

SOCIO-POLITICAL FACTORS AND THE TRAINING OF MEMBERS
OF THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

by

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RESEARCHER'S DECLARATION

“I declare that ‘**Socio-political factors and the training of members of the Church of South India**’ is my own work and that all the sources that I have used are quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.”

(S. Donald Samuel)

Researcher

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SUMMARY

The research is done within the diocese of Kanyakumari of the Church of South India. It examines the viability of the following training programmes to socio-political factors: the Church Workers Theological Training Programme, the Sunday School Programme, the Vacation Bible School Programme, the parish-based training programmes - for example retreats and workshops, the Women's Fellowship Programme, the Christian Endeavour Programme, the Programme of Communication and Revival as well as that of the Student Christian Movement of India, and the Union of Evangelical Students of India. The practitioners of these programmes felt the need for guide-lines to transform their programmes to be more relevant to their socio-political contexts. Hence the present qualitative-oriented research was undertaken.

The preliminary interviews and reading of the related literature enabled the researcher to identify some promoted theories, regarding the relationship between the socio-political factors and the programmes; this assisted him to set up a questionnaire for semi-structured interviews. A sample for interviews was chosen with the help of the organisers of the programmes. A pilot study was conducted using the questionnaire, which led to the semi-structured interviews. The respondents narrated their experiences and reflections related to the socio-political factors. The information was organised, scrutinised, and the findings were recorded under six different pointers, which enabled the researcher to exhibit and explain the connections between the training programmes and the socio-political factors. Then the findings were evaluated, using the puzzle-solving method. Consequently, some guidelines were devised. These guide-lines indicate the limitations and the possibilities in making a socially-oriented training programme more vibrant and viable to its socio-political factors. Moreover, they highlight the possibilities for the existing pietistic-oriented programmes to become more relevant to the context. They also guide the practitioners to construct alternative approaches in training that are more relevant.

The research is a small incentive to the emerging cooperation among the practitioners of the various training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese. It will hopefully encourage them to join hands with people of other faiths and Non Governmental organisations in facilitating the social transformation in India today. Proposals are made for further related research work.

KEY TERMS

Training programmes, Kanyakumari diocese, Church of South India, Socio-political factors, Vision of the church, Theology of the church, Evangelism and Mission, Ministerial resources, Pastoral Counselling and Communication.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.I.D.S	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
C.E.	-	Christian Endeavor programme
C.E.N.	-	Christian Education and Nurture
C.I.S.R.S.	-	Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society
C.R	-	Department of Communication and Revival
C.S.I	-	Church of South India
C.W.T.T.P.	-	Church Workers Theological Training Programme
L.M.S	-	London Missionary Society
S.C.M.I.	-	Student Christian Movement of India
S.S.	-	Sunday School programme
U.E.S.I.	-	Union of Evangelical Students of India
U.N.	-	United Nations
V.B.S.	-	Vacation Bible School programme
W.C.C.	-	World Council of Churches
W.F.	-	Women's Fellowship programme

Abbreviations in the foot notes:

AV	-	Authorised Version
Cf.	-	compare with
ch.	-	chapter
chs.	-	chapters
ed.	-	editor
eds.	-	editors
f.	-	read the following verse
ff.	-	read the following verses
KJV	-	King James Version
NRSV	-	New Revised Standard Version
NIV	-	New International Version
n.d.	-	no date
no.	-	number
nos.	-	numbers
op. cit.	-	in the work cited
p.	-	page
pp.	-	pages
v.	-	verse
vs.	-	verses

The abbreviations for the books of the Bible were used from the New Revised Standard Version.

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CHAPTER-1
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Preamble

A perusal of the background of the research is provided at the outset of this chapter. It is followed by a brief introduction of the major areas of research, the necessity for the research, the nature, and approach of research.

1.1 The title of the research

The present research is entitled as:

“SOCIO-POLITICAL FACTORS AND THE TRAINING OF MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA”

1.2 The background of the research

1.2.1 The scope of the research

The researcher comes from one of the dioceses of the CSI¹ namely Kanyakumari.² CSI Kanyakumari diocese is within the State of Tamilnadu in South India.³ **The scope of the research includes only the diocese of Kanyakumari of the CSI.**

1.2.2 The context of the research

Geographically, the CSI occupies the whole of the peninsula, namely ‘South India’, comprising the States of Tamilnadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. Each diocese of the CSI is constituted in a defined geographical area. The diocese of Kanyakumari of the

-
1. Henceforth the Church of South India is presented by the abbreviation CSI.
 2. The researcher is a pastor of a diocese of the CSI, named Kanyakumari. In 2002, there were 21 dioceses within CSI and Kanyakumari was one of the seven dioceses in the State of Tamilnadu.
 3. Chennai is one of the States in South India, formerly known as Madras.

CSI is located on the beautiful Southern tip of India namely ‘Kanyakumari’, adjoining the Western Ghats in the East, Arabian Sea on the West and the Indian Ocean on the South.⁴ It is claimed that the three seas, the Arabian sea, the Pacific Ocean and the Bay of Bengal meet at Kanyakumari.

Politically, for the purpose of administration, the government of India has divided India into twenty-one States and every State is partitioned into districts. Kanyakumari is one of the districts of a State in South India, namely, the State of Tamilnadu.⁵

The daily lives of members of the CSI are influenced by **social factors** like the castes, discrimination against women (and men), religious conflicts, abuse of alcohol, and migration from villages to cities. Poverty, unemployment, corruption, and dowries,⁶ are some of the **economic issues** that affect their daily lives. The present **political issues** of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese include the leadership of women, an over-dependence on the ordained members, and the loss of credibility of leaders. These socio-political and economic issues in the lives of the people in Kanyakumari are not entities that can be separated and isolated. They are inseparably connected to their real lives. They are only distinguished and differentiated for the purpose of the study.⁷

1.2.3 The training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese

There are 458 parishes⁸ in the diocese of Kanyakumari, CSI. A number of these parishes are involved formally or informally in different types of training programmes of their members. The Church Workers Theological Training Programme and retreats/workshops held at parishes are two of the regular and organised training programmes of the CSI

4. J. A. Jacob, *History of the L.M.S. in South Travancore*, 1990, p. 96.

5. K. M. George, *Church of South India, Life in Union, (1947 – 1997)*, 1999, p. 3.

6. A ‘dowry’ in India is the price paid to the family of a bride-groom by the family of a bride, shortly before the marriage. When the family of a bride-groom demands more than the ability of the brides family, then it becomes an impossible dowry. In South India today, dowry is generally viewed impossible and evil.

