

ORDAINED MINISTRIES IN THE LOCAL CHURCHES OF ASIA

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A. INTRODUCTION AND METHOD

The topic of ordained ministries, though of universal concern and interest today, yet in view of the variety of local and regional experiences we have acquired during the last few centuries in operating them on our soil, very aptly calls us Asians for a sincere and courageous discussion. This study is in service of such a discussion. We cannot afford to take the simplistic approach of merely examining some remedial measures and making adjustments to reinforce them where necessary. That will be an effort in isolation or presuming too much of the past and present as unquestionable. And further such a procedure will not be of much value for the future of the churches. What we humbly propose to do here is to expose the pastoral problematic of these ministries in terms of inadequacies and problems. (It is not our intention to devalue the merits and achievements of the same. We presume them as evident but less relevant to our discussion for renewal). Such an exposure of the pastoral problematic will form the *locus theologicus* or point of departure for our reflection. Our reflection itself will be of an interdisciplinary nature bringing biblical, historical and situational evidence to interact with each other. In other words, with revelation in Christ and revelation in history as our guide and witness, we read and interpret the signs of today. Such a method of approach is based on the understanding that true theology must take its point of departure from concrete pastoral situations, for it is not possible to reflect in a worthy manner on any ecclesial reality within the limits of a single discipline.

B. LOCUS THEOLOGICUS

Present Pastoral Situation. Types of Problems and Attempts

The present pastoral situation could be evaluated from within the church as well as from outside the church.

Both forms of evaluation are important, because the church we believe in is IN the world and FOR the world and its service is not only for those within but also, in a special manner, for those outside its visible membership. Such an evaluation reveals the following significant aspects of the situation.

1. *Falling Numbers*

However much church leaders delude themselves with an apparent numerical increase of vocations and the consistent maintenance of established parish structures, yet a realistic view of the proportional increase of population and tasks versus an increase in the number of drop outs and retirement from active ministry definitely will indicate a fall in the number of vocations to the ordained ministry. Though the seminaries and houses of formation have tried to adapt their methods of formation in favour of a more liberal growth to maturity, the priestly vocation in its present form does not appear to offer an attractive challenge to the young Asian of today.

2. *Inadequate Services*

Due to the widening of the concept of evangelization to mean an integral development of the whole human person (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 18ss) and consequent call for involvement in the struggles of Asians for salvation from injustices, oppression and poverty, the services to be done by the ordained minister – have considerably increased. The same ordained minister, especially in the absence of special and suitable lay ministers for such services, divides his time and concern between the traditional services around the altar and the new services demanded by the human and social conditions of the people. Consequently the services of one who is called to work often beyond his competence are neither qualitatively nor quantitatively adequate.

3. *Clergy-laity relation still immature*

In spite of some initial moves on the part of the clergy and laity to reduce the gap between them, much has still to be done in the area of mature relations and right attitudes. The clergy, who should know better and who have an obligation to make the initial moves to reduce this unjust gap of superiority to a mere functional 'distinction entailing a unifying purpose' (LG 32d), often appear suspicious of the laity and are reluctant to accede their rights to them. They are still afraid that such moves would wrest sacred powers from their hands and reduce their status in the church. And on the other hand the majority of the Asian laity are no better. They appear to be satisfied to leave the clergy on their pedestal of power while they themselves are content to take a back seat and play a passive role of non-involvement in the church. Thus the false positions, into which the clergy and the laity have mutually pushed each other in the course of time, continue to be perpetuated.

4. *The spirit of clerical relation unevangelical*

The height of the pyramidal structure of power has not been sufficiently reduced to allow collegiality to function at all levels as a principle. Collegiality

though accepted as a principle in decision-making, team spirit and in the apostolate, it still meets with practical difficulties in the present structuring of our ecclesial communities.

Often a misunderstanding of freedom and maturity and lack of interpersonal relationship prove an obstacle to an evangelical practice of obedience due to bishops and superiors. Since Vatican II there has been an increase in the number of structures to promote better relationship among the clergy – the senate of priests, pastoral councils, commissions for various apostolates – but much still remains to be done to create that fraternal spirit which should characterise the co-workers of Christ.

