

TOWARDS A FORMULATION OF THE CURRICULUM OF PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

IN THE LIGHT OF SAPIENTIA CHRISTIANA, FIDES ET RATIO, AND
GENERAL NORMS FOLLOWING THE APOSTOLIC VISITATION OF
ECCLESIASTICAL FACULTIES, SEMINARIES AND HOUSES OF PRIESTLY
FORMATION IN INDIA.

Victor Machado*

Introduction

The three documents from the Holy See referred to here were issued in a span of 23 years, all during the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II. *Sapientia Christiana* was given on the 15th, April, 1979 in the first year of his Pontificate within six months of his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*. The purpose of this document was to highlight the need and importance of transmission of theological and philosophical knowledge in our seminaries. Speaking about the Centres of higher learning in general, the document says,

The cultural atmosphere in which a human being lives had great influence upon his or her way of thinking and thus, of acting. Therefore, a division between faith and culture is more than a small impediment to evangelisation, while a culture penetrated with the christian spirit is an instrument that favours the spreading of the Good News (1).

In this activity of the Church, "the catholic universities have had and still have special importance" (2). The church has a special predilection to Centres of higher learning as it is evident from the teachings of the Popes, "The church well knows the future of society and of her own self, which is closely bound up with the development of young people engaged in higher studies (3). The document says that such Centres have their own mission of evangelisation (4).

In the first place, the church has entrusted to these Faculties the task of preparing with special care students for the priestly ministry, for

*Dr. Victor Machado is Dean of Studies of St. Joseph's Seminary, Mangalore.

teaching the sacred sciences, and for the more arduous tasks of the apostolate (5).

The document puts in evidence the importance the church lays on such ecclesiastical faculties when it says, "Ecclesiastical Faculties ought to be conscious of their importance in the Church and of their participation in the ministry of the Church" (6). It also continues in the same strain referring to the command of Christ to the disciples to go and preach the Good News to the whole world (cf. Mt. 28:19-20). This also gives a special responsibility to the Faculties to adhere to what Christ the Supreme Teacher has said. "From this it follows that there must be in these Faculties that adherence by which they are joined to the full doctrine of Christ, whose authentic guardian and interpreter has always been through the ages, the magisterium of the Church" (7).

The Task of the Faculties

In this way, the Faculties are called upon to bear witness before the whole community of the faithful to their wholehearted following of the command of Christ. "This witness must always be borne both by the Faculty as such and by each and every member of the Faculty" (8).

The Faculties which the document speaks about, have to be fully inserted into the changing situations of the society and must be able to respond to the new demands of the present day. This means that their individual laws and statutes should be subjected to revision (9). There is also another reason for such a revision and that is none other than the evolution that has taken place in pedagogical and didactic methods, which call for new ways of organising studies. Then there is the closer connection that is being felt more and more between various sciences and disciplines, as well as the desire for greater cooperation in the whole university environment (10).

The work, begun in 1967 of revising the study programme, had to be completed and perfected with a new law. Hence this particular document abrogating all the previous ones, which include some still valid elements from these documents, while laying down new norms whereby the renewal that has already successfully begun, can be developed and completed (11).

The document is aware of the Ecclesiastical Faculties which exist throughout the world erected and approved by the Holy See. But there needs to be a substantial unity between them and proper guidelines should be laid down for the granting of degrees having universal value. The purpose of all this is a legitimate progress in academic studies which can not be hindered nor restricted, but rather directed through right channels towards obtaining better results. In spite of the different Faculties, the unity among them, will also manifest the basic unity of the catholic church.

The document proposes General Norms in the I Part and gives Special Norms in the Second. Setting down the nature and purpose of such Faculties it deals with the running of such Institutes in its various aspects from the academic to the administrative. The General Norms as stated in that part are not a matter of our concern now, We shall concentrate on the Special Norms and that too only on the Faculty of Philosophy as contained in Section III of Part II, articles 79 to 83.

The Task of Philosophy

What is the task of philosophy? It has the aim of investigating philosophical problems according to scientific methodology, basing itself on a heritage of perennially valid philosophy (12). Hence philosophy has to be taught in such a way that the students in the basic cycle will come to a solid and coherent synthesis of doctrine, will learn to examine and judge the different systems of philosophy and will also gradually become accustomed to personal philosophical reflection.

Further still, the task of philosophy is to equip the students with tools to be ready to teach and fill other suitable intellectual posts. That apart, they are also to be prepared to promote Christian culture and lead to fruitful dialogue with the people of our time (13).

