itself to be bribed – how much of what we have is not part of the system?
We are desensitized, manipulated, there is a wall built round us in such a way that things from outside do not easily get in.

How do we sensitize ourselves?

Who is Jesus Christ for us? – an undertaker?
- a radical revolutionary?

If we preach Jesus Christ we should know He is – what is His message?

The guinea pig idea is not acceptable – let a “crazy” Bishop or Priest act, then approve or disapprove afterwards.

The Youth detest leaders with such attitudes. Christ did not have such an attitude. A Bishop is not an uncommitted leader of social change. All of us have been brought up in a position of security – now this has become a spiritual torment – we are in need of spiritual change. We come to an awareness of the sinfulness of the situation in which we are

Who is Jesus Christ for us?
What is our motivation?
What type of situation do we want?

We should not only have deviant Bishops but committed Bishops.

Dr. Oomen: I have the impression that we are looking at the Church and our big Institution. But we may consider it as MOVEMENT. It is this conversion of the Church into a movement that would replenish our life. Granted there will be always an organizational structure, we should strive to keep it as a movement also.

Comment: I am very much concerned about the image of the Church and our big Institutions. I have told the recent religious communities who applied to come to my diocese that if you are willing to go to the villages you may come, if not do not enter. Even after accepting to serve in a village, one Institute put up a large dispensary costing seven lacks. (I ordered them to take it down as it was irrelevant to this day and age- the cost of pulling it down was 5 lacks).

Comment: All of us are entrenched in the idea of personal sin. It needs an effort to pass on to the people the sense of social sin and responsibility. We find difficulty in believing ourselves guilty as people. People put up a barricade and say ‘this is not a sin for me’.

Comment: It is a question of language – people will realize how they HURT others - the whole system hurts us.
**Clarification:** We have been examining ourselves but what is our goal? There is no equality in any system. If there is a little frustration at that moment it is not bad.

The title of the second part of our programme is ‘The Church at the service of the New Society’. We will find other answers there – we are not going to get all the answers now.

**Comment:** The affluent worker cannot be convinced that he is exploited or belongs to an unjust system.

In our country we have very low caste people who do not see the situation. They felt they were secure and important because they were working for very important families. This attitude is not changing because of the trend in education, mass media, politics, and other movements. It is not a question of affluence or non affluence but the question is to bring them an understanding of the world to which they contribute – this is a real service.

**Comment:** A few months ago during a seminar for priests on the new rite of penance one of our participants used the term “social sin” which almost caused a revolution, but as the discussion went on we gradually come to the realization that this was not a new thing in the Church. Social structures are such because men have them so. It is sometimes observed that as Christians we are more conscientious in matters of private or individual morality than we are in economic, social and political matters. We have given too much notional assent to this concept of the corporate aspect of sin rather than a real one. There must be respect for others thinking. We must grow gradually and respect gradualness.

**Fr. Tissa Balasuryia:** Let us look at Christ. Our goal is to preach the Kingdom. All human systems have evil and good. We must try to keep it healthy and bear witness to the Gospel values. Wealth and prosperity are for all. Our response is to hear witness to the Gospel in season and out of season, before kings and peasants. Our role is permanently constructive, permanently critical.

Let us think how far can guilt b creative and lead us not to despair but to life? In the pedagogy of the oppressed and oppressor there is need for respect – intense respect for the person. One way to respect a person is to tell him the truth. There must also be challenge, if we do not challenge we do not allow the Gospel which is a two edged sword to touch our hearts. We can learn from each other.
SOME DATA ON POLITICO - ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Ownership of Share Capital in Malaysia:

In Malaysia particular attention is paid in planning and the creation of public opinion concerning the racial distribution of income and wealth. The Malays, the Bumiputras are the poorest racial group. Hence the economic plans are for increasing their share of the total capital within a framework of the overall growth of economy. It is proposed in the second Five Year Plan to increase the Malay share of capital of limited liability companies from 1.9% in 1970 to 30.1% by 1990.

Table 4 -7
Ownership of Share Capital of Limited Companies, By Race and Sector, Peninsular Malaysia, 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Malay ($000)</th>
<th>Malay (%)</th>
<th>Chinese ($000)</th>
<th>Chinese (%)</th>
<th>Indian ($000)</th>
<th>Indian (%)</th>
<th>Foreign ($000)</th>
<th>Foreign (%)</th>
<th>Total ($000)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry &amp; Fisheries</td>
<td>13,724</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>177,438</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>16,191</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<td>Mining &amp; Quarrying</td>
<td>3,876</td>
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<td>91,557</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
<td>384,549</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>605,164</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banking &amp; Insurance</td>
<td>21,164</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>155,581</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>4,434</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>332,790</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>636,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13,349</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>220,330</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>13,348</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>182,862</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>582,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>102,611</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,192,038</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>52,402</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,207,889</strong></td>
<td><strong>60.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,288,978</strong></td>
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</table>

The total includes share capital ownership by Federal and State Governments and Statutory Bodies and other Malaysian residents (individuals and Nominee and locally controlled companies), amounting to about $734 million. In this Table, the racial shares in each sector exclude these two groups.

(Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan 1971-75, 1973 p.83)
The above table shows how much the Malaysian economy is foreign controlled. 60% of all share capital is in foreign hands; this includes 75.3% of agriculture and 72.4% of mining and quarrying. Since over 70% of the gross export earnings of Malaysia are from rubber and tin, the country produces mainly for the benefit of these foreign capital owners. However, the data hide the more significant facts about the class composition of capital. Even if the Malay ownership is increased, it does not mean an egalitarian distribution among the social classes. Some rich Malays will benefit from the transfer helped by the State agencies. The Chinese and foreign capitalists who own together 83.2% of the share capital can easily obtain Malay proxies who will sign in to satisfy the legal requirements.

Thus the plan targets can be achieved without much change even in the racial distribution of capital. But more important is that there is little effort to alter the class distribution of this wealth in favour of the underprivileged workers and peasants who labour to produce the profits.

In fact, the Malaysian policies are strongly geared to help capital. The incentive to investment benefit mainly the large companies. This investments of over 1 million dollars in “pioneer status” industries has a tax holiday of 5 years. For such investments below $250,000 the tax investment is only for 2 years. Other incentives include pioneer status advantages, investment tax credit and export incentives. The climate of investment is so favourable to foreigners that the British companies who had the traditional advantage in West Malaysia earn much more profits in Malaysia than their world average. The post-tax profitability rates of U.K. group in West Malaysia between 1956 -64 was 19.8% including plantations and 26.9% excluding plantations. The corresponding profitability rates in all countries was 8.7% and 8.5% (cf. David Lim : Economic Growth and Development in West Malaysia 1947 – 70, O.U.P. Kuala Lumpur, 1973 pp. 263-265).

Hidden beneath these data, and included by the Malaysian plans for development is the large scale exploitation of the workers, peasants and plantation workers who labour to produce such high profit for their capitalists employers. Malaysia is thus a highly unjust society on this count too.

TISSA BALASURIYA, OMI.
SYSTEM ANALYSIS SERVING THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Fr. H. Volken, SJ

I. A Framework for the Analysis of Society

The Church has committed itself to a transformation of society and is discovering the dimension of justice in all her ministries. No involvement of the Church and of Christians in society is neutral; these have either a stabilizing or a transforming impact on the relationships prevailing between different social groups in a society. To give an example – Under the inspiration of a priest and landless labourers of a region in India have organized themselves into a union which is substantially changing their former helpless and hopeless situation in the relation to landlords of that region. Another example is the story of Bishops Saupin narrated to us about the emancipation of bonded labourers in his diocese.

In more recent times a development has taken place in social sciences that provides us with a method to understand more deeply the interplay between the social reality of Society and the social reality of the Church (or Religion). This method combines the insights of economics, sociology and political sciences and is guided by ideals of a more human and more just society. It was worked out by social scientists who wanted to find an answer to the most shocking trend in so called development in the world and in most developing countries: a development towards increasing disparity and injustice.

This system analysis see society as made up of various interlinked sub-systems – the economic, the social and the political. All these have been constructed by men and reveal themselves as embodiment of group – selfishness i.e. they work for the interest of one section of society against the interest of the other. In India these ‘Other’ are primarily constituted by the 250 million who are forced to live below subsistence level. Julius Nyerere has thus described the normal working of this hidden mechanism of organized society, purposely misquoting scriptures –

“For he that has, to him shall be given; and he that has not, that also which he has shall be taken away from him”.

In the schema I am giving, the Church is placed in the midst of the dynamics of a society. To look at the social function of the Church from this perspective is not to replace the understanding the Church has of itself by faith as a mystery, as alive in the risen Christ. On the contrary, if applied seriously and continuously it will help the Church free itself from being in so many ways determine and held ‘captive,’ by the many-sided forces of injustice inherent in economic, social and political systems of society. In a very concrete way it helps a local Church become sensitive to the non-intended effects of its organized involvement in education, health development, which works against the interests of the poor and oppressed. It is the great merit of this approach to help us go beyond the good
intentions of individuals and to scientifically evaluate the liberating or oppressive social functions of institutions, organizations and movements.

We can learn from the bishops and religious superiors of Brazil how all this is put into practice. With the help of social scientists they gathered all the facts of unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, indebtedness, life-expectancy, etc. of the poor majority. They related these to the working of the structures operating in the society and concluded –

“The economic and social structures prevailing in our country are based on injustice and oppression, and we are in a situation which is neither human nor Christian. The actual policies of planning in no way can serve the cause of liberation of the oppressed. A deep understanding of our social reality makes it clear that the aspirations of the people today demand nothing less than a global and total transformation of society”.

In a spirit of repentance they go on to spell out a new strategy for the involvement of the Church in society, knowing well,

“that the price for this option has always been persecution”. (This pastoral letter has been given to you).