5. Lack of leadership in Asian Society

The present situation as seen from the outside shows a decrease in the visible and effective leadership of the ordained ministers in the Asian society. In an Asia that is rich in religions and cultures, where ordained ministers, especially during the period following independence from colonialism, exerted greater force of leadership in the political, social and educational fields, the present state of things shows a decline in their influence. Surely under colonial leadership the christian leadership enjoyed a privileged position and exerted greater weight. We cannot of course aspire to such favoured positions today. But in the wake of the resurgence of nationalism – religiously and culturally – the christian leadership of ordained ministries has failed to identify themselves with the aspirations of the masses for just and social order. This non-involvement may be largely due to fear of being in opposition to governments in power. But such attitudes and positions have robbed us of any social leadership.

6. Distant from the darker realities of Asia

The ordained ministers even now appear to remain at a distance from the problems that are constitutive of our Asian-ness or Third Worldness viz. poverty, injustice, oppression, ill health . . . If religions and cultures are considered as riches constituting one side of the Asian reality, the other side is constituted by the total infra-human condition of Asia. With the sole exception of Japan, all the Asian countries are densely populated with the suffering masses. If the church has a salvific role to play in Asia it is primarily to liberate the Asian from his sub-human condition of poverty and injustice. And the ordained ministers as chief stewards of the churches cannot but identify themselves with every movement for liberation.

7. Priestly Problems in an Asian Style

The ordained ministers of Asia – both bishops and priests – have their own share and style of the common priestly problem faced by their counterparts

in other parts of the world. We mention some as examples: Recognition of the salvific value of other Asian religions pose not only questions about motivation for missionary work or conversion, but also leads priests to question their own faith and the value of their work and can lead to frustration and despair (PO 22b). Celibacy which is better appreciated in Asian religions meets with resentment, opposition and criticism, particularly because of its compulsory nature and the over-emphasis given to it by the Latin Church. Obedience to superiors, independence in thinking and decision making, maturity in their dealings – these are all largely conditioned by a certain amount of financial security of priests and at times these very shortcomings are misused by superiors for their own ends. Such situations generally result in a crisis of faith or of identity (irrelevancy/immaturity) and consequently a priest opts out of the diocesan institution or goes his own way to operate a centre of influence (if that be possible independent of the bishop!) or goes in search of greener pastures of the Western world either as a priest or a layman. The net result of these accumulated decisions is loss of ordained personnel for the established structures of services in the local churches.

8. Ordained ministers raised no cry for useful reforms

The present pastoral policy of the majority of Asian churches seems to be still striving at great cost to maintaining the status quo reached centuries ago. This may be due to an exaggerated submissiveness to Rome and equally uncalled for respect for the wishes of benefactors.

The emergence of the indigenous clergy in this century and the maturation of our local churches in the course of time have not much to be proud by way of new efforts at spreading the faith or at building up of the christian communities. Prior to Vatican II, the Asian churches knew no movements for liturgy or lay apostolate or ecumenism such as arose in Europe after World War II. Although the need was felt to some extent at the grass-root level, there was no leadership of the ordained ministry, not even in the form of local movements to agitate for reform as was being done in the West. The reforms brought about by Vatican II were the fruits of the movements that preceded the Council especially in Germany, France and Italy. There were no such movements from Asia to influence any reform specifically for our benefit. The brave spirit of an Alexander de Rhodes or a de Nobili of the early Asian churches was conspicuously absent in the recent past.

General nature of the attempts for solutions

1. No significant effort to close the gap between increasing need and decreasing personnel

The diaconate was restored as a permanent state of life (LG 29) and recommended to the young churches especially to meet their shortage of personnel (AG 16g). Although this was warmly accepted by the bishops of

our churches, in actual practice they did not see much profit in having them for most of the functions attributed to them were already done by religious and lay people.

The Asian Colloquium on new ministries (Hong Kong 1976) made a positive contribution by way of situating the ministries squarely in the context of Asian realities. But regrettably little has been done to renew the traditional ministry or to create new ministries for new demands.

2. Neither the religious-cultural richness nor the material poverty of Asia has been adequately articulated in the ordained ministries of Asia

Any ministerial leadership for salvation of an Asian which does not take serious consideration of the multi-religious and cultural situation by way of dialogue, tolerance and fellowship and of the oppressed situation by way of solidarity and liberative movements – is bound to fail. Our ordained ministries, which are so sensitive and eager to regulate and ritually celebrate liturgy and effectively give sacramental services within diocesan or parochial structures, do not appear equally sensitive to the richness and poverty of Asia!