This document gives utmost importance to the teaching and directives of the II Vatican Council, when it says that "in teaching philosophy, the relevant norms should be observed which are contained in the Council's documents"(14), and in other recent statements of the Holy See concerning academic studies.

The Curriculum of Philosophical Studies

The document enumerates a detailed curriculum to be followed in a Faculty of Philosophy. It divides the whole course in three Cycles. The first cycle should consist of two years or four semesters during which an organic exposition of the various parts of philosophy is imparted which includes the world, man and God. It also should consist of history of philosophy, together with an introduction into the method of scientific research (15).

Part II, Section III even details the different subjects that are to be treated in the first cycle and they are: Systematic philosophy with its principal parts: i.e., philosophy of knowledge, natural philosophy, philosophy of man, philosophy of being (including natural theology) and moral philosophy; history of philosophy, especially of modern philosophy, with a careful study of the systems which are exercising a major influence; the auxiliary disciplines, namely, selected natural and human sciences. (16).

Specialization begins in the second cycle, which should last for two years or four semesters. Special disciplines and seminars are to be conducted so that the students may have a more profound knowledge of the question in consideration (17).

The doctoral dissertation is the purpose of the third cycle. Such a scientific work calls for Philosophical maturity, which in turn is promoted by such a work (18). All these three cycles have their respective degrees which will be conferred by the Faculty, and they are, the degrees of Baccalaureate, Licentiate, and Doctorate. The purpose of all these degrees is not just for the sake of personal gain of a student, but for the promotion of scientific progress of the subject in hand. It is not to be just an addition by way of a production but it should be a quality outcome of a serious study on a particular theme.

An evaluation by way of examination or equivalent tests for each discipline is also directed by the document; a comprehensive examination too is necessary as per the document. The purpose of such evaluation is to assure that the student has received the full and scientific formation demanded by the respective cycle (19).

FIDES ET RATIO

The Purpose

The issuance of the encyclical, *FIDES ET RATIO* on the 14th September, 1998, in the twentieth year of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II has a clear statement on the need of philosophy in Formation Houses, stressing on the need of bringing faith and reason together and maintaining their inter-relatedness right through.

The purpose of this document is expressed by the Pope himself when he says that faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth, so that by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves. It is a forceful affirmation of the importance and indispensability of philosophy and of the pressing need to rediscover the intimate connection that exists between philosophy and christian theology (20).

He himself being a philosopher, the Pope views philosophy as a "way to come to know fundamental truths about human life", and as "an indispensable help for the deeper understanding of faith and for communicating the truth of the gospel to those who do not yet know it" (21).

The attainment of truth is a journey of discovery, which sets human beings going and provides their lives with meaning (22). Does the church have a role in this Journey? Yes; and it is nothing other than the prophetic mission of Christ, which the Church makes her own consisting in "diakonia of truth"(23), And the church fulfils this task in two ways: (1) by becoming "a partner in humanity's shared struggle to arrive at truth", and (2) at the same time by proclaiming "the certitudes arrived at, albeit with a sense that every truth attained is but a step towards the fullness of truth which will appear with the final Revelation of God" (24).

In the quest for truth one of the noblest resources that humans have at their disposal is philosophy (25). Though philosophy is defined as 'love of wisdom', it has a powerful influence on the formation and development of a great many cultures both in the East and the West. Each culture has brought about a particular system and it has contributed to the pursuit of

truth. One can discern "a core of philosophical insight, within the history of thought as a whole" which in some way is shared by all (26).

The Need for the Encyclical

The Pope feels the need to write this encyclical, because in the present times in particular philosophy seems to have lost its way and has tended to neglect the search for the ultimate truth which is its original vocation (27). Modern philosophy has tried to curtail the capacity of the human mind; it has rather pronounced a lack of confidence in truth and it assumes that all truths are equally valid and thus finds itself adrift in the ocean of opinions. Shunning philosophical pride and false modesty, what is needed is a certain discipline especially from the part of those, "whose vocation is to give a cultural expression to their thinking" (28) The need of the hour is that philosophy should discover its original vocation and reassume its great responsibility of forming thought and culture.

The Knowledge proper to Faith

The Pope recalls the teaching of various councils "that there exists a knowledge which is peculiar to faith, surpassing the knowledge proper to human reason", a knowledge which expresses a truth based upon the very fact of God, who reveals himself, a truth which is most certain, since God neither deceives nor can be deceived (29).