The schema I put on the blackboard is attached to this introductory note. I am sure you can explain it to yourself. This can help guide a study of the global society of your own country as well as a local society e.g. a village. Recently, I spent a month in an Indian village. It was so easy to fill in the details which showed how different castes were placed in the status scale, how there was a correspondence between the economic, social and political organization. The rich farmers belong to the dominant castes and the landless are almost all Harijans. The village council (panchayat) is controlled by the dominant castes. These also use the new ‘democratic institutions’ like the village cooperatives as means to further their interests. Having similar position in the economic and social organization of society as political leaders and important administrators they have access both to the centres of decision making and all allocation of financial resources for ‘development’. No wonder they have become the ‘progressive farmers’ of the green revolution.

II. The Catholic System as Part of the System of Society

The Church as an Institution and the Christians as citizens are immersed in society. Sociological analysis can study the historical manifestation of the Church, though it cannot reach its mystery.

The left side of the scheme shows how the Church is also part of the total system of society. Each of the sub-systems is, on the one hand interlinked with the others, on the other, relatively autonomous. The more the Church becomes scientifically aware of its being determined by forces of society the better are her chances to gain spiritual freedom. Sociologically the Church is related to society as an organization having its institutions and organized ways of involvement in society and also by the meanings she produces.

(a) MEANINGS

There was a time when the Church is recently supplied the ideology to a society. This was so for the Portuguese Colonialism – and we know when it ended! It was a religious
ideology which justified and explained the whole system in the name of God. The rise of secularism set an end to this social function of the Church and secular ideologies (liberal, Marxist, capitalist) came to replace religious ideologies.

There are still many ideological elements in the social teaching, the preaching and catechizing of the Church. In these an ethos is expressed, an implicit understanding of society, of development, etc. which are not derived from faith. This is the result of the Church being under the influence of the dominant value of society, which, it is said, are the values of the dominant class. A striking example of this is the wide acceptance by the Church of the concept of development which evolved during the ‘development decree’. In fact, not only in the preaching and teaching but even in much of the development work of the Church this understanding of development as a process of modernization and of ‘catching up’ is embodied. Some of the exercises we shall make together, analysis pastorals, sermons, etc. will help us become critical of the so often unconscious subservience to the interests of the dominant groups in society.

In situation of racial discrimination, “Vietnam war”, caste repression and accepted concentration of wealth in the hands of a minority, it is sociologically normal that the Church cannot easily escape the subservient role in society and allow religion to justify government policies and prevalent social behavior. Not every Christian is a Martin Luther King! The Church in South Africa supplies enough data to substantiate this. But perhaps we need not search for evidence as far away from our own dioceses.

Meanings are also expressed by the way social involvement is expressed in the models of the Church’s health system, educational system, etc. more often than not these reflect the system of society and their embodied ‘values’. A ‘non-christian’ class distinction may be expressed in the catholic hospital. This is an implicit approval of the greater worth of some social groups and of the lower worth of poor social groups. The same is applicable to building which also speak a language; how are we connected with a particular economic system oppressive for the poor. It also expresses a new concept of providence. If we can lend out to successful business houses space of Catholic Centres, then we shall have this economic base for evangelization, forgetting that this link us up with structures of under-development excluding the poor and oppressed from the process of development.

(b) The Church as Organization

Too many good people are in bad systems, that is in structures, institutions, which cannot, in the existing form, serve the cause of justice. This is most evident in the case of Institutions in the fields of education and health-care (colleges, medical college in particular, hospitals, etc.). System-analysis helps us understand how these are in tune with the overall educational and health systems of a country, which in turn reflect the economic and social organization of society. in India, such a critical study has advanced most in the field of health. The need for new model in the delivery of health-care is recognized; models which make health-care available to all people. Some Christians are doing pioneering work in this field. Even in the field of education the issue is becoming clear, but, to find alternative models proves to be difficult. The institutionalization of mass education has not progressed very far.
“Unless we can go back to the mere simple apostolic traditions of being primarily concerned with the building up of Christian apostolic communities, and take away from our Church structures and institutions even the slightest hint of political power, prestige seeking any form of authoritarian domination, we will never be able to get the message across the hearts of Asia”.

This is the view of Bishop Rodricks expressed at the assembly of Asian Bishops in Taipeh. However true this is, we cannot find a solution in the realm of intentions alone. Institutions by their own dynamics and inherent nature do express power, prestige and destination. The same is true of Church property, which expressed economic power. The rapid increase of the institutional power of the Church is very evident in some parts of India where the Church-owned Institutions (Colleges and hospitals) have increased by 25% in the course of twenty years.

These structural blocks, obstructing the freedom of the Church to witness the justice are inherent also in the local Church seen as an Institution. The new self-understanding of the Church which found expression in Vatican II, and the new ideals and values formulated are not easily institutionalized. The ‘old wine skins’, reflecting in many ways the influence of former society or the Church, cannot contain the ‘new wine’ of Vatican II. Intentionally local Churches may commit themselves to high ideals of action for justice, but there tends to be a wide gap between verbal declarations and strategies of implementation. Sociological analysis is able to detect the cultural and structural blocks which cause declarations to remain mere declarations.

III. The Emergence of a More Prophetic Church

It was taken for granted that the Church is but a stabilizing factor in society. Books have been written to show the social function of the Church in society as ‘counter-revolutionary’ i.e. supporting the ‘status quo’ of society. But this is today no longer universally true. In several Asian countries and in other parts of the world, bishops, priests and a great number of laymen have been put into prison because they are protected against injustice and oppression. Not only individuals but even ‘Church structures’ have become the voice of the voiceless; the episcopate of Brazil, the organization of religious superiors in the Philippines are examples. In India an ecumenical collaboration is seriously engaged in restructuring the health care system of voluntary agencies. The youth in the Church, though often rejected, are increasingly putting into practice an identification with the poor and oppressed which is far ahead of what specialists in religion have been able to do. Besides youthful generosity, it is their going ‘out of the church’ as an isolated world within the world that has put them in touch with the real suffering of the people. They discovered faster than other categories of Christian the oppressive mechanisms of society, and consequently become ardent students of scientific analysis of society. The crucial question is whether Church leaders are today convinced of the fact that “the Gospel cannot be immediately applied to the concrete situations of injustice and underdevelopment in society” (Horacio Da Costa). It is highly ambiguous to speak of discernment in the Spirit without being willing to pay the price of an arduous effort to make use of the tools of sociological analysis to know the truth of society and to hear the cries for justice that become audible to those who seek to hear.

“I have heard the cries of my people” (Exodus 3)
## Schema: Religion and Society – Sociological Analysis

**S O C I E T Y ………………………… ……………………..  R E L I G I O N (Church as Institution)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mode of Production</td>
<td>Social Status</td>
<td>Distribution of power</td>
<td>Legitimization</td>
<td>Social Teaching</td>
<td>Diocese</td>
<td>Mystery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Labour</td>
<td>Class .. Caste</td>
<td>- Dictatorship</td>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>Parish</td>
<td>Parish</td>
<td>Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>- Parliamentary</td>
<td>Symbolic meanings</td>
<td>Religious Orders</td>
<td>Religious Orders</td>
<td>Christ-Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriation of surplus</td>
<td>Social groups of:</td>
<td>Dominant values</td>
<td>e.g. ‘language of buildings’</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Credible Sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>: high prestige</td>
<td>often hiding group</td>
<td>Implicit conformity</td>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>Personal Encounter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>: low prestige</td>
<td>interest</td>
<td>e.g. in catechism</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>: no ‘value’</td>
<td>Verbal to pacify</td>
<td>pastorals</td>
<td>Buildings</td>
<td>Buildings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>(Out-caste)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Owners of means of production</td>
<td>Dominating Groups</td>
<td>Powerful</td>
<td>Ideological elements</td>
<td>Implying:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High Income</td>
<td>Urban – rural</td>
<td>Controlling</td>
<td>Class-values</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 to 5%</td>
<td>: business-man</td>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>Class-mentality</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rich farmers, etc.</td>
<td>Industrialists</td>
<td>Policies of</td>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>Prestige</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor, exploited</td>
<td>Rich farmers, etc.</td>
<td>‘development’</td>
<td>Prophetic</td>
<td>Roles</td>
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<td>60 to 80%</td>
<td>: White-collar workers</td>
<td>‘development’</td>
<td>Denouncing</td>
<td>Institutional interests</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>Organized labour</td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>Orienting</td>
<td>..now</td>
<td></td>
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<td>15 to 25%</td>
<td>Middle farmers, etc.</td>
<td>... Feudal</td>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td>...not yet</td>
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<td>Proletariat</td>
<td>Intermediate Groups</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>Vested interests</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Farmers</td>
<td>: White-collar workers</td>
<td>Cannot buy votes</td>
<td>Prophetic</td>
<td>Hope</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landless</td>
<td>Organized labour</td>
<td></td>
<td>Denouncing</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Labourers</td>
<td>Middle farmers, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Orienting</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Victims of the</td>
<td>Dominated Groups</td>
<td>Powerless</td>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>Need for:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>economic</td>
<td>Rural and urban</td>
<td>… no voice</td>
<td>impediments</td>
<td>Re-structuring</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization violating</td>
<td>Proletariat</td>
<td>‘vote-banks’</td>
<td>Basic Option for the</td>
<td>New Models</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>basic human rights</td>
<td>Slum dwellers</td>
<td>No representation</td>
<td>oppressed</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>for Justice</td>
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<td>for transformation of</td>
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<td>unjust systems</td>
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**Historic Kairos: Chance for the Church in Asia**

Manifest the power of the Spirit also in Social Praxis in the collaboration of transforming an unjust society, incompatible with the demands of the Kingdom. Liberation from atheism in social praxis accept the sacrament of the brother.
QUESTIONS FOLLOWING THE TALK BY FR. H. VOLKEN ON STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Observation: Another way the system works in relationship to the Church: Mass media is highly sensitive and selective regarding pronouncements of the Church. To the point – a speech of an Apostolic Nuncio was editorialized and that of an Archbishop editorialized and given full coverage simply because both legitimized the establishment, whereas a statement of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference on freedom of conscience hardly got any coverage because it was critical of the ‘status quo’.