7. The socio-political issues that affect members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese will be delineated in chapter 2.

8. CSI Kanyakumari Diocese, *CSI Workers Diary*, 2002.

Kanyakumari diocese. There are also other training programmes presented by the different departments of the diocese, namely, the Women's Fellowship Programme, and the programme of the Department of Communication and Revival. The Department of the Youth offers the Christian Endeavour Programme. The Department of Christian Education and Nurture offers the Sunday School Programme and the Vacation Bible School Programme. In addition, there are a number of training programmes presented to the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese, particularly in the colleges of the diocese, by other Christian institutions like the Student Christian Movement of India and the Union of Evangelical Students of India.⁹

1.2.4 The major area of the research

The researcher is interested in focusing on the socio-political issues and training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese as the major area of the research. He examines the viability of the training programmes in the context of the socio-political factors.

The major area of the present research emerged from the researcher's theory and inquiry of the contemporary socio-political context in South India. The contents of the study became clearer during the observations and inquiries of the researcher, concentrating on how socio-political factors have influenced the training programmes of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese. The researcher believes that in South Indian society, people as individuals have energy and enough potential for their own development. Moreover, he is convinced that as individuals and together as a community, people are endowed with power to exercise their energy and potential for the improvement and development of themselves and their society. Yet, secular society and its structures in South India distribute their power in such a way that only a few individuals have control and occupy influential positions. They discriminate and exploit others based on their gender, age, political views, and based on their economic and other status. There are times and situations where the majority in South India discriminate against minority groups¹⁰ based

9. The training programmes presented to members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese will be delineated in chapter 2.

10. Hindus are a majority group in India; Christians, Muslims, and Sikhs are some minority groups.

on their religious identities. Those in power decide for other groups when it comes to the sharing of opportunities and resources for the development of the community in general.

The political trends of the secular society, however, have infiltrated the structures of the CSI. Moreover, the researcher is of the impression that the various socio-political factors infiltrate the churches in South India, particularly in Kanyakumari, and affect the daily life, work, and the religious perspectives of members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese significantly. The social and the economic factors of Kanyakumari affect the daily lives of the members of the diocese considerably. In addition, the socio-political trends of the secular society have affected the training programmes. On the one hand, if a training programme fails to equip members of the CSI to address the socio-political factors that affect individuals and the community in general, then the existing destructive socio-political factors of the secular society affect the life and work of the CSI as well. On the other hand, the training programmes also need to educate members of the CSI towards adopting the perspectives and values of the secular society that are helpful for the development of individuals and the community.

1.2.5 The necessity of the present research

As hinted above, it is generally believed in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese that there remains an inseparable relationship between the CSI and the socio-political factors in South India.¹¹ The CSI as an institution in South India has set up structures to exercise their power for the progress of the CSI and the society in general. Importantly, the CSI remains a part of the social system in South India. It is one of the institutions of Christianity, and, consequently, one of the many religious institutions of South India. Moreover, the CSI clearly forms a part of the economic system in India. It owns land; it has budgets, pays salaries, rents out buildings, runs hospitals, schools, and development projects. Moreover, the CSI functions as a part of the political system in the State of Tamilnadu in South India. Christians are both involved in the politics of the CSI as well as

11. Ref. section 1.2.4, *The major area of research*.

that of society. For instance, there is voting and electing of leaders both within the diocese as well as in Kanyakumari district. A few members of the CSI support the ruling party/group and others support the opposition party/group. Even those who opt to be neutral and keep away from politics play a political role, for instance, by not supporting the rulers. This is probably because people live in relationships with others in society and so, by nature, they are political beings as much as they are social beings. Consequently, the socio-political factors of society like castes, gender, education, and occupation have influenced the CSI. Today such factors seem to influence people to determine their positions and status within CSI Kanyakumari diocese. Due to the above inseparable social, economic, and political factors in the CSI and in the society of South India, **those who are involved in the training programmes of the diocese believe generally that the success of the training programmes in South India depend on how they react to the socio-political factors of the society.**

Further, those who are involved in the work of the training programmes in the diocese¹² are of the opinion that some programmes act promptly in response to the socio-political factors, while others have been influenced by certain perceptions of those who constructed these programmes long ago. **They strongly feel the need for clear and concrete guidelines that may direct their initiatives and attempts to transform their programmes towards becoming more relevant to their socio-political contexts.**

The researcher undertook some **listening surveys**¹³ in order to ascertain how others in CSI Kanyakumari diocese perceive the above major area of the research. Moreover, he used to discuss the advantages and the disadvantages of the existing training programmes in the diocese with other members of the diocese. This experience has convinced him to

12. Including the researcher, who served as a tutor for a while in the Church Workers Theological Training Programme. He has also served in the Programmes of Christian Endeavour, Sunday School, Communication and Revival, Vacation Bible School in the diocese, and the Student Christian Movement of India at the levels of a tutor and organiser.

13. When people in South India relax at their homes, in buses, at bus-stations, railway stations, restaurants and other public places, they are used to discuss daily events seriously, as well as crucial issues affecting their daily lives. The researcher has listened to some recent conversations that are often beset with anger and frustration. 'A listening survey' means to listen to such a conversation and to record it. The listening surveys are only done as a preliminary attempt to obtain the general impression of people which can later be confirmed by scientific research.

believe that the above problem of the research is indeed a relevant problem, perceived as such by many people and about which they have strong feelings, as well as the fact that the contemporary members of the diocese express this issue seriously.

1.3 The nature of the research

1.3.1 A qualitative-oriented research

The intention of the researcher is to carry out, to a great extent, a qualitative-oriented research. Many commentators stress the importance of qualitative research. For instance, Denzin and Lincoln observed: "Qualitative research studies things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them".¹⁴ Popular educators like Strauss and Corbin also agree with this view and explain it further by adding, "Qualitative research produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures. It can refer to research about person's lives, stories, behaviour and also their organisational functional, social movements or interactional relationship".¹⁵ In agreement with their views, the present study focuses on the life stories of the practitioners of the training programmes, in their own natural setting in CSI Kanyakumari diocese. In the report of a research similar to the present study namely 'Women in Development: Perspectives from the Nairobi Conference', one of the IDRC publications, Ellis approves this, saying:

The qualitative approach helps us to understand people as they interact in various social contexts and to define social reality from their own experience, perspective and meaning rather than from that of the researcher alone... It raises hitherto unasked questions, the answers to which afford deeper and sharper insights into how and why people participate as they do in a variety of social processes.¹⁶

14. N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, *Handbook of qualitative research*, 1994, p. 2.

15. A. Straus & J. Corbin, *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*, 1990, p. 16.

16. IDRC, Women and Development, Chapter – 3, *The Research Process*, n.d., <www.idrc.ca/es/ev-27486-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html> (10 September 2005). The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a public corporation created by the Parliament of Canada in 1970 to help developing countries use science and technology to find practical, long-term solutions to the social, economic, and environmental problems they face.