This truth coupled with faith is absolutely necessary to unravel the mystery of human life. This truth is neither the product of the human reason nor is it the result of an argument devised by the mind, It is something gratuitous, which itself stirs thought and seeks acceptance of an expression of love (30). The Pope here makes a reference to the Council's document on the Church in the Modern World, which says there exists a twofold order, distinct both with regard to their source and their object, the order of natural reason and the order of the supernatural within which faith operates. (31).

The Relation between knowledge by faith and by reason

Here the unity between knowledge of reason and faith is profound and indissoluble. "Faith sharpens the inner eye", whereas the light of reason leads us to discover the path we need to take. But following "that

path to its end, quickly and unhindered" is possible only if our spirits are "rightly tuned" within the horizon of faith (32). No reason for any competition between these two, for each contains the other, and each has its own scope for action (33).

Reason to be true to itself must respect three fundamental truths: (1) that human knowledge is an ever unfolding journey; (2) that this journey is not for the proud, who think that everything is the fruit of personal conquest; (3) that God rules the world with the provident love (34). Only within the overall context of the ultimate order of things do the results of reasoning acquire their true meaning and it is faith that makes this possible by liberating reason from false horizons and positions. (35)

The Human Quest for Truth

Man cannot be indifferent to truth, since there is a deep-seated longing for truth in the heart of every human being (36). Hence the need to search for it with all one's might, though success does not come everyone's way in the same measure. The reason for this is that there are certain factors which impede our search and they even distort our understanding. They are: a.) Natural limitation of reason, b.) Inconstancy of the heart, c.) Worldly concerns, and d.) Fear of the demands that truth makes, Hence it is necessary to overcome these in the search for truth, One should see that his efforts are not threatened by fear and anxiety (37).

Man and Truth

It is customary to define man in any culture or thought. How does the Pope define man, who is his favourite subject of study? He defines man as the one who seeks truth. Truth-seeking makes a man. This way of looking at man goes to the very root of his life and activity. Man is a seeker, a searcher by nature. The most important search is for truth, meaning of life and his own nature (38).

Such a search so deeply rooted in the human being cannot be in vain and useless. The capacity to search and to pose questions itself implies the rudiments of a response, which makes man take a first step, making way for further steps however difficult they may be. It is also a fact of experience that man is able to arrive at truth. These truths can either be those which are proper to daily life, or philosophical ones arrived at by

speculation, or religious truths, depending on different religious traditions or thoughts (39).

Truth and Trust

The manner in which we arrive at truth is important. This largely depends on traditions in which we are immersed and which provide us a range of truths to believe almost instinctively (40). "The capacity to entrust oneself and one's life to another person and the decision to do so are among the most significant and expressive of human acts" (41). What is sought is the truth of the person, what a person is and what the person reveals from deep within. Human perfection consists not simply in acquiring an abstract knowledge of the truth, but in a dynamic relationship of faithful trust in others.

Some things we know to be true because we have personally verified them, though they depend on others' testimony. But what is important is the personal trust in our search for truth. The purpose of this is to attain a perfect harmony between faith and reason. (42). This is another evidence of the journey of discovery and search. In this connection the Pope is not unaware of the negative positions which will emerge on the way of finding the truth. These positions which are detrimental to truth have to be carefully avoided and concentrate on the attainment of Truth, a pearl of great price (43).

Truth and Dialogue

Here it is necessary to realise the real purpose of dialogue. It is not to draw someone to our position, but it is to have respect for truth wherever it is found and it is found anywhere if sought with sincere and honest heart. Nobody can have a claim on truth because it comes as a gift, and hence there is no monopoly over truth. The encyclical, at this point tells us to be ready and to learn from others, even from unbelievers. Each one is to realise that he/she is called to witness to and proclaim truth in its most tangible way (44).

Truth and Freedom

What is it that liberates man? It is truth and hence it is a life-long task of every human being, to be after the attainment of truth in order to have

freedom. It is a matter of experience that it is truth alone that sets man free. As it is not possible to reach the fullness of truth by our limited experience, so too it is not possible to attain full freedom. Hence it is a journey towards freedom and along this Journey there are certain elements to be realised (45).

- 1, Truth is one, whereas untruth is manifold.
2. Truth demands acceptance, challenges the human mind, independently of race, culture, religion etc...
3. Despite the compelling nature of truth, man remains 'free' to choose untruth.
4. When we choose untruth, we become responsible for its consequences.

It is the task of philosophy to liberate man from error and set him on the right track of truth to be authentic persons. That's why it is said that Truth is a pearl of great price. The Pope in this encyclical makes amply clear his passion for truth leading to liberation. Because truth exists, man goes in search of it. This is a consoling thought for all those who are in the process of such a search (46).