3. Ad hoc solutions for emergency situations

A false notion is often created that after the Second Vatican Council we are in an emergency situation with regard to services and consequently many ad hoc solutions are justified and radical solutions are postponed or completely ignored. The hope that things will return to 'normal' as was before Vatican II is a type of wishful thinking and of escapism from real situations. This is anything but a sign of true leadership. Under the pretext of providing a solution for a passing situation, leaders have very often proposed ad hoc solutions without courage, foresight and continuity. It is not unlikely that those who propose such short-term solutions intend them to be effective as long as they are in office or that they may help them to tide over a difficult period in their tenure of office.

4. Regional Problems seeking universal solutions

Although after Vatican II national and regional hierarchies have started to function for common pastoral programmes and for better coordination with the universal church, they still do not enjoy sufficient freedom and initiative to decide nationally or regionally, their priorities and problems. Independence and plurality of forms of local churches are still not very effective. Hence it very often happens that local issues are placed before regional bodies and regional issues before universal bodies, and in each case detailed guidance from such bodies are expected.

Although the higher bodies have invited the local churches at least a few times to show initiative and creativity to discover solutions for their own problems, the latter often seem to be neither adequately responsive, courageous nor mature. They still look to Rome to spell out in detail all what has to be done at home. If the church has a genuine right to be asianized (as was told to the church in Africa by late Pope Paul VI; Kampala, 1969: – You could and you ought to have an African christianity) then the leadership of the ordained ministry in Asia has an obligation to be more courageous and creative.

5. Financial Assistance determines the forms of our ordained ministries & ministers

Our ordained ministries and ministers, more than any other aspect of the church, for maintaining their own form and structure, for their formation and maintenance depend largely on the outside for finance. Vocations are not sufficiently community-based or community-supported, but treated as the private affair of the hierarchy which sees to the education, formation and maintenance with funds from abroad. This situation of financial dependence results in the church, in general, and the ministerial structure in particular, becoming a too expensive and unchangeable structure for the poor of Asia.

In spite of this consequence, a certain style of selection, formation and education is still encouraged by the benefactor as universally suited.

With the above conspectus of the pastoral situation, problems and attempts as our locus theologicus, let us proceed to seek the necessary evidence from the sources and from history.

C. BIBLICAL EVIDENCE ON ORDAINED MINISTRIES

The foregoing exposure must be viewed first in the light of relevant biblical evidence. We propose to bring in here the conclusions of biblical theologians under the following aspects:

1. For the general institution of ministries
2. On the ministerial praxis of the N.T. churches
3. On the priesthood

Amidst the wide biblical research that is being done with regard to ministries in the church, we could mention for our purposes some basic and commonly agreed findings of the scholars (cf. A. LEMAIRE, *The Ministry in the N.T.: Recent Research*, in: *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 3 [1973] 133–166). These will have a value for our discussions both as normatives to measure ministerial developments and deviations in our present churches and as inspiration and incentives for any further ministerial development.

1. For the general institution of ministries

a) Scholars who agree that the public life of Jesus had laid the foundation for the church to be a visible institution in history, will also readily agree that

this institution was largely meant to be one of servants and helpers. Hence ministeriality was a fundamental character of the church. And already in the first century of the church there were various functions and titles encountered in the N.T. There were apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, doctors, presbyters and a large number of Pauline co-workers (cf. E. E. ELLIS, *Paul and his co-workers*, in: *NT Studies* 17 [1971] 437–452).

b) Among these services there was one service – that of the Twelve and of the apostles – which seen from different angles appeared to be original, essential, constitutive and fundamental. This becomes evident not only from the manner in which Jesus called them and dealt with them but also from the way they were later replaced or their function handed over in succession (Acts 1,15–26, 1 Tim 1,18, 1 Tim 4,6.11.13, 2 Tim 2,2.15, 2 Tim 4,2, Tit 2,1.15). This ministry of the Twelve enjoyed a unique authority from the Founder to ‘invent’ direct and sustain other ministries. All other dependent ministries acknowledged the centrality and presidency of this ministry and worked around and under it (cf. K. E. KIRK (ed.), *The Apostolic Ministry*, 10–12).