Simmons and Elias as presented by Ellis declares that a qualitative-oriented research generates holistic results: “Qualitative methods, ...produce contextual or holistic explanations for a smaller number of cases, with an emphasis on meaning rather than the frequency of social phenomena”.¹⁷

The researcher aims to evaluate briefly below the advantages and disadvantages of following qualitative-oriented research in the study:

1.3.2 The advantages of using the qualitative-oriented research

Qualitative-oriented research method¹⁸ allows the researcher to describe existing phenomena and current situations regarding his major area of research. It encourages him **to describe freely the details of the various aspects of the study.** For instance, it deals with and describes in details the various socio-political factors affecting the lives of people in South India today. Moreover, **the researcher hopes to be able to deal with the most delicate nuances of the meanings of the respondents in the qualitative research.** According to Patton, "Quality has to do with subtle and unique things that make a difference beyond the points of a standardized scale. Quality is what separates and falls between points on a standardized scale".¹⁹ He means that qualitative research is useful in examining to some extent the totality of the unit of inquiry.

Firestone as perceived by Aukerman in his writing on ‘Philosophy of Research’ states, “The purpose of qualitative research is to understand the current social situation, from the point of view of the participants”.²⁰ Accordingly, **the researcher is interested not only in listening to the respondents, but also in finding out what they really have in mind and if they really intend what they disclose.** Although it is difficult to accomplish this in a strict scientific way, the intention is to observe respondents' body language, voice

17. IDRC, *Women and Development, Chapter - 3, The Research Process*, (10 September 2005).

18. More than the quantitative-oriented research method.

19. M. Q. Patton, *How to use qualitative methods in evaluation*, 1987, p. 3.

20. J. H. Aukerman, *Writing guide, chapter-1, Philosophy of Research*, n.d., <<http://www.anderson.edu/sot/guide/ch1.html>> (16 October 2004).

tones, and behavior while sharing their opinions during interviews. The views of the respondents will be checked as much as possible against the researcher's perceptions during the interviews. This will enable the researcher to 'read between the lines', to detect hidden meanings, to make out and construe to a great extent what the respondents really denote and mean.

Moreover, **in a research in ministerial training like the present one, absolute objectivity is not attainable**; therefore, attempts to approach objectivity via quantitative procedures are largely illusory. The subjective beliefs, judgments, experiences, and values of individuals and groups, combined, are important and valuable; therefore, they ought to be collected, studied, and learned from. In this regard, qualitative research is more congruent with the realities most often of interest to theological study than the logical positivism of quantitative research.

It is generally believed that **the qualitative-oriented research provides significance to the actual perspectives and experiences of people**. The researcher intends to conduct structured interviews and enable the respondents to reflect on, describe, and discuss their own perspectives and experiences regarding the various factors contributing to the construction of a training programme. It is particularly aimed at discerning how far the practitioners of those programmes are participative in their programmes and personally aware of the various socio-political factors that affect their programmes. In turn, it is also intended to discover how responsive the participants are and in what ways in their daily lives they respond to the socio-political factors of the society. It is especially important to observe the ways in which the different respondents make sense of their specific views, reflecting their own lives. In the research, therefore, the experiences and perspectives of the practitioners²¹ are thrashed out. Likewise, throughout the interviews and the review of the related literature, the personal insights and reflection of the researcher serve as the key instruments to assist him in his analysis and interpretation of the responses.

One of the qualitative approaches is descriptive and inferential research. According

21. The term 'practitioners' refers to all parties related to a training programme, like the organisers, the trainers, the trainees and others.

to Krathwohl as recorded by Aukerman, "Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer questions... about the current status of the situation under study".²² Agreeably, **the present study includes descriptions, judgments, and evaluations, which in turn ascertain the dependability of the findings and recommendations** emerging from it.

It is planned in the study, to take note of the respondents' evaluation of the training programme with which they identify. Further, the insights and inferences of the respondents and the researcher in the study will contribute to the revival of the training programmes as well as to the innovation of new programmes that are more viable to the socio-political factors. Thus, the present theological research follows qualitative methodology, and intends to pioneer new ground.

1.3.3 The disadvantages of using the qualitative-oriented research method

The qualitative research method does not fully escape the issue of interpretation and it can, therefore also be reductionistic and in need of and reliant on interpretation. Moreover, looking at the character of interpretation, the qualitative-oriented research method can also be very subjective. This is especially true when the present research is based mainly on the experiences and the socio-political contexts of the researcher and his respondents. It is virtually impossible for the researcher to enter the field of research without any presuppositions and prejudices.

Nevertheless, reviewing the pros and cons of using the qualitative-oriented research, the researcher is convinced that the advantages of using the qualitative method prevail over the disadvantages. **Consequently, the researcher has decided to bring into play the qualitative-oriented research method largely in studying the topic.**

The researcher, however, does not intend placing the different methods, namely the

22. J. H. Aukerman, *Writing guide, chapter-1, Philosophy of Research*, (16 October 2004).

qualitative and the quantitative, in opposition to each other. They can be to some extent, complementary and can reinforce each other. It will probably be necessary for the research at some stage to bring into play some simple statistics. For example, if and when we state at a stage in the research that many feel that the training programme is not in accordance with their social-political climate, we base such a statement on the opinion of the (statistical) majority of the respondents.²³

1.4 The practical theological approach

The study opts for a **practical theological** methodology with a qualitative-oriented research. Heyns and Pieterse describe the task of practical theology as “...to develop its own practical theological theories that function in practice, evaluate these theories and if necessary evolve new theories for praxis... based on empirical studies”.²⁴ This requires that **practical theology focuses on day-to-day experiences of people**. We can say that all scientific work of practical theology builds on ordinary experiential processes, but it is monitored and evaluated in a differentiated way. It integrates theory and praxis, and is an experientially based method of theological reflection.