Observation: In dioceses which are newly formed it is easier to put into practice all you have underlined. In diocese that are well formed it is very difficult.

Question: Can you give us some concrete examples that show how action ensued from the structural analysis you have outlined.

Fr. Volken: I can take the Health project in India as a example. A couple of women from a village are chosen. They are given some medical training. They in turn go and demonstrate to the other villagers what they have learnt. It is wonderful to see what these uneducated people are doing in the past three years – this is a form of cheap health development and it is rapidly spreading.

There is also a programme to prepare young girls who have never gone to school. They are prepared in six months for life experiences in the villages. (Refer also to what Bishop Saupin mentioned in Lecture No. 2)

There is also the example of the priest in Andhra (India) who has started a movement for the landless people who are ‘outcasts’. These are people whom we would call ‘lazy’ – ‘uneducated’, etc. The priest had so much trust in these people that they responded and are now several thousand in number in the movement. They are able to at and to understand what they are acting for.

Fr. Aloysius: What was interesting to see in this experiment involving about 12,000 peasants was the constant accusation that the priest who inspired the movement was going against evangelization. The Church in the villages is a very feudal structure.

But over 12 – 15 years these workers – subsistence farmers and landless labourers – were given the opportunity through well organized development programmes, seminars, Savings Schemes, and other contacts with government, to grow towards a realization of their ability to lift themselves out of poverty; they developed a sense of power and of the need to unite; as a result several of the traditional sanctions imposed by the parish structure collapsed; they now relate to the union which had afforded them an opportunity to become persons in their own right.

Bishop Toppo: The bulk of my diocese is in the lower income category. In some parishes there are parish councils. The people in the parish council have not been to
school. As a result they are coming out with all sort of decisions that I cannot agree with. They say “we want Fr. X, as our parish priest. Fr. Z, as our Bishop. They drafted a list of names of people they would like to choose as Bishops and had the list published. I can see things from a global view point because of my position as a Bishop. They see things in another perspective and do not realize that some people whose names are on that list can never become bishops.

**Fr. Volken:** You may find help in reading the booklet of Fr. Jaime Bulatao “Split Christianity”.

**Bishop Clemens:** I opened a dispensary in a small village. It is not sufficient for the medical care of the people. I want to open a hospital for the poor. perhaps I can get money from Misereor to build it but how can I maintain it?

**Fr. Volken:** My sincere reaction is one of sadness that you may be doing such a thing this day and age.

**Fr. Aloysius:** You must ask yourself what are you going to do in this situation? What are the basic problems of the poor? I see it as a problem of malnutrition, immunization, basic hygiene, helping them to improve production and marketing and credit facilities; therefore it is not a hospital that is primarily needed. This should be the basis of your planning. You do not really need doctors because that would again raise running expenses. You need a team with several skills that answer the all round needs of the people. You do need a referral unit, but that should be small (10 beds) and come later. At the moment you seem to think that a hospital is the only answer to the medical needs of India, with the poorest this is not the case.

**Comment:** If you were in my situation, you would not answer like that. There must be a doctor.

**Comment:** I am a little saddened at your reaction. You need to dialogue with other dioceses and with others who have done good work in India – discuss with them, talks things over.

**Fr. Gordijn:** You were referring to HEALTH PROGRAMMES FOR THE PEOPLE. It made me think of an old protestant hospital that was falling to ruins. The doctor with his staff studied the question and they came up with ten objectives such as:

- introducing birth control
- supplying contraceptives
- giving preventive medicines, etc, etc.

After all their discussions they went to the people who said “What are you talking about preventive medicines for? We are sick …. if you listen to us we will tell you what we need and we will then co-operate with you”.

**Fr. Aloysius:** Our experience is that birth control cannot be a primary objective with the poorest; the landless agricultural labourer for example, the larger the family the more their income. It is within an integrated plan that it can succeed. As for preventive medicine – true there must be a blend of curative and preventive but the stress and overall planning must be preventive for 60% of our people in India. Otherwise we
will continue to put up large hospitals in rural areas which are half unutilized – when the villages surrounding them have all the problems I mentioned above.

**Bishop Rodericks:** When we first began Grihini schools in our area they were very effective. Now, in our recent evaluation we find they are less effective than they were formerly. Like many of our Church institutions they began by helping the lower strata of society. Now we find that a girl who has passed through one of these schools gets a higher marriage price and therefore the family status goes up. I notice also that all religious orders start off by working with the poor but as time goes by they all somehow go up the ladder.

**Questions:**

1. How can we keep our works for the poor?

2. Take the whole education system. What was its objective and what has it become?

3. Is this built upon a supposition that the Church has to be involved in education, in health, etc. Should this not be the concern of the State? Once the State is ready we hand over? I ask the developed countries to share with us their experiences of what happened when the State took control of their schools and hospitals.

4. Can we say that in the course of history the Church has adapted itself to structures that existed e.g. when the feudal system existed the Church also was in feudal state; as we moved into the social structure, the capitalistic structure, communistic structure, the Church also finds herself in these structures – these are the structures of the time. The Church understands them and therefore can bear witness within them. I give the example of a meeting held in Rome in 1970 when we had Jesuits coming in from communist countries. It was noticeable that the participants who came from these countries were more authoritarian and more structured than participants from other countries. Was this because the Church in these communist countries had taken on the structures of society? Should we enter into society as it is and then from within it try and divinize it as much as possible? But is it our duty to give society a new structure?
PART II: SYSTEM ANALYSIS

Fr. F. Volken, SJ

System mean patterned relationships….

Different types of societies affect differently the interaction between Church and Society.

Looking at the triangle: I \[\triangle\] Social reality, we can approach the question of new systems, new models from a personal angle. The question then is: How can I enter into new pattern of interaction (social reality?). This may happen –

a) on the level of exposure to scientific analysis
b) more decisively in processes of group-reflection

I would to place this question into the perspective of genuine Metanoia (conversion) and propose to your consideration the statement: Without option for a new social role (in any system of interacting) there can be no full conversion.

From the sociological angle this question of freeing ourselves form a given social function (role) presents itself as follows: It is difficult to think, feel, have aspirations and to act outside the place one has in a given system, be it society, my diocese, my parish, my college, etc.

We have exposed ourselves to a passing interaction with a group of students of this country. Many among you confessed that this affected you very much. If a Bishop decided to set up such an interaction with students as a permanent pattern in his diocese, this would be a new system of interaction. I hope that pursuing these thoughts will help us see, how the option to expose ourselves to new interactions back home is the crucial question of this BISA III. This new patterns within the Church will make us sensitive for new altercations of interactions between the Church and society e.g. a new type of health system.

Even Wider System

Each one of us is born into a family. Here we interacted and were exposed to values, ideas, ideals….which became our own. Then we entered another system, the school, then the parish, etc. in each of these we had a special place. In the diocese the bishops, the priests have a place, a specific role. Can we break through the limitations which the set system gives us? Can we e.g. experience existentially the life-situation of the poor in the diocese, which is the same as creating new pattern of interaction which will affect us in our own thinking and perception.
Every system is partly limiting, alienating and partly liberating. This can be applied to the Catholic Health system or to the Catholic Educational System. How can both of these, back in our dioceses, become more liberating to meet the basic needs of the masses of the people? To function in new system affects our personality structure. He shares in the discovery of reality made by students, who now also are teachers.

Systems and organizations are animated by a spirit. Within the Church much has happened in terms of new ideals, a new vision. But it has proved difficult to get all this as a spirit into new models and structures. The opposite also is happening. We set up new structures e.g. a parish council, but it is a mere structure without a spirit.

**Church – Society**

Christians act within society. There they are involved in many system. They may be in systems and organizations which are oppressive for the people. The Church as Institution also is linked up by its organizations …. colleges, hospitals, projects with society and, in a wider sense, with the world community and its institutions.

**The Health System of the Church**

In India, the health care system of the Church is closely linked up with the national system of health.

As an example of what the challenge of the hour can mean in this field we may consider what the Medical Mission Sisters have done in India.

They got together, first, to get initiated into a critical system analysis in an effort to find an answer to the question: why this trend of disparity in development. They singled out a more close analysis of the health system, gathering statistics: 80% of medical personnel and investment into the urban sector where only 20% of the people live; emphasis on curative rather then on preventive health care and health education, etc. From the perspective of the national health problem: 50% of the rural population without any health-care, they began to evaluate their own statistics. Then they had to give themselves an honest answer to the real question: Are we part of this system, are worse, are we doing what we want to do? How can we give embodiment to the love of Christ for the people who today have a right to health? Now they are experimenting with new models, and know the basic direction their search has to take.

If you wish to look deeper into the question of health, you will do well to read the W.H.O. Publication “Health by the People” now available. When we acquaint ourselves with so many different new models of health care, we realize what a challenge to creativity the restructuring means, and how important it is for the Church to be open and to learn from whosoever has proved effective in including the people hitherto left out of inadequate and unjust system.

**Caught up in an Economic System**

This is the story of a monastery in India that owned much land. It tells how the Monastery was linked up with other landowners of the locality. An outsider came into the region to conscientize and organize the workers. It was decided to make demands for better wages
to the Monastery first, in the hope of finding there a hearing. But the other proprietors warned the Monastery: “if you give in, we are all lost. You must resist”. The Monks accepted the idea. In the struggle which lasted several days two people lost their lives. A young member of this Monastery share with some of us, how much he suffered in this situation. Maybe many of us are more at home in the culture of management than in the art of entering into the lives of workers and accept their right to emancipation.

**Radical Transformation of the Total System of Society**

In many countries today the question arises: Can and how can Christians collaborate in building up a socialist society? It might be helpful to realize what a radical transformation of all the structures of a society this would mean. As in example, not meant to be a model, but an invitation to reflection, the case of China may serve.

Important is an option for a certain type of technology as this affects deeply what happens in the economic system. (labour intensive technology).