Truth and Error

The search for truth inevitably brings up the question of untruth or error. The seeker after truth cannot simply put all thoughts together as opinions. An incomplete truth may be of some help, but an error is an obstacle which has to be abandoned. The church has always exposed error in her pursuit of truth. The Pope extols the reality of truth and side by side exposes those systems which make the search for truth difficult or even impossible, To be able to refute falsehood and correct error one must believe in objective truth and be guided by it (47).

In the pursuit of truth there are three temptations just like Jesus encountered in his mission-fulfilment.

1. Temptation to be self-sufficient, self-reliant, to have a save-yourself attitude, the secularist tendency; hence 'Not by bread alone' means, 'not by reason alone' 'not by human effort alone'.

2. A Fideistic temptation, in which there is a 'God-will-do-everything' attitude. There is no need of human effort or caution or prudence. To be presumptuous in our pursuit.
3. Conquer the whole world and 'lose one's soul' temptation. That is to say, not to refer the search for truth to the inner self and to one's dignity and value (48).

These and such temptations will take man away from the real and authentic search of anything beyond man. They will sidetrack the more important and necessary dimension of human life, denying it of its worth and meaning.

Inculturation and the Study of Philosophy

The Pope says that 'Revelation introduces into history 'an universal and ultimate truth' (49), which transcends cultures and places (50). What does this statement assume? It brings out the dimension of Revelation and consequently of Philosophy. Philosophy is to be considered as a special-activity of the human reason (51), and this activity is driven by the quest for the meaning of life (52) and it consists in asking and answering the fundamental questions about life and its meaning (53). This involves a rigorous mode of thought and it issues into a systematic body of knowledge (53). It has its own tools and methods, depending on sense perception and experience, guided by the light of intellect alone (54). This may be described as a practical wisdom and an education for life (55).

Such an activity is somehow transcultural and hence the need of inculturation in the study of philosophy. The emergence of different systems is attributed to different cultural contexts (56), depending on complementarity of cultures (57) and the historical and cultural conditioning of the truth formulations (58). Therefore the totality of truth can never be the right of any historical form of philosophy, so too a complete explanation of the human being and of the world defies any sort of systematisation in the strict sense.

The world is moving in the direction of a common heritage and a common platform from where to function, manifesting a common humanity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself is an off-shoot of such a concept. Doesn't it mean that there exists a transcultural

core in every individual system making it historically conditioned? Philosophy as an activity should turn out to be transcultural and should acquire a wide perspective and must be applicable to all (59).

The encyclical says that philosophy prepares for a correct 'auditus fidei' through the structure of language in its dimension of communication (60) which is part and parcel of a true culture. In this process there are several problems which need to be addressed, because any study of theology has its own philosophical underpinnings bearing itself on the culture in which it takes its origin and shapes itself. Hence there is need of a critical evaluation of culture before ever thinking of inculturation (61).

It is to be noticed that the whole society is (1) replete with erroneous and inadequate notions of truth, which also manifest a widespread distrust of universal and absolute statements especially among those who think that truth is born out of consensus and not of an agreement between intellect and reality (62). And it is not altogether wrong to see that such distrust brings about the distrust of universality of revelation.

(2) Another problem that has to be faced is that of Historicism, as per which truth of philosophy is determined on the basis of the appropriateness to a certain period and a certain historical purpose, that is to say, what is true in one period may not be so in another (63). It is also true that the formulation of a truth is bound to be influenced in some way by time and culture, but the expression has to be something beyond space and time (64).

(3) Yet another problem is that of the relationship between meaning and truth; the meaning referred to here is not a narration of simple historical events, or of a statement of neutral facts, it is rather the meaning, those events have "in and for the history of salvation" (65). Here philosophy has its task cut out that is to examine from its point of view the relationship between fact and meaning, "a relationship which constitutes the specific sense of history" (66). Thus the task of philosophy is to get itself involved in the actual process of appropriation of the faith itself. This is because both Tradition and the Magisterium and Theologians often make use of a particular philosophical tradition, and a knowledge of such traditions by way of culture become indispensable for proper and correct interpretation (67).

Reference to the East

Here the Pope's "thoughts turn to the land of the East, so rich in religious and philosophical traditions of great antiquity. Among these lands, India has a special place" (68). Why does he single out India? He feels that the rich heritage of this great nation will enable to draw elements compatible with faith, so that christian thought may be enriched. I think this is really a positive thought of the Holy Father, recognising at the same time the riches of every culture where the Church finds herself (69).