Contemporary practical theologians like Groome and Tracy too have carefully discovered that human experience and historical process as vital sources for theology. As perceived by Barbara, “According to Imbelli and Groome (1992), the major methodological shift in the twentieth century was toward theological inquiry that grounds itself in the human experience of the persons and communities doing theology...”.²⁵ Barbara sees Tracy's contemporary theology too calling for a critical correlation between the Christian tradition and contemporary understandings of human existence.²⁶ He believes that Tracy has set forth this as the basic task of any contemporary theology and the general characteristic of all theological models. Agreeably, Barbara affirms that,

23. Here, the statistical majority qualifies the programme and contributes to the research. (As we know, not even gold is 100% pure, though it is refined repeatedly).

24. L. M. Heyns & H. J. C. Pieterse, *A primer in Practical Theology*, 1990, p. 6.

25. F. Barbara, *A theological method for adult education rooted in the works of Tracy and Lonergan*, Winter, 2000, <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3783/is_200001/ai_n8881129> (17 September 2005).

26. F. Barbara, *op. cit.*, (17 September 2005).

... pastoral theology, is a mutually interpretive, critical, and transforming conversation between the Christian tradition and contemporary experience. Historical, hermeneutical, and socio-cultural analyses are integral to this method of theology.²⁷

This implies that the Christian tradition, personal experience, the sociopolitical life-situation and the institutional context of ministry are some of the important sources to practical theological research. Moreover, in the biblical record of Christ's life and his ongoing work in the Spirit, the church continues to experience God fulfilling God's liberating principles in the socio-political contexts of God's people.²⁸ This is why Scott in his article on 'The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis' stresses that, "Theological method, therefore, is a dynamic process of applying eschatological ideals within the mission of the Church, as also informed by critical dialogue with secular sources of knowledge".²⁹

Moreover, the research examines some religious actions scientifically, for example, the tasks of the church, evangelism, mission, worship services, prayer, Bible-study, preaching, team ministry, retreats and pastoral care. According to Heyns and Pieterse, "Practical Theology is one of the fields of theological study which focuses on people's religious actions".³⁰ These religious practices are also part of the concerns of the theological training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese. Thus, common concerns are at issue and inquiry.

1.5 The two major stages in the present research

The present practical theological research undertakes the following two major stages:

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27. F. Barbara, *A theological method for adult education rooted in the works of Tracy and Lonergan*, (17 September 2005).
 28. Mt 5:27ff, Acts 2:16ff, vs. 42-45;
 29. H. J. Scott, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis*, December 2002, <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3817/is_200212/ai_n9153649> (17 September 2005).
 30. L. M. Heyns & H. J. C. Pieterse, *A Primer in Practical Theology*, 1990, p. 6.

Stage-1: A Study of the problem

At the initial stage of the research, the researcher intends identifying the recent socio-political factors that have an effect on people in South India today. It is also anticipated that the researcher will be able to identify the promoted theories³¹ that exist among those who are involved in the training programmes, on the relationship between the socio-political factors and training programmes. Such accepted theories will be formulated according to the existing information from the preliminary interviews, reading of related literature, and the researcher's insights, intuition and convictions. It is expected that these theories will assist the researcher to establish some questions that may be used as a tool during the semi-structured interviews, to collect the data regarding the research problem.

Stage – 2: The empirical research

In the second stage of the research, the researcher intends conducting semi-structured interviews with those who are involved in training programmes, to scrutinise the perceptions and experiences of the members of the diocese on socio-political factors. He will examine the collected data, to determine the connection between the training programmes and socio-political factors. It is expected that this approach will help him to evaluate the socio-political viability of the training programmes, using the 'puzzle-solving'³² method. A few guidelines will also be devised towards shaping the training programmes of the diocese to become more relevant to their socio-political contexts. It is hoped that these guidelines will encourage others to construct new and more relevant training programmes for the CSI Kanyakumari diocese and address their respective contemporary socio-political contexts in South India in a worthwhile manner.

31. 'Promoted theories' are some presuppositions or assumptions meant for the initiating of discussions with the respondents during the semi-structured interviews.

32. 'Puzzle-solving method' will be delineated in chapter 3.

CHAPTER - II
**PRELIMINARY INTERVIEWS AND
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Introduction

The outset of this chapter specifies the preliminary interviews, leading to a description of the key concepts of the title of the research.¹ Subsequently, the various socio-political factors that affect the members of the contemporary CSI Kanyakumari diocese are sketched. This information has been drawn from the preliminary interviews and the critical review of related literature. The researcher has further acquired and depicted preliminary information on the various components of the training programmes from some publications and reports of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese. Eventually he infers some connections between the different components of training programmes and socio-political issues, which in turn determine the viability of the programmes to the socio-political factors. At the zenith, a questionnaire is set up for the proposed semi-structured interviews of the subsequent empirical research.

Hence, the present chapter is formed systematically in the following order:

- Step-1: Describing preliminary interviews.
- Step-2: Describing the key word, 'the Church'.
- Step-3: Describing the key words, 'the CSI Kanyakumari Diocese'.
- Step-4: Describing the key word, 'training'.
- Step-5: Describing the 'training of the members of the CSI Kanyakumari Diocese'.
- Step-6: Introducing 'a few training programmes presented to the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese'.
- Step-7: Describing the key words, 'socio-political factors'.
- Step-8: Describing the link between 'the Church and socio-political factors'.
- Step-9: Outlining the relationship between socio-political factors and the different components of the training programmes of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese.
- Step-10: Noting the existing promoted theories regarding the training programmes, relevant to the socio-political context of the contemporary diocese.
- Step-11: Constructing the questionnaire for semi-structured interviews.

1. 'Socio-political factors and the training of the members of the Church of South India'.

2.1 Preliminary interviews

The researcher clarified and confirmed his perceptions on the various socio-political factors influencing people in South India today through preliminary informal interviews. Besides, through such interviews, he intended to **draw the opinion of other interested members of the diocese on the major area of the present study.**

Since these interviews were open and informal, the respondents were chosen at random from the organisers, directors, tutors, and students of the various training programmes of the diocese. The respondents included a few graduates of the programmes, as well as a few community workers from the community² where the programmes were located. Some popular informed educators in the social, economic, and political fields were also interviewed. They had been conversant in the socio-political factors of the Kanyakumari district. Nevertheless, the researcher was careful not to control the selection of the respondents. The selected respondents were mainly those who volunteered for interviews and those who were available at the training centres and homes. The researcher made sure that the respondents had been familiar with the details of their training programmes.

The training programmes researched during the preliminary interviews included the Sunday School Programme, the Vacation Bible School Programme, the Christian Endeavour Programme, the Communication and Revival Programme, the Church Workers Theological Training Programme, the Women's Fellowship Programme, and the training programmes at the parish level. Two independent training institutions working in the diocese, namely, the Student Christian Movement of India and the Union of Evangelical Students of India were also inquired.