**What happened to the economic system?** The means of production are no longer privately owned. Land belongs to the commune. Income from ownership does not exist. Those who labour share together the increase of production. This and the constant participation in discussing problems of the work brigade of the commune, created a type of motivation among the people, which could not exist at the time of feudal ownership of land by landlords.

Constantly, *service to the people, not profit*, is proposed to the people as motive for hard work. Though critical towards the system in many ways, a friend who spent two months on several communes, reported that he was impressed by the intense participation of the people in endless processes of decision making and planning. He noticed great equality in income, housing, etc.

The new *Ideology* all through the process, before and after the revolution, played a central role. Mao’s thought seems beyond criticism, though he himself claims that it evolves through a constant dialogue with the people. It does give the highest and central value to the people and the good of the people, as one can read in Mao’s writings. Of course religion has no place in it.

**Political Organization.** There is definitely concentration of political power at the top, whatever the diffusion of decision making at the level of the commune for progressing together.

Visits and studies made by outsiders describe the transformation of the educational system and the health system in extremely positive terms. See the publication by the W.C.C. “The Health System in China”, and the publication by the W.H.O., mentioned already.

All this is meant to help our discussion on the issue of being creative in finding new patterned interaction, which will expose us to experiences affecting our own personality structure. This will help us search, with others, for new models at various levels in order to make the Church a more credible sign of God, who is Just.
QUESTIONS FOLLOWING AN ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS MODELS OF SOCIETY BY FR. H. VILOKEN
11TH NOVEMBER 1975

Abp. Gleeson: 54 million people died in China to establish the communistic system. If I respect people I must give them time to change and to grow. I cannot force new system upon them…

Fr. Rayan: How many people have been maimed, humiliated and killed in establishing the system we have now?.

Comment: We must not simply canonize the communistic system. We must try and take what is good from one system and add it to what it is good in another – integrate the good values from different systems. We must not be exclusive.

Fr. Tissa: This figure of people killed in China bothers me. I heard of 10 million, never 54 million. Bishop Walshe (when he was released from prison in China) mentioned that after the revolution in China a group of people came along saying ‘we are in power’ and started killing but they were checked by Mao who said ‘this is a human revolution’.

Bishop Saupin: (a) I go around like this, with my stole worn for functions. This is a new experience for the people. There was an occasion where my elderly catechist was to be decorated with a medal from the Holy Father. I put on all the paraphernalia of a Bishop. I was the laughing stock of the young but touched to tears the older members. The youth eventually saw my point – and the lesson behind it – to try and be a little more tolerant of others at the same time keeping the basic values.

(b) The youth wanted to have a camp within a certain parish area. The parish priest did not want it. The youth asked what they should do. I told them that it was not necessary, in this matter whether the parish priest joined them or not. They could invite him, but if he did not come to go ahead with their camp. The following year at the camp the parish priest agreed to see what the camp was all about; the third year he was fully agreed the camp should take place and whole heartedly supported it.

Comment: We should try and meet the material and spiritual needs of the people. Fr. Volken seems to be only interested in material needs. Where does the Church come in?

Comment: Fr. Tissa alluded to Bishop Walshe. I had an interview with him. He presented the picture in a different light from what Fr. Volken did. No man can live in that country and have dignity. I felt Fr. Volken was brain-washed. As Christians we cannot associate with such a system.

Fr. L’Imperio: Fr. Volken’s analysis asked us to take into consideration all the elements mentioned as interaction and reflection that come from group reflection and scientific analysis applying them to the life situation.
From my life experience of years among groups of poor countries I could say that the analysis presented to us is a right one and helps to penetrate into the reality.

No doubt each system has its own alienating and liberating aspect, and being inside a system it is not easy to be free, and not conditioned by it or by its principles and ideology.

Everybody knows about Mafia. Being in England among Italian immigrants I realized that Mafia was a reaction to an unjust system. There were educated people in an organized society with its own set up, rules and regulations, that were unknown to these immigrants. Language was the main difficulty. The people of the various systems – Police, Civil administrators, Church leaders, Politicians, were unable to see the reality, because being inside the system they were concerned with maintaining the status-quo of their society and not concerned about the result of work of this group on their own society.

The result was that a few Italians – about seven out of 700 families, because of their knowledge of the English language, were able to control all the groups, forming a parallel society and taking advantage from the situation.

Bp. Fox: First, something about the Australian position. After the war a tremendous number of people from east European nations came to our country. They were persecuted in their own countries and were seeking refuge. If you lived with them and associated with them, as I did, you would know their reaction to the communistic system. Australia has gained from these immigrants – their cultures etc. We also gained from them because they were Catholics. I felt Fr. Volken was a little unbalanced when he spoke of communism.

I visited the seminary in Penang, and saw the number of martyrs they had. The priest showing me around said – “Where are our priests in China now?” – there is still persecution in China and there is a denial of Religion, even if there is material betterment. P.P. XI condemned communism.

Fr. Healion: In our discussion we must remember not to overlook reality. The world in which we live. And what is the reality in which we live.

People: Over 80% of the people of the world, are in control of less than 20% of the earth resources. Hasn’t the Church defined that the earth belongs to all men?

Work: The greatest category of workers in the world are the unemployed. Hasn’t the Church taught the dignity of labour whereby man co-operates with God in His work of creation, salvation and sanctification of himself and his world?

Health: World Health Organizations paper recently pointed out that the only country in the world giving adequate and total health services to all their people, is China. In fact the U.S. and N. Z. have sent health officials to China to learn from them.
Again, a previous questioner condemned China as being inhuman. But, in the light of the above facts of our world, I would really like to know what his definition of inhumanity is, as he seems to imply acceptance of our system, which is surely not human.

But, the point I want to make, is that there are defects in all human systems, and we must not in criticizing the defects of China, thereby justify the immorality of capitalism.

**Bp. Fox:** I think capitalism and communism are about the same. I would be against capitalism.

**Comment:** We have come here to get some ideas on how we can learn from the world situation. It is true we are not here to opt for or against China. Let us bear in mind that the speaker tried to highlight what he felt we should change in our present structures.

**Fr. Bernard Pereira:**

(a) In speaking of persecution in communist countries let us ask ourselves “why are they persecuting us?”.

(b) Look at India – 250 million people living below subsistence level in our present situation.

(c) I do not go along with Bp. Arulappa when he said that Fr. Volken would have to be in China in order to understand the situation.

**Bp. Joachim Rozario:** We should not pass a negative judgment on an effective system only because the person or community who have originated the system do not hold the same ideology as ours or are contrary to our own. Furthermore we have only been discussing how a system works – its effectivity or non-effectivity and we are not meant to pass a moral judgement on it.

**Nalini:** The World Council of Churches sent people to China to study the present system. They have written a very interesting document on “Theological significance of the New China”. It would be of value to have the document in our libraries.

**Fr. Aloysius:** As long as there is original sin in the world while we look at the weaknesses of one system how do we look at our own? What worries me is that it was the same Bishop who said that 250 million people in India live below subsistence level, now seems to say that our present system is all right and China is unjust. We have tried to place China against a system we have accepted – we are trying to work towards a third system.

**Fr. Tissa:** I am surprised that Bishop Rodericks could speak of 54 million persons killed (or exiled from China after the revolution). This is the largest figure I have ever heard – 54 million would mean over 1/10 of the Chinese population of about 500 million in 1949. It would mean about 1/5 of the adult population or 1/3 of the adult males. This is unthinkable. I would like to have a proof of this. Whatever is bad in China is bad and we need not condone it, but, what bothers me, is to think how easily we seem to accept such fantastic views regarding China.
Regarding Bishop Fox’s statement that the Pope has not condemned capitalism as intrinsically evil and that he has the experience of the evils of communism, I wish to remind him that we in these countries, have nearly 500 years experience of capitalistic exploitation. This is the major evil that has sapped the life-blood of our people. If the Church does not condemn capitalism, I am sorry for the Church.

But actually the Church has condemned capitalism very strongly, as Pius XI did already in 1931 in Quadragesimo Anno.

**POPE PIUS XI'S CONDEMNATION OF CAPITALISM:**

“In the first place, then, it is patent that in our days not alone is wealth accumulated, but immense power and despotic economic denomination is concentrated in the hands of a few, and that those few are frequently not the owners, but only the trustees and directors of invested funds, who administer them at their good pleasure.

This power becomes particularly irresistible when exercised by those who, because they hold and control money, are able also to govern credit and determine its allotment, for that reason supplying so to speak, the life-blood to the entire economic body, and gasping, as it were, in their hands the very soul of production, so that no one dare breathe against their will.

This accumulation of power the characteristic note of the modern economic order, is a natural result of limitless free competition, which permits the survival of those only who are the strongest, which often means of those who fight most relentlessly, who pay least heed to the dictates of conscience.

This concentration of power has led to a three-fold struggle for domination. First, there is the struggle for dictatorship in the economic sphere itself; then, the fierce battle to acquire control of the State, so that its resources and authority may be abused in the economic struggles; finally, the clash between States themselves. This latter arises from two causes: because the nations apply their power and political influence, regardless of circumstances, to promote the economic advantages of their citizens; and because vice versa, economic forces and economic domination are used to decide political controversies between peoples.

You assuredly know, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, and you lament the ultimate consequences of this individualistic spirit in economic affairs. Free competition is dead; economic dictatorship has taken its place. Unbridled ambition for domination has succeeded the desire for gain; the whole economic life has become hard, cruel and relentless in a ghastly measure. Furthermore, the intermingling and scandalous confusing of the duties and offices of civil authority and of economics has produced crying evils and have gone so far to degrade the majesty of the State. The State which should be the supreme arbiter, ruling in kingly fashion far above all party contention, intent only upon justice and the common good, has become instead a slave, bound over to the service of human passion and greed. As regards the relations of peoples among themselves, a double stemmed has issued froth from this one fountain-economic imperialism; on the other, a not less
noxious and detestable internationalism or international imperialism in financial affairs, which holds that where a man’s fortune is, there is his country.”