c) Every community in the NT appears to have had its own gifts, charisms and services and none appears to be deficient or unable to meet a need with respect to services. Ministerial crisis or shortage was unknown in the NT churches.

d) Titles and group patterns of services appear to be conditioned by the milieu and hence were different. The church at Jerusalem – due to the Jewish influence – had its apostle, prophets and presbyters. The church at Antioch – a dynamic community of dispersed disciples from Judea – had its prophets and teachers. The Pauline communities of multiple charisms, in addition to the great apostle as leader had a variety of co-workers.

e) But these differences in gifts, titles and patterns of organization do not appear as any obstacle to the strong and evident unity that existed among the various churches. Ministers were sent out to areas in need and gifts were sent to the communities who were in need of relief (Acts 13, 1–3).

2. On the Ministerial Praxis of the NT Churches

a) One thing stands out clearly from a critical analysis of the limited instances where ministerial needs were met by the early churches: – The churches felt themselves competent to ‘invent’ (Acts 6,1–6) and direct (Acts 13,1–3) ministries to meet the needs that arose within and without the community.

b) There was a community consciousness and a collective sense of responsibility to find the needed ministers, and a conviction that the Spiritfilled community could meet their needs from its own resources.

c) The independence with which the leaders acted without in any way endangering the unity with the other churches with the mother church was evident.

d) The qualities and conditions that were imposed were according to local standards and in keeping with the demands of the gospel message.

e) The titles were taken from the environment with great liberality.

3. *On the Priesthood*

a) Although the OT had a definitive levitical priesthood for the function of sacrificing, teaching, and even consultation of gods, in the NT no christian was identified as a priest (hiereus). Though the early christians, as a movement within Judaism, celebrated the Eucharist regularly, they did not see nor understand the celebration as a sacrifice, nor did they see any need for calling the one who presided over it a priest. Sacrifice and priesthood were associated with the temple, which they continued to attend even as christians. It was only after the destruction of the temple (70 AD) when in absence of Jewish priestly leaders, christians had to think of themselves as founders of a new religion distinct from Judaism, that they came to see in the Eucharistic celebration a sacrifice and in the one who presided over it a priest.

b) Although in the NT times those who presided at the Eucharist were not considered priests and ordination was not laid down as a condition to preside over the Eucharist, the seeds had already been sown in the gospel for a later development. By giving special significance to the elements of the meal that he ate with his disciples, Jesus himself supplied the community with a rite and a commemoration, that would later be seen as a sacrifice with its president called as priest (cf. R. BROWN SS, *Priest and Bishop*, London 1971, 10–20).

c) So the development or the evolution that took place already within the first century is not merely justified but potentially inspired by Jesus.

d) Hence our usual claim, that Jesus clearly and directly instituted at the Last Supper a sacrifice and a priesthood, should be modified to see only the seminal beginnings of Eucharist as a commemoration of his love and of the washing of the feet of the disciples as a commemoration of his service.

Hence that concept of the christian priesthood is more of a spiritguided evolution from the seminal inspiration of Jesus largely conditioned by the historical situation of the churches.

But what has happened in history – especially in our Asian churches?

D. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The churches that were transplanted faithfully in Asia with the help of colonial masters were very different from those planted by the apostles of the NT. The former were the products of a long and hazardous development of thought, life and structure on an alien soil (Mediterranean Countries). And worse still for the ordained ministers of our early churches it was the time of a counter-reformation rigidity and legalism. The long ministerial develop-

ment that preceded the Reformation affected both the bishop and the priest – but more especially the latter. The episcopate, based itself on an earlier tradition of the Greek speaking communities, remained always in the church as the pivotal leadership – even in spite of its having been contaminated by the trappings of high social and political status privileges. The priesthood on the other hand, being the product of a longer evolution, was subject to deeper impacts and changes from socio-political history.

From the influence of a privileged Constantine era, it suffered a decline with the feudal era (6th. to the 9th. century) and from then onwards it was subject to all the evils of the Barbarian kingdoms. It was only towards the 14th century that the priesthood began to reveal the accumulated defects of its past evolution, thus preparing the ground for the Reformation.