The respondents were encouraged during the interviews to discuss the significant socio-political issues, affecting their daily lives in the Kanyakumari district. They were also motivated to comment on the various components of the training programmes that they

2. For instance, civil servants of the government and others who work with the non-governmental organisations.

represented; eventually they were requested to relate them to the socio-political issues.³ They freely described and discussed the relationship between each aspect of the programmes and the related socio-political issues. The researcher immediately scrutinised the findings. Thus, he ascertained with the respondents both their strongly felt socio-political factors as well as the pressing need for a study on the viability of their training programmes to the socio-political factors.

It was discovered from the preliminary interviews that there dawned a new climate⁴ in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese, focusing on the importance of the viability of its training programmes to the socio-political factors. Nevertheless, **the present study was found as a pioneering venture of its kind on the above area of study. Hence, the researcher had to rely mainly on his preliminary interviews for the study of the problem.**

To facilitate this initial process of research, a critical review of related literature had also been undertaken at the onset, which broadly presented the recent socio-political factors and issues that affect the lives of the people in Kanyakumari district. The time spent checking such sources, getting more facts and learning about more facets of the major area of study increased his confidence, giving him a firmer grasp of the topic of research.

2.2 A description of the key word – ‘Church’

2.2.1 ‘Church’ – A word study

The ‘church’ is one of the words in the title of the present study, abbreviated as ‘C’ in the phrase, ‘C.S.I. Kanyakumari diocese’ that is a part of the Church of South India.

According to Richardson, “... the word ‘church’ is a Anglo-saxon word, similar to ‘kerk’ in Dutch and ‘kirche’ in German”.⁵ In his view, “Church is derived from the Greek word,

3. For instance, the respondents were asked to comment on topics like ‘aims and the socio-political factors’, ‘organisers and the socio-political factors’, and ‘students and the socio-political factors’.

4. Several members of the diocese had already begun to talk about relating the training programme to the socio-political factors and issues.

5. A. Richardson, *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, 1988, p. 46.

‘kuriakon’ meaning ‘Lord’s house’ - a building for worship”.⁶ Nevertheless, he agrees that this is not the meaning of ‘Kuriakon’ in the Bible; compare, for instance, ‘you come as a church’⁷ and the ‘Spirit says to the churches’.⁸ Obviously, the concept ‘church’ means ‘the people, gathered in a building for worship’. This view is supported by another Greek word, ‘ecclesia’ in the New Testament. Richardson unveils: “In Mathew 16:18 ecclesia clearly refers to the future Christian community”.⁹ Kirkland confirms this, saying, “...it is Ekklesia and means **a called out assembly**. This is the way it is always used in the Greek language. It means an assembly of people who are called out for a purpose”.¹⁰

2.2.2 Church in socio-political context

The word ‘church’ is further explored as an institution, that functions in the socio-political context: Tracing back the early roots of church as *ecclesia*, Richardson says,

... LXX¹¹ uses ‘Ecclesia’ to translate the Hebrew words, ‘edhah’ and ‘Qahal’; The AV¹² translates them as ‘congregation’ and ‘assembly’ respectively. Now ‘edhah’ means ‘to appoint’; it refers to ‘those assembled by appointment’. ‘Qahal’ means ‘to call’; it refers to the assembling community for counsel.¹³

In his view, ecclesia was marked by the Hebrew word, ‘Edhah’. In the P tradition,¹⁴ ‘edhah’ designates the ‘assembly of Yahweh’¹⁵ with ‘Israel’.¹⁶ The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible specifies the assembling of Israel before God on Horeb as the most significant ‘qahal’.¹⁷ The Israelites were socially and politically oppressed in Egypt,

6. *Op. cit.*, 1988, p. 46.

7. I Cor 11:18.

8. Rev 2:1. Historically speaking, until long after the first century, Christians had no church building.

9. A. Richardson, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 47.

10. A. J. Kirkland, *The New Testament Church A local Body*, n.d., <http://www.pbministries.org/Theology/A.%20J.%20Kirkland/a_local_body02.htm> (27 January 2006).

11. The LXX is the earliest translation of the Old Testament in Greek.

12. ‘AV’ indicates the translation, the Authorised Version of the Bible.

13. A. Richardson, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 46.

14. The P-tradition marks the Priestly tradition of the Old Testament. It is a collection of information regarding the beliefs in God and a godly life, perceived from the perspective of priests.

15. ‘Assembly of Yahweh’ denotes God who assembles.

16. It refers to ‘Israel’ who is assembled.

17. Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, volume 1, p. 608. Cf. Deut 4:10; 9:10; Gen 49:6; Num 22:4.

but ‘called out of Egypt’, to worship Yahweh on the mount Horeb.¹⁸ Hence, they believed themselves to be called by Yahweh to react, according to their socio-political framework. Moreover, various socio-political events of the Israelites where they assembled with Yahweh were referred to as ‘Edhah’; for instance, at the giving of the law, dedicating of the Temple and republishing of the Law by Ezra. In such occasions, the Israelites were reminded that Yahweh constituted them as a Messianic community and the bearers of the divine covenant in their socio-political context.¹⁹ Eventually, Jesus specified his disciples as the ‘flock’ or ‘little flock’²⁰ commending them as the nucleus of the Messianic community. Consequently, the early Greek-speaking Church had endorsed ‘ecclesia’ to entitle themselves as ‘the re-constituted Messianic people of God’,²¹ who continued to react effectively to the challenges of their contemporary life-situations. Interestingly, ‘Ecclesia’ had been commonly used in the ancient Greek world,²² long before the time of Christ and the New Testament.