**Ab. Henry de Souza:** I trust that neither Fr. Volken or the organizers are presenting systems for acceptance. The objective is an analysis and criticism of the various systems, so that we can understand the role of the Church in all this. Again, it does not matter quantitatively whether few or many are killed or oppressed. In this context there is a small purpose in counting Arch. Bp. Gleeson’s question of how many died to establish communism in China with the question of Fr. Rayan of how many die and are oppressed in the capitalist system. The Christian concern is for each and every individual.

I believe that the Church cannot opt for a system. It acts as a leaven in society – leavening by criticism, by constant renewal, etc. It neither makes nor dethrones systems. It leavens them until one day the whole mass is leavened.

It is a pity that Fr. Volken’s analysis gave the impression of only a material concern for the people without considering the cost in liberty values, religious values, etc. Is this human in the true and full sense?

**Fr. Gordijn:** In the last three issues of PRO MUNDI VITA there is some information on China which is worth reading. This discussion on the talk of Fr. Volken shows us that it was very necessary to present this analysis. The discussion which here arises shows we are putting religion on one side and society on the other. Perhaps Fr. Volken could say Religion in Society instead of Religion and Society?

**Bp. Rodericks:** (for information only) The Hong Kong based China watchers have collected all the information connected with the communist take-over of China, from the beginning of the revolution until 1972 when China was seated in the U.N. people killed, fled, exiled and missing, province by province; 54 million.

1. The key issue it seems to me, at this stage, is ‘private property’ On it hangs other questions like free enterprise, profit motive, value systems in society, etc. all of which tend to cause the great disparities and injustices of our contemporary world. I would like a deeper study made on how far any system-change would require a radical change in our attitudes to the concept of ‘private property’.

2. I am inclined to believe that the early Christian communities, as described for us in Acts 2 and 4, were really communities where private property as an institution did not exist, but they were rather communities where everything was held in common by all. This would seem to be the ideal of the new people of God- Can we return to this?

3. However, given the fact of original sin, as well as several other historical developments, this idyllic situation in the early Church did not continue for long. Private property soon came to be an accepted fact among Christians for whom the radicalness of the Gospel had lost its pristine sting. Yet, there was need in the Church to have this living witness to the poverty preached by Christ. And so, as time went on, what was originally the demand made on all Christians, become a demand only on some Christians who then developed into ‘religious’. Would this
development indicate that the best way in which the goods of this world can be enjoyed by all men in peace and prosperity, is through ‘private property’?

4. Finally ‘private property’ seems to be intimately linked with other basic human freedoms, so that, historically, when this freedom is tampered with other freedoms are sooner or later also lost – making man the victim of a totalitarian regime. In fact, historically the right of private property has been taken away from men only by force or through violent revolutions.

Yet, I repeat here, we have a key issue on which any systems-change must hinge. I think it needs to be studied more deeply in all its implications.

Bishop Labayen: The discussion has entered on specific models. It is a pity that the model has upstalled our attention rather than the question on the relationship of religion and society. What is important is not so much ‘what I think’, but ‘how can I listen to the others to see what good can come from them’. Once we take fixed positions we may as well pack up and close BISA III. We are not here to defend one position or the other. We are all here as learners. Everything we ask a question we are almost always able to ask a counter-question. When the question is raised that P.P.XI condemned communism we ask ‘why did he not condemn capitalism?’.

We can be very subjective and I am subjective, but, if we listen to one another we can enrich another and profit from the process that we all have entered into. Religion reflects the society within which it is found. The dynamics we are trying is meant to help us find out how religion can influence society towards change – towards a just and humane society.

In all the talks we sense there is something missing. How can we search for what is missing? I hope we will not cease to be open. If we do we will all be losers…

Fr. Ek: Perhaps our attitude here is to confirm only the good that the Church has done and to condemn the evil communism has caused. This is an attitude that is one-sided. We should aim at an integral view. The good the Church has done we have already seen. It is now time for us to see the bad side of communism, let us now look at the good side. It will be from the overall view of things that we will be prepared to judge and plan for the future.

Chairperson Anita Fernando: Perhaps we can call upon Fr. Volken to summarize the points touched on, in this discussion.

Fr. Volken: I should not think I should summarize. I am more pleased with myself today than the last time I spoke. What is important is our methodology of interaction. Why do I feel I have not been understood by Bishop Fox and Bishop Arulappa? The real problem is how can we expose ourselves? – How can I expose myself to the circle of contacts of Bishop Arulappa? And how can he expose himself to my circle? As long as we do not agree on analysis it is dangerous. I am not saying ‘I know better’ or ‘who is better exposed’.

This morning showed us where we stand and the different stands we take.
Much depends on what we read, which are the various groups of people that we talk to, whether we dialogue, and what we do to broaden our experiences and inspire our perceptions.

If there is still so much difference in our analysis it is no use to get down to specific plans. To be a leaven we must know the situation which is very complex.
QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FOLLOWING THE TALK
OF MISS ANITA FERNANDO OF SRI LANKA
15TH NOVEMBER 1975

Comment: This was the best talk of BISA III. You gave a beautiful synthesis of Christianity. Very few of us can say we experience the power of God in our lives perhaps that is why our preaching is so useless.

Comment: Anita to me was like the great women of the O.T. – Judith and Ruth. Her courage and example shone through and was real inspiration.

Question: What kind of spiritual power you have?

Anita: The twenty of us meet once a month for prayer and reflection. Our life is just one of love and love explains everything. Love shows us the way. Regarding the MP who made us suffer I used to tell my girls “hate his action but do not hate him”. The girls themselves have weekly meetings. The strength I get is also from the experiences of the girls. When I do not know how to take the next step or where to turn I go to them and we pray about the situation and evaluate together. There strength is unity.

Comment: You mentioned some priests helped to transform you. Were you able to involve any of the Sisters?

Anita: Yes. A number of the sisters have changed their life-style and are doing wonderful work. While I am here I know some of them are united with me.

Comment: You mentioned you had already saved 2 ½ lakhs. Are you not afraid that what you are doing will turn into another type of system?.

Anita: We are very careful at every stage not to let the girls forget their Christian attitudes. Out of the 2 ½ lakhs, for example we have taken 25,000 rupees for a mulberry project – this project will help other villages. Christ would not want to grab and keep, but SHARE. That is what we try to do. We started on 1st November a project with dried fish and prawns. At each step we decide together what we are to do next. Every decision is taken in prayer.

Question: Are all the girls you work with Catholics?

Anita: 905 are.

Question: You associate with politics?

Anita: In our country when one party gets into power all the members in the party get the important positions. When the next party gets in they take over. I decided I would not accept any government post if the party I was associated with, got into power. No matter who comes to me for help, whether he or she belong to the same party as I do or not, I listen, and if the change is worthy I offer my help and support. Many of the
850 girls whom I work with belong to the other party. A few of them spoke against me at election time, but I do not bear that against them. I bear witness to Christ.

**Question:** Have other educated girls followed you in the work you are doing?

**Anita:** Yes.

**Question:** Are you trying to change structures?

**Anita:** We are trying to break-down irrelevant structures and rebuild society with new values.

**Comment:** When Anita said that BISA III made her look into herself I know what she meant. I have been through three BISA’s yet this is the first experience I have where all we have been talking about came to life – through Anita’s talk the Gospel came to life.

We have been struggling with the dichotomy whether justice is part of evangelization – here it comes through with great simplicity. So many things have fallen into place through this sharing of experiences which Anita has given us. With the talk I am a Christian and it is a pleasure.

Reflecting on my own life, if I cannot be free like Anita to live the Gospel life, I feel I should resign as a Bishop, but here we have been challenged – I reflect – does being a Bishop make me less a Christian?

**Anita:** Please do not think I am doing wonderful things. Each day there are new responses to be made to new calls. Now, at the close of BISA III find myself with two questions in my mind. I ask your prayers….

(1) Should I continue teaching at Aquinas College? (I am doing do because I do not want to hurt my mother more than I have done and also because I Am able to face total insecurity).

(2) Seeing we are involved with .0001 of the countries population and 70% of our country is Buddhist – does God speak to me, through BISA III to go further? How convey God’s love, salvation, peace and joy to our Buddhist brothers and sisters? I will discuss this question with the 20 who work with me, when I return.
This talk continues and concludes what we have been doing by way of Theological reflection. Not all Theological Reflection on social questions and on the new society is complete with this but that, in the present context, this all we can do, given the limitations of time. In the first three presentations we spoke of the social dimension of the Gospel of Jesus giving us the call to become involved in the question of the shape and quality of human life on earth. We took a look at the goal to which we are called, at the final shape of the society, the new Jerusalem which God is shaping with us. From that too we can draw inspiration for social involvement as well as for pastoral planning. We then came to the consideration of man as the center of God’s concern as far as the Biblical Revelation goes. It is man’s wholeness that concern’s God; and the wholeness of man includes not only the individual’s personal fulfillment but the growth and blossoming of the whole human reality on earth as well as of the scene of human life and our history-making activity, namely, this universe of ours. All this is called, or is still considered secular and profane. In all these spheres God and his Christ are active in the spirit, expecting our partnership and collaboration in the shaping and reshaping of human history and of human destiny.