When the Reformers directed their attack against the cultic priesthood and its excesses, the church was compelled to fortify its defensive structures. The first missionaries for our Asian churches were the loyal sons of missionary religious congregations born during the Reformation and counter-reformation periods, which were marked by polemics and disciplinary rigidism with respect to ministerial structures. Unlike Paul and Barnabas – the missionaries of the early churches, our missionaries were understandably pre-occupied with fidelity to Rome and to their mother churches and less open to the new possibilities which encounters with different religions offered them.

Hence we could appreciate and understand the situation of these band of missionaries who understood themselves as men filled with sacred powers for definite sacerdotal and cultic functions within the churches. They were seen as the alter-christus personifying all the ideals of christian life. Hence spirituality was identified with sacerdotalism, and lay spirituality was hardly spoken of.

While the bishops tended to become increasingly administrators and guardians of order, and the diaconal ministry was seen merely as a liturgical step to priesthood, it was the priestly ministry that emerged into central prominence by swallowing up all other ministries in the church. If the laity did anything in the church, and for the church, it was done as an extension or a substitution of the priestly ministry. While Protestantism was making the church – a people without a priesthood, we were reducing the church to a priestly system without a genuine people.

Today when the ordained ministries are again feeling the impact of some deep sociological and ecclesiological changes – clearly acknowledged in the documents of Vatican II, and evident all over the world in a series of crises – it is incumbent on all our young Asian churches to examine their past history and become firmly decisive about the future. We could spell out this in the following three steps:

I) We have accepted as genuine, original and *de fide* the already historically developed forms of ordained ministries presented by the counter-reformation churches.

II) The ordained ministries, as practiced by the young missionary churches, notwithstanding a colonial-conquest-and-conversion attitude based on a

hierarchical ecclesiology, did yeoman service in founding the churches of Asia. The pioneers worked under severe sub-human conditions and their discipline and heroic dedication led them to a martyrdom. Their institutions for education, priestly formation and charitable services – all built at the cost of their sweat and blood – are facts which cannot be overstressed, nor for which we can ever be sufficiently grateful.

III) But today we find ourselves at the cross-roads where we have to make decisions involving changes for a clear vision, sincere consideration and boldness in planning for the future. We want to listen to the world of God and to the lessons of history, from within our own Asian situation of joys and sorrows, of diverse cultures yet common poverty. This is no reaction to counter-reformation practices nor a rejection of the ways of our predecessors, but a holy obligation to read and interpret the signs of our times. And woe unto us if we do not (Mt. 16.3).

If the biblical evidence gives us an insight into the essential nature of the ministries in general and priesthood in particular and if the historical development shows the gradual development to present forms, then in determining the future shape of these ministries, the priorities and demands of today's Asia will play an important role.

E. SITUATIONAL PRIORITIES AND DEMANDS

The priorities that should underline and determine the future of ordained ministries in our churches could be briefly brought under three categories corresponding to three aspects of our Asian-ness.

1. Inculturation of our ministries,
2. Emphasis for ministries against poverty and social injustices,
3. Ministries to suit new ecclesial structures.

1. Inculturation

The second phase of evangelization in Asia is definitely an attempt at inculturation and the future of the church of Asia is bound up closely with the outcome of this attempt. (Cf. Cardinal J. Sin, *The Future of Catholicism in Asia*, Roma 1978)

If inculturation is understood as incarnation of the gospel message or values into a particular culture, so as to become relevant, meaningful and effective for the salvation of the people, then the need for it evidently springs from its very nature. This has been amply demonstrated by the pluriform birth and growth of the early apostolic churches. Had Paul and Barnabas set foot on India or China, instead of on Cyprus or Selucia, the story of evangelization, in general, and of ministerial structure, in particular, would have been quite different. But for us the first phase of evangelization in Asia was not a genuine encounter between the gospel and the culture but a transplantation of the church in its long developed or alien incultured form. And embracing the christian faith meant estrangement from our own

religious-cultural forms. Hence the need for inculturation springs also from our present unfortunate state of being foreign and not close enough to our own origins.

Culture is supportive and expressive of the life of the people. So is ministry to our faith and love for service. Hence ministry as the visible institution in expression and support of christian life, has a primary need for inculturation. And such inculturation was evident already in the early churches. But in our Asian situation we face additional problems, as a consequence of our past history, and as a result we are forced to think of two types of inculturation – *direct inculturation* and *corrective inculturation*.