Originally, it referred to the legislative assembly of a city, summoned by a ‘crier’²³. Thus,

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18. Ex 3, particularly vs. 10-12, (NIV). As Messianic Community, they are asked to continue to respond to their contemporary socio-political challenges.
19. Cf. A. Richardson, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 46.
20. Mt 26:31; Lk 12:32.
21. *The interpreter's dictionary of the Bible*, Volume K-Q, 1962, p. 364. Jesus came in the fullness of time, when a Greek-based political culture had already spread across the Mediterranean world and the Near East. Cf. Gal 4:4; Mt 16:18 Though ‘ecclesia’ meant primarily a local Jewish community, it might connote the ‘Messianic remnant’ which Jesus came to call out of the Israel of the old covenant, thereby reconstituting it as the eschatological worldwide community that will enter the Kingdom of God. Here, it can also be recalled that in the Age to come, God will bring God’s justice and peace responding to the socio-political challenges. Cf. A. Richardson, *A Theological Word Book.*, 1988, p. 46.
22. Brown, as evinced by Abrams, concludes: “Thus *ekklesia*, centuries before the translation of the OT and the time of the NT, was clearly characterised as a political phenomenon, repeated according to certain rules and within a certain framework. It was the assembly of full citizens, functionally rooted in the constitution of the democracy, an assembly in which fundamental political and judicial decisions were taken”. Ref. C. P. Abrams, *The Mistranslation of the Greek Word "Ekklesia" in the English and its Ramifications*, n.d., <<http://www.bible-truth.org/Ekklesia.html>> (05 July 2005).
23. Thomas, G. *What is the ekklesia*, n.d., <<http://presys.com/~ekklesia/home.html>> (24 May 2005). In Israel the legislative assembly was originally composed of the elders of each family. Once they sought a king who appointed officers over them, however, the need for an ‘ecclesia’ steadily increased. When the Greek city governments had become too corrupt and oppressive, the Israelites called for an *ecclesia*, an assembly outside the civil authority of the city. If enough people came out and refused to be under the civil authority, that government collapsed. Thus, *ecclesia* was originally a socio-political term. When the disciples heard Jesus using this word for church, (Mt. 16:19, 18:17), they were certainly aware of its implications, relating it to this public authority. Jesus did not wish to use the other terms, such as ‘synagogue’, ‘agora’, ‘paneguris’, ‘heorte’, ‘koinon’, and ‘thiasos’ that meant ‘gathering’, or ‘herd’, as in a herd of *cattle*.

the ‘ecclesia’ was symbolic of the status of a free people, who constantly addressed their socio-political issues. As Thomas puts it, “The word *ekklesia* was a political term, not a religious term. Jesus was the King and the Bible used the term *ekklesia* for a good reason”.²⁴ He implies that **Jesus and the Kingdom of God are related to all spheres of life, including the socio-political factors**. Being the Creator and Sustainer, God is Lord of all, embracing all spheres of life.²⁵ Consequently, God’s Kingdom, covenant, and redemptive concern through Jesus Christ, is comprehensive.²⁶ It implies that ‘ecclesia’ as the body of Christ must proclaim the gospel of Jesus, in their daily inter-personal and socio-political context. It must witness to the Kingdom of God on daily basis.²⁷ Maggay uses the term ‘ecclesia visibilis’ to confirm the fact the ‘ecclesia’ includes all of God’s people in a society, beyond the local church:

The whole body of Christ is to stand as a sign, a visual aid to the Kingdom that has come. ...this body which makes the Word visible is not limited to the local church. The *ecclesia visibilis* is God’s people making the presence of the Kingdom felt in all areas of life, the leaven which permeates all of human activity. It is the church in academia, the church in politics, the church in the market-place.²⁸

2.2.3 Church – local and universal

When Christianity spread from Jerusalem, the church as ‘ecclesia’ acquired two distinguishable, but related meanings: Firstly, being the local church, the ‘ecclesia’ is a community within its local socio-political context, for instance, the church at Jerusalem, Antioch, Caesarea and Ephesus.²⁹ Secondly, ‘ecclesia’ in a wider sense refers to ‘the

24. The disciples of Jesus experienced God’s Reign breaking into their socio-political context in the person and ministry of Jesus. By blessing children and setting them as models of faith, he offers a Kingdom for nobodies. Going through half-caste and religiously plural Samaria, Jesus crosses racial, sexual, and spiritual barriers. Jesus’ teaching of women and acceptance of the poor goes against the culture. He criticises the politics of holiness, which consist of external purity, and He calls both individuals and the nation to change. Ref. Thomas, *op. cit.*, (May 24, 2005). Thomas notes that Jesus’ procession into Jerusalem is similar to Ghandi’s strikes and marches for civil rights in India and South Africa; it was Jesus’ call for the people to stand against corrupt oppressive socio-political systems and structures, a powerful and non-violent force to change the course of history. Though killed, he has arisen and lives as the Head of the church. His authority was recognised by the existing civil government, Pontius Pilate.

25. Gen chs. 1-2; Ps 24:1-2.

26. Jn 3:16, Mt 5:3, 8:11; 28:19.

27. Mt. 4:23; Mk 1:15; Lk 4:18-21.

28. M. Maggay, *The task of the church*, n.d., <<http://www.cscoweb.org/maggay.html>> (7 May 2005).

29. Acts 6:1; 11:26; 18:22; 20:17.

whole universal church’ as far as it existed in various circumstances in the world.³⁰ Paul speaks of the universal Church, being locally embodied by Christians, as ‘one body of Christ’.³¹ Moreover, since the time of the Early Church, churches had sustained ties locally in the society and universally with other churches, particularly with the church at Jerusalem. It is worth noting that they had carefully addressed their contemporary socio-political factors like poverty, discrimination against women, gentiles, and slaves.³²

2.3 A description of the key phrase – ‘CSI Kanyakumari diocese’

2.3.1 ‘Church of South India’ – What is it?

The CSI has commenced and put down its roots in India, rewarding the noble work of the Christian missionaries in South India since 50 with the arrival of Thomas, the disciple of Jesus.³³ Eventually the CSI blossomed as the result of a unique union of three great churches in South India, namely the South Indian United Church, the Methodist Church and the Anglican Church.³⁴ Yet this union is a long historical process that culminated in the memorable event of the unification service on 27th September 1947 at St. George’s Cathedral at Chennai.³⁵ This ecumenical journey of the churches in South India is still treasured by the respondents as one of the greatest miracles God ever did in the first half of the twentieth century.

2.3.2 The purpose of the CSI

The purpose of the CSI is based on Jesus’ prayer: “I ask... they may all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me”.³⁶ In constitution of the CSI, it is interpreted as follows: “The CSI will become a more effective instrument for God’s work... through it there may be a greater release of the divine power of the fulfillment of

30. Acts 9:31.

31. 1 Cor 12:12-27.

32. Acts 2:44-45; 6:1-3; 15:5ff; Gal 3:28

33. M. S. S. Hector, *CSI History*, 1988, p. 1.

34. K. M. George, *CSI of South India: Life in Union*, (1947 - 1997), 1999, p. 1.

35. *Op. cit.*, 1997, pp. 7 -25. Ref. appendix-2, *The development of the CSI Kanyakumari Diocese*.