Our particular concern is with justice. God is just. Paul’s basic declaration is that God is just and He justifies the sinner, the man who is broken and deviant and alienated, who is not developing towards wholeness. God communicates his justice to man so that his brokenness may be healed, the deviation may be straightened and the human enabled to grow and come to the full stature of manhood as it is indicated, disclosed and given in the Risen Jesus. We and our theology have tendency to understand the biblical statement about God’s justice in the forensic terms, as if God were a Chief Justice or head consulate imposing law and order and punishing transgressions. Such a conception is a major aberration, and a caricature of biblical thought. What the Bible means when it says that God is just is that He gives to everyone and to the whole of humanity everything they are capable of. Justice has been defined as giving to everyone what is his. Now, God gives to everyone what is his, what is ours. Of course, judicially, legally, strictly, nothing is due to us, but on the basis of the love that God is, and of his decision to create us, everything is, in a way, due to us, that He is willing and eager to give us whatever we are capable of receiving; existence, in the first place, which is a share in his own existence; historical existence here below which is full of possibilities and promises; and finally the ability to grow up to the stature of Jesus Christ, sharing fully in God’s transforming life. All that is the capacity and capability of man. God’s justice consists in this that he is willing, eager and active to give to everyone of us and to the whole of our race what is ours in the sense of what we are capable of receiving, by way of existence, love, forgiveness, friendship and eternal life.
Our justice therefore will consists in striving to give to one another and secure for the human race as a whole whatever human persons and groups can receive; to give to one another the maximum of honour, as God honours man, not just the man at the top with wealth, power and influences and ideology to justify the concentration of all these things in his hands, but every man to the last, the least, the lowliest, the neglected and those who have been described as the wretched of the earth. We became just when we honour men as God honours them, when we begin to love men for their own sake and not merely ‘ for God’s sake ’, love them as God loves them who does not count up their merits and virtues but make his sun shine and his rain fall on all, independent of their virtue or merit, guided not by what we do but by the love which He himself is. Therefore, to be just is to strive to give to one another and to the whole of human existence the maximum possible of honour, respect, freedom and responsibility, the maximum of love, opportunity and creativity until each and all together reach the full stature of manhood as given in Christ Jesus raised from the dead.

Therefore when God manifestly intervenes in history and God appears in human society, He does so on behalf of the deprived and the powerless, on behalf of a group of Hebrews enslaved in Egypt and not on behalf of the Pharaoh, not in order to educate the Pharaoh, not to start a university for his family so that once educated they may learn to liberate the Hebrews. On the contrary, God intervenes on behalf of slaves, on behalf of little ones, of the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, the poor and the dispossessed. It is thus that God is experienced throughout the Old Testament; and in the New, when God in Christ appears in our midst, He moves almost by instinct into the company of publicans, sinners, prostitutes, Samaritans, the outcast, the neglected, the down-trodden. He came to bring the Gospel to the poor, his task is to open prisons and break chains, to let them go free. This is his declared and defined programme, based on Isaiah 61. Even the God who appeared and acted in Jesus, meek and humble-hearted, is remembered by the early Church not as a gentle, tolerant God but as a subversive God, who throws down the mighty from their thrones and lifts up the humble, who changes structures and challenges existing arrangements. Where the honour and friendship and respect due to everyone of his friends, his human creatures is neglected, forgotten, overlooked, violated, God becomes the great challenging and subversive actor in history. It is remarkable that the early Church should put this revolutionary song on the lips of the gentle mother of Jesus, Luke Ch. 1, the Magnificat. It is possible for us to sing this hymn everyday and yet miss its point and its revolutionary clarion call. It is possible for us to miss it as we have done for centuries.

Every man is in God’s image. When this image is dishonoured, handicapped, prevented from blossoming into the reality which is God’s dream for him and for his community, then God is concerned. That is the meaning of the Bible. When the strong man, the elder brother kills the weaker, young man (Genesis Ch. IV), then God hastens to intervene, to save both but particularly in favour of Abel. “ Where is your brother” becomes the central question of the Bible. And if Cain’s answer is a refusal to care, God Himself takes on the task of caring for the younger brother. We know there is in the Bible a partiality for the younger brother, that is for the weaker, the smaller man, and of this partiality God cannot be cured. If Cain does not care, I will begin to care, says the Lord, I will become a brother to every murdered and oppressed Abel; I will not take my brother’s life, but if need be I will give my own so that both he and you, Abel and Cain, may live. Beginning with Chapter IV of Genesis, God takes on the task of being man’s caring brother till He lays
down His life on the Cross on Calvary. The disciples of the Man murdered on Calvary are supposed to lay down their life for all the murdered and suppressed Abels, all the oppressed of this earth. The Church has no real point of struggling and laying down life for the wretched of the earth. Because man including the small man Abel, the younger brother, Jacob, and every man is the image of God and is the most sacred reality on earth. He is the sign of God, the Sacrament of God on earth. Perhaps we speak too much about God; He is too great for words. Silence is perhaps the finest language about Him. Five hundred years before Christ, Sri Buddha taught us to talk less about God and begin to live because it is in life that God communicates Himself. At any rate, God is that unspeakable Mystery hinted at and dimly and distantly indicated by the human. The more we become human – and that can only be in a human society – the more is God manifest, the more is God a reality on earth, the more is God able to speak and utter Himself within our history. Therefore the one essential sign, the one indispensable Sacrament which every man, from the beginning of history to its end, must receive, is the Sacrament of the Brother and the Sister, the neighbor, the needy man. If this Sacrament is neglected, and not cared for then, when history itself is evaluated, Christ would say I don’t know you though we might say that we had been working miracles in His name, and putting up great institutions in His name. (Matthew VII, 21-23, which is a summary of Matthew XXV, 35-46. It is not everyone who calls me Lord, Lord, etc…) What matters is not the creed and the register in the parish but doing the will of God; and the will of God for us, for everyone, and for the whole of humanity is, in the first place, the brother, in particular the needy, broken brother and, along with him, the human society, its historical quality and the direction in which we are shaping it.

Therefore the dishonor and deprive man, to humiliate him, neglect him, to exploit and to impoverish him, to fetter him, in any way whatever, as individuals, as groups, as nations, as continents, as Churches, as religious groups, as historical movements, is to insult God, to destroy His image on earth, to make it impossible for God to reveal Himself in history. It is to abolish the temple of God on earth, to obscure His name and black out His face. That is the meaning of every injustice and exploitation, no matter what shape it takes – colonialism, slave trade, totalitarianism sacred or secular, the Inquisition or the international imperialism of money. All that amounts to a practice of atheism. All these are acts by which God is abolished from this earth. Centuries of such practice can result in a total black out of God. When 19th century thinkers looked around and said God did not exist, they were not so much philosophizing as stating a historical-sociological fact. (See Micah III, verses 1-7). Practice of injustice is practice of atheism. Long practice of injustice to human kind and the creation of the wretched of the earth, has shaped up as ideological atheism of modern times. This is so almost inevitably, theologically. Services, Institutions and attitudes which neglect the powerless and nurse a secret devaluation of the lowly are also the matrix of atheism. Injustice in biblical language is Godlessness; it is literally so. Hence, action for faith and action for Justice today are identical. The more human and more loving society is, the more fraternal and open to one another, the greater is the possibility for the revelation of God.

The question, Who are the poor, is relevant at this moment. According to the Bible, the poor are those on whose behalf God intervened in Egypt. The poor are those on whose behalf Amos, Micah, Isaiah, and innumerable prophets have spoken out. Summing up the biblical perspective, one may say, the poor in the first place are the wretched of the earth: those who have no wealth, no power, no influence, no prestige; those who have no one except God. This is the essential basic meaning came another perspective according to
which the poor are those who rely on God alone, who have no one else to lean upon, no estate, no bank account, no patrons at the top; who therefore put their trust not in power, wealth, etc., but in God alone. The poor are those who are really poor and powerless so that their only support and stay, their only staff and bread is God. This is the meaning of the poor, and it is to these that the Gospel is proclaimed.

Here comes another concern that we have often expressed, of equality and inequality. We must be careful in the use of these words, because they are mathematical terms. Mathematically, equal and unequal are what can be measured and weighed and observed in the distribution of things. Mathematical quality obviously does not exist among men and is not our concern. What we are speaking about is human equality, something on the human, personal level, on the level of values, relationships and meanings. Provisionally we may say, there is equality in the sense that all are made in God’s image, all are God’s children, to everyone is this earth given, all are redeemed in Christ and are destined for life with God. But we know the same equality includes and implies great differences for life as well in taste, talent and outlook, even I God-given charismata. The way God relates to me is different from the way He relates to you. Each person is a unique, unrepeatable relationship with God. There is infinite variety and difference among persons. Hence the equality is an equality of differentiated complementarity. Differences may be willed by God, or may spring from historical contingencies and the autonomy with which creation is endowed, or may be caused by human decisions. In all cases they can be taken up into the framework of God’s love and made to serve the goal of building a history which is ever more truly and fully human. Surveying the whole scene one may say that the differences can serve as a school of concrete caring and loving, a means of dove-tailing personalities and lives into one another. They constitute a provision for love, mutuality and inter-dependence, and therefore for upbuilding of Community. My falling ill and being in hospital, which is not simply the will of God but an historical accident, can become an occasion for a new blossoming of love in those to whom I am dear and in me who am nursed and cherished; and that new growth of love is, I submit, a far greater reality than the health I missed for a while. All of us can become more humanized in the process. It is within such a frame work of thought that I would place differences and varieties and look for their meaning in the context of a friendship that God gives to us for acceptance and sharing. The sharing is for mutual completion as is the case between mother and child, or teacher and pupils, or wife and husband. The goal is that all may grow up together into that beautiful pattern which is God’s dream and God’s best wishes for our history.