Criteria

Such an interpretation is to be guided by certain principles, which the Pope calls as criteria of discernment, which find inspiration from the Council's Declaration, *Nostra Aetate*. And they are: (70)

- (1) Universality of the human spirit, whose basic needs are the same all over and in the most disparate of cultures.
- (2) In engaging great cultures for the first time, the church cannot abandon what she has gained from her inculturation in the world of Greco Roman thought. This is to be considered as valid in very age.
- (3) Care is to be taken lest, contrary to the very nature of the human spirit, the legitimate defense of the uniqueness and originality of Indian thought be confused with a particular cultural tradition and remain closed in its difference and affirm itself by opposing other traditions.

These criteria tell us that there should be a continuous process of inculturation. Somehow or other we become deeply rooted in a certain tradition and just to abandon it without reason or purpose is going to be arbitrary. No inculturation begins in a vacuum, and hence all of us become part of a tradition (71).

It is also necessary to realise that cultures are not away from history. Both of them interact with each other and they have to. Or else each of them will run on totally different lines and will be devoid of any meaning

and value for human life. If and when they are together there takes place communication of values and assimilation of new experiences (72).

The above mentioned criteria are meant to impress upon us not to lose sight of the importance of a properly philosophical and metaphysical inquiry into the process of inculturation. A discernment basically means and demands a philosophical foundation and inquiry or else it is going to be a futile exercise, leading us nowhere. It is only such a philosophical inquiry which leads us to the objective truth, and in the final analysis all inculturation should take off from the objective truth and should lead to it (73). It may be necessary to point out here that even theology without a metaphysical horizon and basis could not move beyond the analysis of religious experience, which may turn out to be subjective (74).

The Church and Philosophy

From the very beginning itself the church was confronted with the philosophical systems of the time, for instance, Paul had warned the Colossians to be on their guard against being taken", captive through philosophy and empty deceit" that is to say, a kind of "esoteric speculation", which is widespread at every moment of history(75). But in history the church has come out of that tangle and has stood beyond any subjective approach to truth.

It is to the credit of the church that it has made philosophy accessible to the common man. It has contributed to the affirmation of the right of everyone to have access to the truth(76). e.g. many of the Church Fathers made use of philosophy in dealing with religious truths(77).

It is true that philosophy is autonomous on the basis of the fact "that reason is by its nature oriented to truths and equipped with the means necessary to arrive at truth and that a philosophy which did not proceed in the light of reason according to its own principles and methods would serve little purpose" (78). But the task of the church's magisterium is not to intervene,, but humbly and tenaciously to exercise a critical discernment of opinions and philosophies which contradict christian doctrine and confuse the 'pure and simple faith of the People of God' (79). Hence the task of the church is to prompt, promote and encourage philosophical inquiry(80).

An Independent Philosophy?

With all the above, the most important question looms large - does the Pope advocate an independent philosophy or what type of philosophy does he advocate? A connected question could be - should there be an independent philosophy? What is wrong in falling in line with the thinking of any other culture so long as it is convenient? The encyclical has already touched upon the existence of an universal spirit that is prevalent, call it a common humanity or whatever. Aren't there certain patterns of the consciousness which mark us all as one? Isn't there a desire to do the right things and the right way to live? Aren't love, affection, truth, trustworthiness so very necessary that without them one is unable to live? Doesn't everyone experience a deep-seated longing for something beyond? Don't the words of Augustine become the driving force in our life?

It is the fact of common understanding that all the above are universal to all human beings cultures and thought-patterns. That's why we can say that these structures and questions have in themselves in germ and in a hidden way the principles and concepts which we may term transcultural and which the church has been advocating all through. Hence the relationship of philosophy and the church is very close and needs to be promoted.

Hence the Pope expresses his displeasure at the position taken by some theologians who have demonstrated a lack of interest in the study of philosophy. Both philosophy and theology are closely related to each other. If any thinks otherwise he is very much mistaken. Without recourse to philosophy an authentic theologizing is impossible. (82). The need of the hour then, according to the Pope, is to create a necessary infrastructure for an intelligent philosophical and theological formation of those called to ministry (83).

It is not the question of an independent philosophy totally cut away from reality or culture, or theology, rather it means that the philosophy the church chooses should be one which is totally free of any clutches, but one which approaches reality on its own as a science to arrive at certain of its own conclusions. Though the Pope does seem to support a Thomistic approach than any other, we need to look beyond and take into confidence

the many different ways of understanding reality making it more personalistic than anything else.