36. Jn 17:20-21 (NRSV).

God's purpose of fullness of life for this world within all its contemporary socio-political realities."³⁷

2.3.3 Kanyakumari - The inhabitants

The earliest inhabitants of Kanyakumari district were the 'Dravidians'. Around the 10th century AD 'the Arians' from Central Asia had infiltrated North India near the banks of river Ganges in India, particularly in Kanyakumari district is further divided into hundreds of castes.³⁸ The caste next to the Brahmins in the South Indian social hierarchy in Kanyakumari district namely 'Nair' was the ruling class and the principal slaveholders until Independence. The caste placed below Nair in the social hierarchy in Kanyakumari district was 'Shanars' or 'Nadars': "... the low caste Nadar community, which had a long history of struggle against social oppression and economic deprivation... In the Hindu caste hierarchy the Nadars were ranked very low just above the untouchables"³⁹

2.3.4 The dawn of the church in Kanyakumari

Historical church writings of Kanyakumari indicate that the ground work was done by William Thobias Ringal Taube, a missionary from the LMS,⁴⁰ to Mylaudy in 1806;⁴¹ he was followed by Vedamanikam Maharasan, a devout Shivite Hindu,⁴² from Mylaudy and a Nadar by caste, who went on a pilgrimage to Chidambaram.⁴³ He visited his Christian relatives at Tanjore and became a Christian. On his invitation, Ringeltaube came to Mylaudy in Travancore on 25th April 1806.⁴⁴ Soon Vedamanickam had led thirty persons to Christ who later became the nucleus of the church at Kanyakumari. Later on the mission work was shifted to Nagercoil, a central place.⁴⁵

37. J. W. Gladstone, *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 8.

38. S. Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, 1883, p. 302.

39. Truth is a pathless land, *One hundred Tamils of the 20th century*, n.d., <<http://www.tamilnation.org/hundredtamils/kamaraj.htm>> (16 June 2004).

40. LMS stands for the London Missionary Society.

41. S. Mateer, *The gospel in South India*, pp. 19f.

42. J. W. Gladstone, *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 24.

43. Chidambaram is the name of a city in the State of Tamilnadu.

44. J. W. Gladstone, *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 203.

45. The diocesan office of the present diocese of CSI Kanyakumari is located at Nagercoil.

2.3.5 A church emerging from the socio-political context

Since its formation, the CSI Kanyakumari diocese has been responding to a great extent, to the socio-political factors. Devakadacham, the bishop of the diocese confirms this:

From the beginning the CSI Kanyakumari diocese responded constructively to the socio-political factors ... The story of protestant Christianity in South Travancore is the story of the socio-political, religious and cultural struggle. It has been a story of freedom for Nadars from the enslavement and exploitation of the Nairs and Brahmins. It is a search for our dignity and identity.⁴⁶

2.3.6 Towards a united church in the area of Kanyakumari

According to Devakadacham as indicated by Gladstone, “The minority status of the Christians all over the country and the need for localisation of leadership enabled the Congregational and Presbyterian missions in South India to join to form the SIUC⁴⁷ on July 25, 1908”.⁴⁸ The SIUC negotiated with the Anglicans and the Methodists in the district of Kanyakumari towards a wider union. At the inauguration of this union of churches, the South Travancore⁴⁹ diocese of the CSI was formed.

2.3.7 The birth of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese

In 1956 with the linguistic re-organisation of the States in India, the district of Kanyakumari joined the State of Tamilnadu. Consequently, the idea of the divergence of the CSI diocese of South Travancore gained momentum to form the dioceses of South Kerala and Kanyakumari of the CSI on 01 June 1959.

46. The church historian C. M. Agur (*Church History of Travancore*, p. 424) says, “The history of the protestant tradition in this part of India is different from the Orthodox and the Catholics. While the Syrian and Roman Catholic faiths were brought into Travancore by foreign ecclesiastics the protestant religion had the honor of being introduced into the state by one of its own subjects...” As we have already seen earlier, the illustrious son of the soil mentioned here was Vedamanikam who was in a search for his dignity and identity.

47. SIUC denotes ‘The South Indian United Church’.

48. J. W. Gladstone, (ed), *United to Unite*, 1997, p. 203; Ref. appendix-2, *The development of CSI Kanyakumari diocese*.

49. Travancore was the former name of the area, including the district of Kanyakumari. Ref. J. W. Gladstone, *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 203; Ref. appendix-2, *op. cit.*

2.4 A description of the key words – ‘The training’

Recently there have been many seminars and writings regarding the concept ‘training’. The study explores various convictions about ‘training’ towards an in-depth analysis. The word ‘training’, used in our daily conversations, bears an implication of patronising, i.e., ‘something done to someone out of sympathy or pity’.⁵⁰ Hence, some writers propose that the word, ‘equipping’ to replace the word, ‘training’. Nevertheless, ‘equipping’ connotes to the preparatory arrangement, before a real act of ministry.⁵¹

Some educators emphasise that the training must focus on a whole person, including one’s attitudes, values, skills and knowledge.⁵² For instance, to Augustin & Rosario Batlle, “Education means the formation of an integrated personality”.⁵³ Writers with this view insist that a training programme should facilitate the personal, ministerial and theological formation. They replace the term ‘training’ with ‘leadership formation’.⁵⁴ “Training is just one aspect of the entire process of growth in one’s personhood”, argues Johnrose.⁵⁵ Concepts like ‘awareness building’, ‘conscientisation’, ‘capacitation’, and ‘skill-upgradation’ are some of the aspects of growth in one’s personhood.⁵⁶

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50. For instance, those who wish to be soldiers are trained in the ways their officials desire. So, the contents of their training is decided and prepared in advance by the officials. Immediately after training the trainees should walk, salute, talk or eat strictly in the way they were trained. According to this view of training, there is no place for trainees’ evaluation and their free will.
51. Both the terms ‘training’ and ‘equipping’ connote to some extent that the training is held in a place that is cut off from the daily life situation of the trainees.
52. Cf. Augustin & R. Batlle, *Theological Education by Extension*, 1983, p. 6.
53. *Op. cit.*, 1983, p. 34.
54. To Augustin & R. Batlle, this approach will prepare the trainees to lead one another in the services of worship, ministry and mission in the society.
55. C. Johnrose is the editor of the journal, ‘Saarathy’, January 2003.
56. *Op. cit.*, p. 7. Some aspects of training: ‘Awareness-building’ enables people to identify the socio-political issues by themselves; ‘Conscientisation’ stimulates people to think creatively for themselves; ‘Capacitation’ makes people capable by means of information sharing to address the socio-political challenges; ‘Skill up-gradation’ encourages people to take responsibility for themselves to upgrade their skills. Moreover, when the victims of evils are led to get organised and address an issue jointly, they get the attention of the political parties or the government who then come forward to negotiate with the people. Thus, people are enabled to obtain ‘bargaining power’ as another aspect of training. ‘Empowerment’ is another major purpose and the content of training, that is, to make people realise that they can do things by themselves and support themselves financially.