The meaning, then, of wealth and power, etc., according to the New Testament and the mind of Jesus is friendship and community. Brotherhood is the meaning of the wealth that God gives and of the wealth that God enables us, individually and in community, to produce. What is Jesus praising in the enigmatic parable of the crafty steward in Luke XVI? He is praising man’s new insight into the meaning of wealth. Riches are not for hoarding and accumulation, but for use in making friends and building a fraternal society. Only through such sharing as will create community and brotherhood can wealth become human and riches acquire a human face; unshared and hoarded wealth, not made available to the needy, is demonic. Every structure that concentrates wealth into a few hands and few pockets, and prevents its availability for everyone who is God’s image and God’s beloved, is demonic and sinful. We are all caught up in it, those at the top and those at the bottom. Caught in this system, we become progressively sub-human. We should not think we are already human because we have lost the tail; having lost the tail we only begin the
journey towards the really human. The truly human person is Jesus Christ in Whom the Humanity of God has appeared. We are on the way to becoming human, we can go forward or backward, we can deviate and zigzag. We cannot become truly human without a struggle. And no one can become human individually by rocketing upwards from the rest of humanity. As long as one man is in chains, humanity is not free; as long as one man is in chains, humanity is not free; as long as one man is lost, God is in tears, Mankind is one and develops or decays as a unity. That is why God intervenes in order to pull down the mighty from their thrones and lift up the humble, in order to level the hills and lift up the valleys. In Luke XVI, there is the story of that Damned Diner. This damned man was already dead and in hell while still dining because he was living in an atheistic world of his own, a world without God, because of his refusal to share his wealth with the needy. The rights of Lazarus were not met; this image of God lay dishonored in the streets, which is a far greater sin than throwing the sacred Host on the streets because the sacred Host is for Lazarus, similarly, in Luke XII, there is the Rich Fool, beautiful name for such a man. Fool, because of his trust in wealth which he never thinks of sharing. “Be happy, my soul, you have plenty laid up for many years to come”; and therefore his wealth is death; this night your life is required of you.

There are a number of models of the new society built into Christian faith and practice. We would like to indicate the outlines of two of them, the Eucharist and the Trinity.

1. **The Eucharist**

   a.) The Eucharist is celebrated with bread and wine, or more theologically, with food and drink. These are secular human realities, socio-political realities, for which men have fought battles, and around which wars have been waged. The fact that they are now taken up into the centre of our faith means that our salvation, the wholeness of mankind through participation in the Paschal Mystery, is bound up with them. God and His Christ are in them, present, operative, suffering, emerging. It is within our economic activities and social relationships that the Kingdom of God comes and then will of God is done, or both are prevented.

   b.) Where there is no bread and wine, nothing to eat or drink, there can be no Eucharist, since there is no experience of God’s presence and love, no experience of a God who is for us. The celebration and experience of the Eucharist, then, is an imperative on us to do our best so that all may have bread, from the heart of which thanksgiving may grow.

   c.) As long as men do not have enough to eat, the Eucharist is a memorial of God’s suffering.

   d.) In the Eucharist, food and drink are shared. As long as there are systems which deprive men of food and opportunities of growth, the breaking of the Eucharistic bread is an act of protest as well as a declaration of policy to strive for a just and human re-distribution of bread, power and privilege, in order to offer to all men the opportunity of an experience of God at the very basis of their early life.

   e.) The one loaf, shared, makes the sharers one body and a single community: I Cor. X, 17. The Eucharist is a community-building act cutting across and
abolishing all class and caste distinctions, and healing divisions. Certain “sinners” are sometimes excluded from Communion, but rarely those whom the Eucharist by its very nature excludes: the black-marketer, the extortionist, the slave trader, the colonial oppressor, the hoarder of food and wealth which the wretched masses of the earth badly need.

In the Eucharist, then, we have the shape of the new society. We celebrate in order to personalize this vision, to project it into history, to commit ourselves to striving after it, and to make ourselves ready to give our life, if need be, for its realization.

2. **The Trinity**

   a.) Our faith in God as Trinity represents the Christian position that Reality at its best and highest, at its source and foundation, is inter-personal and social.

   b.) This mystery therefore provides us with the finest model and mould for human society. The more mankind approximates the Trinitarian reality of God, the saner and truer, the more human and genuine it will become.

   c.) In God there are Persons and Relationships, and friendship and union. The Personal differences are irreducible, but also complimentary and are for love. Each is wholly for the Others and is made by the Others the centre of Their life and love. Within the Trinity no one is neglected, deprived, oppressed, exploited, subordinated; there is no competition, no one seeks to get ahead of the rest. There is equality with difference and unity with plurality. And all that they have is held in common and the whole of it is each one’s own. Using weak human words, one may venture to say that God is socialist society, that essentially He is communism!

Such, then, are the Christian models for human society. If these have played no significant role in the shaping of socio-economic and political realities among believing Christians, the reason probably is that faith which provides these models has never been allowed to bite deep into the tissues of actual human history and become life-transforming praxis. The type of society which has actually emerged among Christians could as well emerge among Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, and perhaps even among atheist. Need faith in the Trinity and the celebration of the Eucharist make no difference for the social system we make and live in? Both these are, I submit, big with social consequences and are for praxis.
QUESTIONS & COMMENTS WHICH FOLLOWED
FR. RAYAN’S TALK

1. Could you make further distinction regarding what you said that OBEDIENCE IS TO TRUTH AND SUBMISSION TO POWER? Obedience to truth binds all of us. Is religious obedience something more than that?

When we choose the life of evangelical counsels, obedience is not just obedience to truth but truth as made known to me in my concrete situation through someone who has authority.

Both superior and subject seek the truth but if there comes a moment when there is disparity in their thinking, it seems that the very nature of obedience will make me obey the one in authority. That would be not just a submission to power but to truth as well, except when what is clearly sinful.

ANSWER:

What is specific to the religious life is that the concern for the seeking of the truth becomes professional and communitarian. The exception you mention presupposes:

a.) That the subject must in every case discern the truth
b.) That the superior has authority only in the measure in which he reflects the truth, and
c.) That in case of conflicting consciences, conscience has primacy.

2. God is love and He is just.

The Church and the authority may not be on the side of justice. Either God is not with them or God is not just.

ANSWER:

We can acquire a conviction of the justice of God from two points of view:

a.) From the Revelation in the Bible:
We have there the experience of the people of God and the testimony of Christ that God is concerned with man’s well-being.
b.) A certain amount of reflection on one’s own life shows that, in spite of what we have suffered, we have grown. Even sorrow has something positive.

Both of these approaches are rooted in faith.

The Church is composed of men, and men are both generous and selfish. Sometimes the darkness overwhelms the light. There has been much in the history of the Church that is obscure, sad, sinful; and much that is liberating and beautiful. In general, it is when the
Church allows itself to be used by secular interests that its face becomes clouded and God’s face veiled.

3. The Gospel is at the service of truth. What happens in the following situation? Both superior and subject seek the truth. But we are very much conditioned by a number of human factors: background, experiences, environment, etc. The superior says that, in conscience, he feels he must decide in one way. The subject says that in conscience, he must take a different view of the situation. Theologically, is this situation in which the subject should bend all his forces towards obeying the superior?

**Answer by one of the participants**

- both must be open to the Spirit  
- there must be dialogue  
- if the difference persists, the subject obeys.

**Answer by Fr. Rayan**

Conscience has always to be respected and followed. If I cannot follow it peacefully in an organization, I may leave it so that I can obey God in conscience and peace. Meanwhile, the dialogue and prayer must continue, and the case may be re-examined. Decision may not be forced if the matter is not urgent or fatal. The sincerity and openness of all to God and to one another is pre-supposed.

**Remarks from various participants**

- if someone, in any of the Churches, feels that, in conscience, he ought to leave his Church, it should be done with the knowledge of his Bishop  
- that no man can leave the catholic Church without sin is true when the Church so shines as to be an unmistakable sign of saving love. The question of the primacy of conscience still remains.  
- we said that, if there is no question of sin, the subject should obey. The Spirit is in everyone. If there is no question of sin, then, why shouldn’t the superior respect the freedom of the subject?  
- there may be no question of sin. Still, when I ask myself: is this better than that, I must take the common good into consideration.  
- we have to develop our understanding of the value of the person and of conscience as well as the historical and communitarian way in which the Kingdom realizes itself.  
- superiors are still acting in a structure. They think in those terms. People who think that way can never reconcile obedience and freedom. We need a change of categories, a new idea of community.  
- there have been cases which proved that a firm stand on the part of the superior had been wise: for instance, priests assigned to a new parish after wide consultation, changed their mind due to the influence of some other priests and did not want to
move anymore. The Bishop maintained his decision and the priests admitted that it had been beneficial.

4. We cannot avoid conflicts. We knew what we committed ourselves to when we took the vow of obedience.

**Answer**

It is true but our understanding of obedience is not static. There can be progress in it, with widening and deepening understanding of man, of community, of historical responsibility and the way God’s Kingdom comes.

5. What is the responsibility of an individual in regard to social sin? How far can he allow social sin?

**Answer**

For workshop.
QUESTIONS & COMMENTS WHICH FOLLOWED
FR RAYAN’S TALK

Comment: We have moved a more communitarian approach to decision making. The importance of brotherhood is to be stressed.

Fr. Tissa: Once or twice we mentioned Canon Law. Vatican Council was made possible because of Canon Law. According to Canon Law there should be a Synod in every diocese every 10 years. I know of very few Synods in Asia.

Fr. Rayan: There could be a variety of structures from place to place, and time to time according to needs and cultural possibilities. There could, should, be a Constitution for each diocese, Region; and surely for the Papacy. Only Constitutional Government can secure continuity and avoid arbitrariness. Credible organs to redress grievances at all levels are a necessity.

Fr. Rayan: No bishop could ever say that he does not have to listen to anyone. It is true that he is the focal point of the Community, but he can be that only if he remains close to the Community. He has to listen to the needs, wishes and aspirations not only of his local Churches but of the other Churches as well. No bishop can isolate himself. He has to listen, along with the people, to the Gospel and to the Spirit living in the community.

Fr. Tissa: Why not resurrect the Synod? It does exist. To refuse to hold it is not only unjust to the membership but a denial of obedience to Canon Law.

Comment: Democracy and authority.

When a bishop is appointed, he receives full pastoral authority from Jesus Christ. Peter’s authority is on the universal level. At the local level, the local leader of the community is fully in charge.

In a democracy, authority lies with the people for the people. Similarly, in the Church from God. It resides in the people for the people. Similarly, in the Church, authority which comes from God and the Spirit can reside in the community and become socially expressed and operative in one member of the community as at a focal point of light and he becomes a sign of unity.

Comment: Some bishops govern as if they were the Church. If they don’t serve, what do you do?