By the former we mean a genuine encounter between the gospel values and a new culture. Such an encounter may be effected in primary/frontier evangelization or in evangelization through dialogue with non-christian religions where we do not carry or propagate the cultural forms of our institutional ministry but only the essential elements of christian ministry (salvific service) which may put on suitable cultural forms through encounter.

By corrective inculturation we intend a simultaneous process of deculturation and inculturation – liberating ourselves prudently and gradually from acquired forms and taking in the genuine cultural forms of our lands. Most of our churches need to go through this complex and painful process. For this reason we could perhaps express this complex process as the cross and resurrection of enculturation.

Hence demands of enculturating our ministries will be basically three.

1. Only a ministry that is genuinely evangelical, open to cultures and social impacts can be encultured. And enculturation will be furthered in proportion to making the ministries more evangelical.

2. Community and culture are so intimately connected – one feeds on the other – that if the minister is really from the midst of community then he has assimilated basic cultural elements (of the community) in a natural manner and can re-express the faith and service in relevant forms. And vice-versa, if the minister has firm ties with the culture of the community, then he could be incorporated into it. Hence enculturation will be in proportion to the extent to which the minister is community-based. Instead of selecting the minister from one community, forming him another and sending him to a third, each community with its positive religious-cultural riches and negative economic-social poverty should be the matrix and base of all its ministries.

2. Poverty and Social Injustices

Asia is poor. And Asia is ridden with a variety of social injustices like discrimination, political oppression and economic inequalities.

If religious and cultural plurality be the brighter face of Asianess, then there is a darker face too in the poverty and social injustices of Asia. If the former realities call for a sincere and genuine encounter in enculturation, the

latter throws out a challenge to the salvific or liberative services of the church in Asia. Thus eradication of poverty and the fighting of social injustices have become a central priority for the leadership of the churches. The future *raison d'être* of our churches will be determined largely by the response given by the ordained leadership of our churches to this challenge.

In spite of centuries of ecclesial dedication to the cause of the poor and the afflicted through the charitable institutions, we are all still unhappy, or even ashamed, of our silence and non-involvement – let alone the occasional connivance – in the face of massive poverty and social evils. Our excuse for such attitudes has been often to label such inhuman evils as political, social and economic, and consequently, taboos for the ordained clergy.

But the new understanding of the mission of the church in such situations, especially as found in the Conciliar documents and in the encyclicals *Pacem in Terris* and *Pupulorum Progressio* has been to encourage the church leadership to fight these evils at all levels, and in ways in keeping with the moral teachings of the church.

On the one hand this leadership must obviously avoid two extremes: viz. of becoming friends with unjust powers that be, in order to win favours and privileges and thereby lose their strategic strength to sponsor the cause of the poor or of becoming too closed up isolated labelling all inhuman issues as political, social and economic issues taboo for the church.

But on the other hand the ordained leadership must strive to develop positive and heroic forms of prophetic leadership for such causes. It is true that the laity have a right and duty to dominate on many secular issues. But that does not justify our labelling the world or the evils of the world as sacred and secular and carving out a safe and sacred niche for the ordained minister. Our form of leadership may be solidarity with the suffering or may be leadership of movements against such evils, both challenging in many ways.

But such forms of leadership will demand various life-styles or approaches in keeping with the struggles we are engaged in. And this in turn will require that the local churches inspire, guide and design their own method of selection formation and maintenance of their ordained ministers. In this sense it is obvious that many of our present seminaries and houses of formation have out-lived their period of usefulness and need to be replaced by other forms of training suited to the local churches.

3. New Ecclesial Structures

The third priority which will determine the form of the ordained ministers in Asia are the new structural and community forms to which they are tending or aspiring to become. A great achievement of the ecclesiology of Vatican II is in the shifting of emphasis from an institutional concept of the universal church, which is divided into large administrative districts called dioceses, to a concept of the church as mystery and sacrament, concretized or concretisable in every local human situation without losing any of its

ecclesial gifts. This has resulted in the healthy acceptance and encouragement of the reality and pluriformity of the local churches within the reality of a universal communion or universal church which remain as a sacrament of salvation for the whole world.

Hence irrespective of any imposed conditions – especially those that cut through diverse cultures or races, and notwithstanding their administrative advantages – the sacrament of the church will incarnate itself in a perfect manner within various people living with various cultural and social links. These churches will become local churches lacking none of the gifts necessary to become fully ecclesial.