Various Stances-of Philosophy

The Pope puts forward three stances which emerge out of the different thought-patterns which have ruled, the minds of men right through the centuries.

(1) Considering philosophy as totally independent of the Gospel, a philosophy so autonomous an enterprise, that obeys its own rules and employs the powers of reason alone. The error consists in considering philosophy to be totally self-sufficient. (84).

(2) Christian Philosophy as it has been often pictured. Though this is valid, it should not seem that the church has an official philosophy of her own. Rather it refers to a Christian way of philosophizing accompanied by faith. (85).

(3) How does theology need philosophy? The need is to be a partner in dialogue in order to confirm the intelligibility and universal truth of its claims. Hence the traditional principle which said that philosophy is the "handmaid of theology" is to be understood in more personalistic terms. Philosophy is not subservient to theology, but both of them walk together the journey of discovering the truth. Both of them need each other to achieve the joint purpose, or else they will be handicapped. (86)

Need to discover the Original Vocation of Philosophy

The Pope decries the plight and the situation man is in today, and that according to the encyclical is a "crisis of meaning"(87), due to fragmentation of knowledge. Man at times does not even ask the meaning of life and consequently there is a crisis of values, both moral and religious. The need of the hour is that philosophy rediscovers its original vocation, that is, "recover its sapiential dimension as a search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life"(88).

This 'dimension is all the more necessary because the immense expansion of humanity's technical capability demands a renewed and sharpened sense of ultimate values. Technology should be ordered to

something greater than a merely utilitarian end, or else it would soon prove inhuman and even become potential destroyer of the human race (89).

The Pope is not unaware of the obstacles or hindrances for such a *sapiential dimension* to be adopted. Hence the need for certain requirements, such as (i) insistence on total and definitive truth, (ii) verification of the human capacity to know the truth, (iii) need for a philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range, transcending the empirical data to attain something absolute (90).

What the Pope wants by proposing these requirements is that "reality and truth do transcend the factual and the empirical and to vindicate the human being's capacity to know the transcendent and metaphysical dimension". The Pope continues and says, whenever men and women discover a call to the absolute and transcendent a whole range of metaphysical range opens up: in truth, in beauty, in moral values, in other persons, in being itself and in God"(91).

Challenge to the Philosopher

The Pope proposes a challenge to every philosopher to move from *phenomenon to foundation*, a step that is so very necessary as it is urgent. Though experience reveals the human being's interiority and spirituality, speculation it is, which penetrates the spiritual core and ground from which it rises (92). There is no doubt that the Pope is clear about the tasks demanded of a true philosophy that is the possibility of coming to an unified and organic vision of knowledge. This is the task which the christian philosopher should take up. "The segmentation of knowledge, with its splintered approach to truth and consequent fragmentation of meaning, keeps people today from coming to an interior unity" (93).

It is also necessary to be aware of the dangers, which are hidden in some currents of thought, which are especially prevalent today. The Pope lists some of them, as (a) eclecticism, (b) historicism, (c) scientism, (d) pragmatism, (e) nihilism (94).

The Pope, the Philosopher

In the concluding part of the encyclical the philosopher-pope reiterates the importance of philosophy with a strong link to theology,

because it is in close relationship of these two there is to be found a wealth of common reflection (95). Insistence on the importance and true range of philosophical thought, the church promotes both the defence of human dignity and the proclamation of the Gospel message. What is of utmost importance today is "to lead people to discover their capacity to know the truth"(96).

The Pope continues saying "Philosophy moreover is the mirror which reflects the culture of a people" and it is called upon to take part in the evangelisation of culture (97). In the appeal for new evangelisation, the Pope says, the philosopher has a special task "to explore more comprehensively the dimensions of true, the good and the beautiful to which the word of God gives access... The attention to philosophy too should be seen as a fundamental and original contribution in service of the new evangelisation" (98).

The need is urgent, says the Pope, to make use of philosophy to have dialogue with those who don't share our faith. This demands an attentive and competent commitment, ability to discern the expectations and openness to the key issues, which are the concerns of every human being at this historical moment. It is the responsibility of the Christian philosophers to develop a reflection, enabling everyone to grasp the full truth, which divine Revelation declares. Hence the most pressing issues like ecology, peace and co-existence of different races and cultures may possibly find a solution, if there is a clear and honest collaboration between christians and other religions, leading to the renewal of humanity. (99).