Fr. Rayan: Try to understand them and bear with them. Let us try to live the Gospel ourselves in a remarkable way. And also go on contesting and re-basing everything on the Gospel of Jesus.
STUDENT REPORT

We do not expect anything conclusive but, at least, a certain amount of dialogue. We want to see what the Church can do to help for the development of the poor.

Our social structure is the result of the historical development of colonialism. For instance, take the case of the railway built in the region of Taiping. It was not built for the people but simply to export tin and bring it into the world market.

In our own days, development is a new word, not for peace, but for exploitation. See, for instance, here in Kuala Lumpur. We are told that the Kuala Lumpur Hilton consumes more electricity in one day than the whole town of Malacca does. The women who de-vein prawns suffer, because of their work, ill effects on their skin but they receive no assistance from health services. The highway to the airport will soon give an impression of sophisticate development but there are 14 kampungs hidden along the way which have no facilities for proper sanitation,....

What has the Church been doing? It has put up centers of training for students, hospitals, all sorts of institutions but she has simply been a feeder of development. Her welfare services have been confined to jumble sales and the like.

The strategy for development brings about working for the establishments. A large proportion of the people cannot avail themselves of the facilities provided by “development”. The inequality goes on increasing. Injustice is obvious. A rubber tapper earns $3.10 per day, a worker in a plastic factory earns $3.00 or $3.50. We have fisherman who have to live on $30.00 or $40.00 per month. The farmers cannot make more even with double cropping.

What does the Church say?

Her social teaching is wonderful but it is used as a tool for intellectual rationalization: only the Prime Minister can solve the problem. And the situation continues as it is. Our theological interpretation must come down to action.

What do we see?

20% consume 56% of the gross profit. The income of some people has risen from $750 to $1,500 but it has fallen from $48.00 to $31.00 for the poor. The farmers are in worst condition. Many have no education would be the starting point for development.

The Church has taken a stand for the rich.
(a) In one instance, the rubber tappers were facing starvation. The Church kept silence. No sincere effort was made to study and understand the issue.

(b) In one place where there was a textile strike, the workers wanted to use the Church facilities to deliberate. It was refused.

(c) The YCW had its funds cut.

There is a big delusion in us: on one hand we preach love and justice and on the other hand there is no action.

Now, we wonder whether the bishops will help or interrupt social action.

**WORKER’S REPORT**

I am one of those who took out of the Church structures because of a series of experiences. I work in a squatter area which houses thousands of industrial workers. It is a concentration of the people who form the backbone of the industries which enrich the country. They cannot afford to pay rents. No other sort of houses are provided for them. Where they are, there is no sanitation, no water, no electricity. No opportunity for progress, no chance for getting out of that rut. From experience, they know their children will not be better off. They have barely enough to buy food for them.

When I was within the structure of the Church, I felt that we were kind of appropriated by the Church to work within the Church. We worked with middle class kids. Now, coming into the squatter area, I find that it is difficult to draw any kind of inspiration from the Church. In fact, we have a lot of hang ups.

What do we expect from the Church? We were not keen to come to this meeting because other times we came for such things and we went back with the feeling that we had been cheated.

We do realize the delicate position of the Church in Malaysia. But this should be no excuse. We are only 2% Catholics. We should act as leaven in the dough. Her members can work. There are various efforts but we know that in our present set-up we cannot feed the hungry. We are talking about a total transformation of the society. The life-style of our priests, sisters, brothers must change. We want to see efforts in that line; never mind the documents, it is what we do that matters. The more recent happenings all seem to point out that only the poor people themselves can bring about change. The genuine involvement of the Church in this will be to identify with the poor and to organize them.

A few things we can deduce:

1. To stop investing money in kindergartens, car parks, hospitals, etc which help the rich.

2. To vest in persons who will work for change
3. Invest in programs of scientific research and scholarship

4. Train seminarians and novices along that line, less time given to theology.

5. The Church should engage some of the qualified people to do the research.

6. We want to participate but only if we have right to decide. There must be a real study of the situation.

Bishops: You said that you want your right to make decisions recognized. That right is shared: you but also the other. You said you won’t allow the other to give any advice.

Answer: We know everyone has the right. What we mean is that it must not be centered on one person: for instance, the Bishop can veto against the majority.

Bishops: You are still young and yet there was wisdom in what you said. How did you come to it? What was the process?

Answer: This came about through the influence of some individuals in the Church. They pointed out this ideal to us but they themselves were ostracized. Also our involvement with the working class was learning experience: they gave us strength we needed. It is from the people we got our wisdom. The means were: analysis of the situation involvement with the people.

Workers/ students: The Balim issue…. We were involved and we were rejected by the Church. Regarding responsibility and decision making, a lot has been said about the participation of the laity… the Mystical Body.

To what extent do the people believe in it? Thje youth do not want to be dictated. But this happens. Those in authority cannot accept that the laity have a spirituality of their own. They say that they were leftists; they issue statements on organizations, they cut funds. Does the Church believe in the dynamism of lay organizations?

Bishop: What you said is much appreciated. We are concerned about the big gap between the rich and the poor, how the Church keeps on alienating the young. It is sad to know some of you have decided to opt out of the Church because you are very much of the Church. It seems as if you made your decision because you felt rejected and you were dictated….

We sincerely want to dialogue. We would ask you your understanding of the Church and we would like to discuss more fully your practical suggestions so that we know what to do.

Fr. Tissa: Someone said that the youth felt rejected and dominated and that’s why they opted out. I think they opted out because the Church kept on supporting the establishment.

Bishop Labayen: It seems that we use CHURCH in a very ambiguous way. Perhaps this is a new type of Church. The youth refer to the institutional Church.
Bishop: You seem to dissociate yourself from the Church.

Answer: We feel the structures are a problem. Don’t try to make every activity as coming from the Church.

Bishop: You stress scientific analysis. Would you say that you would feel more at home if this was done.

Answer: That would be a very good step towards dialogue.

Fr. Tissa: We spoke about the collective sinfulness of humanity. What we do may be harmful. We should take the youth’s suggestions and study them, find out what type of involvement we are ready to commit ourselves to in the way of personnel. Decide on what kind of training we will give to those who choose social action so that they will not be divorced from the life of the people. The training of seminarians and nuns can be very important for this commitment to justice. There is an objective situation of a breakdown in communication between the authorities and those who want social action. We have one faith but there should be plurality of options and involvement. The bishops and religious superiors have to understand the demand of students and young workers for chaplains who can really inspire them. Such chaplains are often marginalized by the authorities. Or those proposed by them are not so suitable for the youth.

Students: We didn’t go o the University just to get jobs. Today we realize the need to link with those who are at the grass-root. It is a new orientation.

Workers: The impression I get is that we are more concerned about membership… What matters is how we tackle issues.

Bishop: What was said helped me to form a certain conviction: often a new vision clashes with the authority. But, as time goes on a development occurs. See for instance, what happened in the case of the modernists.

Bishops Proposal: Would it be possible for some representatives of the youth to join us in our deliberations in an effort to build up a new society?

Bishop: You can’t develop any genuine sympathy sitting in an armchair. In some Congregations, they passed resolutions to the effect that every house had two involved itself in some kind of project in favour of the poor.

Workers: We speak of dialogue but we are doing confrontation. We criticize instead of trying to understand. We should

1. try to listen without prejudices
2. try to cooperate.

The hierarchy should call up the youth and not wait until they are so heated up that confrontation cannot be avoided. When there are problems to tackle, invite them to come and talk. It has been the attitude of the hierarchy to look at the young as those who
have no experience. Today we know that they have some wisdom and, in some spheres, they have made experiences.

**Students:** There are many things that we need not do officially as a Church. In fact, things are spoiled when done officially. Anyway, we are not looking for glory for the Church.

**Workers:** Individual efforts do not change the situation. The middle class should be given a social conscience. That would go a long way to change things because they are the policy making class. Priests should be involved. They can help to conscientise people in their sermons, contacts, etc. But dialogue will do more than sermons.

**Bishop Labayen:** When I made my remark I thought it would help. The issue is the Church because it is part of the reality. A. and A. started with the image of the Church. In social change we need social space. The Church is one of the social spaces which will bring social change. The institution must get behind the movement.

**Bishop Labayen:** What about the crazy priests? I am concerned about the institution because I did not opt out. We said that vision comes out from associating with people. We have been associating with the wrong kind of people. We don’t read enough signs of the times. The reason why I did not get out is that I believe the institution must get behind the movement.

**Bishops:** It was said that you have no need for Church’s approval of your projects. Still, when we discover a situation which is a social sin, do you expect the Church to take a stand?

**Fr. Tissa** It is alright to say: we allow you to go ahead. But do we put ourselves personally on the line? Jesus Christ took a personal option. He contested injustice and was killed for it. Can we take some practical steps now? For instance, take a practical project (like the situation on the rubber estates or in the new factories) and:

(a) Study – analyze the situation  
(b) Bring up material collected  
(c) Have a consultation on the situation and strategies  
(d) Send up some well documented papers to the authorities  
(e) Presuming that the people involved in this project would have received the proper training to be efficient in their work

We can develop an Asian strategy for the action of bishops concerning plantations, workers, multination, also. If the Bishops of Asia support the cause of the exploited masses it will be a great help to them. We share moral power that we must use for human liberation. We will then find new meaning and joy in our work. Today there is a call to great moral power that we must use for human liberation. We will then find new meaning and joy in our work. Today there is a call to great moral leadership by Asian Bishops, as Dom Helder Camara is doing in Latin America.

**Students/Workers:** We would recommend to establish a sub-committee:

(a) To study the situation
(b) To raise the necessary funds

Then engage in the struggle. It would have great power.

**Students/Workers:** We are here for

(a) Those who have gone in a different direction: a real relationship must be established with them,

(b) BISA and the Bishops of Malaysia should make recommendations and carry them out.

At the end of this meeting, we see seeds of hope because of the open-mindedness we have observed in the conference.