Fortunately, parallel to the growing consciousness of the rights and duties of our churches to become local and encultured, there is also an increasing awareness, based on recent biblical research and situational needs, of the ecclesial dimension of our ministries. The ministers of the church tend to move away from their clerical, hierarchical or power-block status and are becoming more and more ecclesial, community-based and community-oriented (cf. Y. CONGAR, *Ministeri e comunione ecclesiale*, Bologna 1971). Ministers are no longer individuals who descend from above filled with sacred power to do 'wonders' among the people according to their own fancies, but rather men among men, blessed with certain gifts of the Spirit to be of service to their fellowmen. They are filled with powers and gifts of the Spirit for the benefit of the community – not to rule it but to serve it. According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, they neither create the community nor are they created by the community but created with it and in it by the Spirit (cf. D. BONHOEFFER, *Vie, Pensee, Temoignage*, by E. BETHGE, Paris 1969).

Hence the various churches will have their right and obligation to determine, with their pluriformity of existence and function, the form of their ministers without in any way lessening their communion with the other churches. The present moves of the local churches to divide or demarcate dioceses in guided largely by administrative priorities as Rome sees them. A better approach would be to recognize the autonomy of the regional or national hierarchies, which can, not only divide and demarcate regions, but also recognize new forms of ecclesial communities (such as the Basic Christian Communities, Functional groups and centres other than the traditional parishes) – by using better criteria, like the presence of the Spirit, the Word, the Liturgy, fellowship ... than territorial basis. This will facilitate recognizing the ministries and ministers that are created in the community by the Spirit.

F. THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES

The foregoing biblical evidence, (b) historical evidence, (c) and the situational priorities of Asia, (d) if allowed to interact on the pastoral situation of the ordained ministry, (a) in an inter-disciplinary manner, will lead to theological conclusions with a pastoral orientation. Hence we will try in this final section to present some such conclusions.

1. A shift in the notion of ordained ministries is evident

The traditional understanding of the ordained minister as a mediator sent by God, as a man filled with sacred powers, as a man set apart for the offering of sacrifice and presiding over worship and as an official of the institutional church is being surpassed by his acceptance as an ecclesial (community) leader, as the point of unified ecclesial leadership, and as the representative of the headship of Christ in the mystical body. This shift is not only justified and inspired by the NT evidence, but also in line with the ecclesiology of Vatican II which is in favour of an ecclesial-centred theology of ministry in preference to a sacerdotal theology of ministry.

2. New motives impel us to re-examine old questions

If the questions once raised by the Lutheran reformers regarding ministerial priesthood are raised again, it is not for any objectionable state of the clergy vis-a-vis the laity, but for other genuine reasons. The pastoral situation of utter need of the church in Asia obliges us to re-examine some of the traditionally accepted ecclesial realities, especially with respect to ministries. In this re-assessment we are encouraged and enlightened by the new insights into the sources as well as by an unbiased view of post-historical development. The freedom for biblical research enjoyed in recent times gives evidence of an openness and liberality in NT attitudes and praxis, which are normative and inspirational for our present situations. And our view of the historical development of ministries – especially in our churches – is not based by the spirit of the encounter-reformation, but urged more by a genuine spirit of ecumenism.

Hence it is important to note that we cannot afford to dismiss the re-entry of old questions regarding priestly ministries as really belonging to a dead past and as being settled once and for all. The growing pastoral need and the decadent ministerial situation demand new answers under new light. Hence we could appeal to the defenders of pseudo-orthodoxy to be guided by genuine orthodoxy and orthopraxis and to put gospel values, situational needs and ecclesial goals before any other consideration from scholastic theology or ecclesiastical history and renew scholastic definitions regarding priestly ministry viz. ordination, character, laying-on-of-hands ...

3. Ordained ministries within a wider structure of ministries: orders with a wider sacrament of service: ordination within wider forms of recognition.

Though biblical evidence is for a large variety of ministries in different forms, early historical development narrowed them to the tripartite (three tiered) ordained ministries and later development tended to make the priestly ministry to be identified as the only one ministry. The present needs,

inspired by NT teaching and praxis, impel us to re-distribute the accumulated priestly functions to others in the church on a wider structure of ministries. Thus the ordained ministries must recognize and readjust their image, role and function to make room for other collaborators or co-ministers. Such a move will not be detrimental to the present ordained ministers but will only demand of them that they should be the central leadership with a strong inspiration and encouragement for other ministers.