Philosophy and Priestly Formation

Referring to the formation of candidates to the priesthood, the encyclical says that they need a solid philosophical formation (100). Hence the Pope says, "I encourage them to pay special attention to the philosophical preparation of those who will proclaim the Gospel to the men women of today and, even more, of those who will devote themselves to theological research and teaching. It is their duty "to contribute to a genuine and profound communication of the truths of the faith" (101).

The Holy Father reminds of the "grave responsibility to provide for the appropriate training of those charged with teaching philosophy both in seminaries and ecclesiastical faculties. Teaching in this field necessarily entails a suitable scholarly preparation, a systematic presentation of the great heritage of the christian tradition and due discernment in the light of the current needs of the church and the world" (102).

The special appeal the Pope makes to philosophers and to all teachers of philosophy needs to be heeded with attention and readiness. It consists in having "the courage to recover, in the flow of an enduringly valid philosophical tradition, the range of authentic wisdom and truth which is proper philosophical inquiry"(103). This means to be open to the impelling questions which arise from the word of God and they should be strong enough to shape their thought and discussion in response to that challenge. They have to strive for truth always, alert to the good which truth contains. Then only they will be able to formulate the genuine ethics which humanity needs so urgently at this particular time of history (104).

The Holy Father has special word of encouragement to the philosophers, when he says, "The Church follows the work of philosophers with interest and appreciation and they should rest assured of her respect for the rightful autonomy of their discipline"(105).

It is not only the philosopher but everyone is called upon to arrive after truth, that's what the encyclical says, "I ask everyone to look more deeply at man, whom Christ has saved in the mystery of his love and at the human being's unceasing search for truth and meaning"(106). He also has a word of warning and caution not to be allured by different philosophical systems, because "the grandeur of the human being consists in finding fulfillment only in choosing to enter the truth, to make a home under the shade of Wisdom and dwell there"(107). If the purpose of philosophy is to liberate man, the Pope says, "only within the horizon of truth will people understand their freedom in its fullness and their call to know and love God as the supreme realisation of their true self" (108).

Report of the Visitation:

The third document that we are called upon to take up is the following: GENERAL NORMS Following the APOSTOLIC

VISITATION of ECCLESIASTICAL FACULTIES, SEMINARIES and HOUSES OF PRIESTLY FORMATION in INDIA. (G.N.)

This Visitation which took place between 1997 and 1999, was on the initiative of the Holy See. It was a joint effort of the Four Congregations concerned:

Catholic Education,
Evangelisation of Peoples,
Oriental Churches, and

Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

Forty Four Visitators visited 96 Institutes. All aspects of formation of candidates to the priesthood were taken into consideration following the criteria outlined in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, i.e. the human, spiritual, academic, and pastoral/missionary dimensions. (109). While the Report appreciates the great commitment of the Church in India to priestly formation, and the depth and breadth of resources involved in this ministry represents the wealth for the Church, it also has certain recommendations for the improvement of the formative work in these Institutes (110).

The first remark the G.N. makes is that the Charter of Priestly Formation in India has not been fully implemented in most of the seminaries in India. Hence the need to pay attention to this, besides paying great emphasis on Ecclesia in Asia and the Declaration, *Dominus Jesus*(111).

With regard to the study of philosophy the G.N. has this to say, "Keeping in mind *Fides Et Ratio*, the curriculum in all philosophates should be reviewed for content and methodology" (112). One observation that has been made in the G.N. is the fact of many variations in philosophy training in India, and there is a need for more consistency (113). It enumerates the variations and says that a programme should be selected that conforms to the Charter of Priestly Formation in India, n-3-2.3f.

The G.N. says that sufficient time be given to the proper study of philosophy. While the seminarians should be exposed to a variety of

schools of philosophy, Thomism, and Indian Philosophy, in connection with and in view of future study of Theology and the fundamental questions of human existence are to be stressed. (114). The report refers to what the encyclical, *Fides Et Ratio* says (115).

Basing itself on Canon No.250 of CIC and Canon No. 348 of CCE0, the report says that where the current programme is less than two years, it should be changed. The Canons say the studies in philosophy and theology should last six full years, in such a way that the time given to philosophical studies amounts to two full years and that allotted to theological studies to four full years.

The G.N. also stresses the need for the academic qualifications of the Faculty members, and the preparation of new Faculty members to take on the load of work; more than that it is to ensure the formation of the candidates. There needs to be a minimum of permanent formators so that they may be able to pay personal attention to the formees.

Though it does not propose a curriculum of philosophical studies, it bases itself on the previous Documents of the Church, both universal and local. What the report intends doing is to emphasize the need to stick to the norms given earlier and not to have too many innovations. It wishes to have a continuity of the traditional way of dealing with the subjects while at the same time opening the programme to new realities around.

CURRICULUM

Having gone through what the Documents have said, it is necessary to see what curriculum could be derived from them. Let it be clear to us that the purpose of *Fides Et Ratio* and the G.N. was not to propose a curriculum, but to set those responsible thinking and planning about it, taking into account all that is necessary for a holistic approach to the study of philosophy. One thing stands out is the fact that the Pope with his own philosophical background desires a study of man in all his dimensions, his nature, dignity, rights and duties. A study of man is not to be done in a vacuum; that is to say, he is closely related to the world he lives in and the Absolute from where he comes and to whom he goes.

So it is an integrated picture of reality that needs to be treated. Then only philosophy becomes a science of the whole reality. But what should it

have in its programme? An adherence to tradition, but to see tradition as living in the present circumstances, thus considering nothing as alien in an integrated study of reality.

Philosophy should go beyond boundaries. Hence the perennial quality of philosophy has to be kept up and preserved. Perennial philosophy need not mean sticking to the past as a museum piece; it means bringing philosophy out in the open. It also means making philosophy more and more relevant or having a praxis-oriented approach.

Talking about praxis-oriented philosophy means making that otherwise abstract science look not so abstract after all and in the bargain applying it to every day life of an individual. Thus philosophy turns out to be a science of human life and its meaningfulness. It includes both speculation, critical analysis and prescription for life. It also means action, both physical, mental and spiritual. It is a two-way traffic, in that, praxis is always guided by philosophy and praxis-experience does and must lead to philosophy in its turn. It is a contextualised philosophy that will take into serious account the prevalent social, economic and cultural problems and questions in its reflection and search (116).

Why do we need a praxis-oriented philosophy? (117)

1) Every human being is guided by some philosophy about which one may be aware or not. Such a

philosophy leads to action, essential for life. There is no growth without action.

2) If philosophy is known to be love of wisdom, which liberates man, then such a liberation

should have recourse to praxis leading to self-fulfillment. A true liberation is the manifestation of action.

3) Philosophical ideologies have taken over from religious ideologies, since the modern man has a distance for everything that is religious. This means

4) It is philosophy which takes upon itself the task of highlighting simple and basic truths about

man, the purpose of his life and his needs and rights.

- 5) Even in the history of philosophy various types of philosophies have been praxis-oriented for more reasons than one.
- 6) With the sort of a reaction to the abstract type of philosophy all over, praxis-oriented philosophy does take the centre stage.

Having said that, we need to have certain way of going about in this new venture. Hence here are some suggestions: (118).

- 1) The core of philosophical education really consists in developing an ability to raise weighty critical questions about all significant realities concerning concrete human existence.
- 2) One of the best ways of developing this capacity for questioning would be a critical study of history, literature and works of art by taking into his stride everything that concerns human life.
- 3) The purpose of such a study is not only to make us observant and discerning, but to make us have a live contact with people and participate in the people's struggles of liberation and collaborate in their efforts to build up a society worthy of human dignity and God's reign.
- 4) There is also the need to have a critical survey of the history of Thought in India, in Asia and in the rest

of the world, tracing their development against the background of history of peoples.

- 5) There is no question of absolutizing theology or philosophy. Hence it is necessary to understand that God is greater than our heart and our histories, theologies and philosophies. This means, what really matters is neither philosophy nor theology, but the people, their liberation and life and their God.
- 6) The question should not be what to choose, theology or philosophy, but to see both of them as essentially synthetic, going together and complementing each other, pointing to the ultimate unity of destiny of

all things and peoples. Thus the ultimate keeps on coming into our life as we live it in the present.

CONCLUSION

Our purpose has been to see philosophy in the context of the Houses of Formation. What should it be? (119). It should consist in the following:

- a/. to train the students in the method of clear and logical thinking
- b/. to familiarize them with various problems that affect life today.
- c/. to enlighten them on the way the great minds have tried to offer solutions to such problems in their own contexts.
- d/. to train these young men to tackle these problems on their own in the present-day context and come out with their own solutions, i.e, to teach to philosophize in today's context.

To achieve this there needs to be a change in our entire perspective and emphasis, that is, exercising the praxis aspect together with the speculative and see that they run together, This also will bring out the personalistic dimension of philosophy without too much stress on metaphysics for its own sake. This is a task before every right thinking human person on whom rests the future of philosophy.

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