In the understanding as we have postulated above, the sacrament of orders should come to be understood as the sacrament of service – open to the whole people and for the whole people. It cannot be conceived only as a sacrament around the Eucharist or cultic services, but conceived more in terms of services to the whole church. This sacrament will commemorate the servanthood of Christ (cf. the washing of the feet of the disciples and the discourses about it) and will celebrate the ministeriality of the church in general in terms of the gifts and services. Hence it is an occasion for the local church to thank the Lord, to accept the gifts, to recognize them suitably, to be at the same time the matrix and recipient of the services. It will be an incorporation into the public ministry and ministerial college of the local church.

Within this one sacrament, there should be a variety of recognition and strengthening too (valorising) according to the needs of places and the nature of services demanded. This variety in recognition and strengthening is not intended to build a new power-structure or grade of membership in the church, but to create a diversity of functions for a unifying purpose (LG 32d). Ordinations could be meant for more stable and responsible leadership which will remain as the core of the whole ministerial college. Such moves in our view has advantages of smoothening out gradations and differences into functional distinctions, incorporating the whole ministerial college into the local church and will widen the services of the ministerial college. In this view the sacramental character in ordination would have to be re-thought along the original Augustinian idea of incorporating one into the 'ordo' of the church ministry (PIET FRANZEN, *Orders and Ordination*, in: *Sacramentum Mundi*, 1146) rather than creating a new juridical and ontological relation leading to 'metaphysical clericalism' (ibid.).

4. *The Disciplinary Structure of the Ordained Ministry*

For the ordained ministries to continue to remain as the core or backbone of the churches 'leadership' and ministries they undoubtedly need a certain amount of discipline. But the form, the spirit and the exercise of this discipline will need changes based on the safe principle that the charism of institution (of structures, laws) is at the service of the other charisms (services, ministries) (K. RAHNER, *Factor of the Charismatic in the Church*, in: *Theol. Invest. XII, Confront.* 2, 86). Hence the churches must allow fresh and hitherto unknown forms of the charismatic factor in the church to appear . . . and give

them any institutional embodiment that may be useful to stabilize and strengthen them (ibid. 86–88).

For a long time, it was the voluminous decretals (*Decretum Gratianii*, *Decretales Gregorii IX*, *Decretales Clementii VIII*), all stated in the pastoral context of problems and abuses, that guided the ministries and ministers of the counter-reformation church. With the Codification of 1918, it became a set of more abstract and less pastoral canons (CC 108–486). But the post-conciliar legislation on ministries has been a return to the older tradition of dispositive laws trying to set the laws squarely on their context (cf. J. A. CORDDEN, *Ministry*, in: *Chicago Studies* vol. 15 n. 5). Yet we do not consider this to be in keeping with the theology of the local churches and their ministries.

Rome still continues spelling out in greater legalistic and ritualistic details the conditions, required standards and methods of formation for the ordained ministries. But the local churches, devoid of initiatives and courage for re-thinking their ecclesial situation must change in favour of more initiatives on the part of locally responsible leadership. Hence we expect maximum encouragement and a minimum of guidance necessary from the centre and a maximum of inspired initiative from the local churches.

5. Formation of Future Ordained Ministers

One of the important and more pastoral consequences of situating the future ordained ministries within a wider structure of ministries, will be the change demanded from the present seminaries and houses of formation. They should change from their isolated and uniform patterns to other patterns dictated more by the local needs, new principles of formation, charisms of Founders, etc. ... Any attempt to maintain a system of recruitment and institutions of training beyond their time of usefulness and efficacy will only increase problems for today and tomorrow.

Hence leaders of churches will do well to courageously launch out on methods of selection and establishment of houses of formation inspired more by the spirit of their place and time and face new relevant issues like mature vocation, inculturated spiritual and academic formation, pluriformity within the priestly ministry and priestly ministry within the pluriformity of ministries.

6. What the pastoral and sociological conditions of Asia demand in terms of ordained ministries is already inspired by the Sources, attested in history as possible and supported by the post-Vatican theology as strongly desirable. What prevents us Asians from taking the initiative and being as equally creative as the early churches, the churches of the Barbarian Kingdoms or the churches of the counter-reformation?

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