2.5 The ‘training of the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese’

2.5.1 The origin of the training of the members

People in general say, ‘discovery is the daughter of a need’. The training programmes in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese also have originated as the child of a need – that is, ‘the need for training all its members, in their personal, ministerial, and theological formation’.⁵⁷

2.5.2 The nature of the training of the members

The researcher restricts himself to the training programmes that directly or indirectly promote Christian faith and leadership of the members of the diocese.

2.5.3 Different approaches to the training of the members

The diverse training programmes presented to the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese adopted different approaches from one-day retreats to long-term residential programmes. They are presented at different times throughout the year as occasional, regular or in series.

2.5.4 Different components of training of the members

The training programmes of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese seem to regard organisers, aims, curriculum, resources, study-material, feedback, accessibility to training and the students of the training as their important common components.

57. According to a former bishop of CSI Kanyakumari diocese, namely C. Selvamony, “We train our members to respond to the socio-political factors of our society and to express their theological convictions in programmes of social action.”; *The Kanyakumari diocese*, in *United to unite*, J. W. Gladstone, 1997, p. 209.

2.5.5 Different perspectives regarding the training of the members

Training is presented to members of the diocese from perspectives regarding the ministry, socio-political realities, leadership formation and as an alternative system of education.⁵⁸

2.5.6 A shared vision and goals of the training of the members

The training programmes of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese share a common vision to a great extent, towards enabling members of the diocese to develop their gifts and skills and to respond to socio-political issues. They allow the members to live and study in their homes, parishes and on their jobs as a life-long process.

2.6 A few training programmes of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese

2.6.1 The training programmes conducted by the diocese

The analysis of the information collected so far⁵⁹ indicate that the various training programmes of CSI Kanyakumari diocese at present are presented through two channels:

i) Training programmes through parishes, pastorates and districts

Training programmes are presented to the members of the diocese by way of retreats and

58. In terms of a biblical concept of 'church and its ministry', we may describe that these programmes open the door to theological education to all; it promotes the ministerial formation of all members at local parish and at the diocesan levels. It contributes to the various ministries of the diocese. In 'socio-political' terms, the programmes reach people of different social classes and economic levels. It builds up awareness in them of their potential and basic human rights. It also assists them to take decisions for themselves and to participate with others in decision-making. From the view of 'leadership formation', they reach out to the potential and actual leaders of local churches. The training provides them with the information to fulfill their various responsibilities in the church and society. Some programmes are described by the respondents as 'alternative systems of theological education'. They have tremendous potential to promote learning where theory and practice are integrated closer.

59. To get to know the source of this information, Ref. Appendix-2, *The development of CSI Kanyakumari Diocese*.

seminars at the different levels of local parishes, pastorates and districts.⁶⁰

The origin and structure of training programmes through parishes

Since the origin of CSI Kanyakumari diocese, one full day conferences, retreats, discussion groups, and seminars have been organised through parishes. They were convenient for most of the members; for instance, they took place on government holidays or at week-ends. The committees of local parishes, pastorates, and districts in the diocese took on the whole responsibility for the training programmes. They were normally held in buildings where members of the diocese met for worship services.

The curriculum, the resource people and method of training

The training programmes in retreats and seminars usually focus on Biblical studies and Christian leadership. Special resource people are invited, usually from the pastors or from lay people who are trained in theology. They present papers regarding various issues and different topics of study. The participants are facilitated to raise questions towards clarification; this is followed by discussions, often in common plenary sessions. Retreats include new songs, making pledges, promises, and prayers of dedication related to their study programmes. They are held at buildings, owned by the parishes.

ii) Training programmes through various departments of ministries

The Women's Fellowship Programme,⁶¹ the Sunday School Programme⁶² and the Vacation Bible School Programme⁶³ have been presenting training programmes. Since May 2002 four departments of ministries of the diocese, The Christian Education and Nurture Department,⁶⁴ The Youth Department, The Communication and Revival

60. 'Parish level' is at the level of a local congregation; 'pastorate level' includes one or a few congregations who are served by a theologically trained and ordained pastor of the diocese. The 'district level' includes a few pastorates of a particular area of the diocese who are administered by a senior pastor who is called a district minister.

61. The Women's Fellowship Programme is abbreviated as WF. It has been serving as a department of the diocese since the formation of the diocese.

62. The Sunday School Programme is abbreviated as SS.

63. The Vacation Bible School Programme is abbreviated as VBS. The department of Work Among the Youth (WAY) had formed an alliance between the programmes of Christian Education, the Youth and the Human Resources development and Communication. WAY prepared the materials for training through the SS and the VBS.

64. The Christian Education and Nurture is abbreviated as CEN.

Department⁶⁵ and The Human Resources Development Department organised training programmes.

a) The Sunday School programme

The origin and aims

SS with its motto: ‘to lead children to Christ!’⁶⁶ had begun during 1962 in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese. It is a major training programme of the department of Christian Education and Nurture of CSI Kanyakumari diocese. It is seen as character formation centre and training ground for church workers.⁶⁷

The structure and students

SS is held in church buildings, schools, hostels and hospitals on Sundays. The students are of the age from three to twenty years old.⁶⁸

The tutors

The graduates of the SS who joined the Holy Communion serve as tutors. Training has been arranged annually for the SS tutors for a full day. The curriculum of the training includes methods of teaching, the psychology of children, and an introduction to the SS text books.

The curriculum

Originally, the curriculum of the Indian SS of the National Christian Council had been followed in many of the parishes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese. In 1976, the pastors of the diocese introduced a new curriculum for the SS lessons of the diocese.

The method

Students learn by asking questions, having group discussion and by way of reflection.

65. The Communication and Revival Programme is abbreviated as CR.

66. W. Christopher, (ed), *Sunday School Programme – a background*, 2001, p. 3.

67. Committee on WAY, (ed), *Sunday School Programme Constitution and Rules*, 1995, p. 1.

68. Committee on WAY, (ed), *op., cit.*, 1995, p. 2.

They either take notes or buy textbooks for study. Regular tests are prepared for students to review their lessons. Staffs assess students' performance at local, district and diocesan levels.

b) The Vacation Bible School

The origin, goal and the structure

The VBS was introduced in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese in 1962 with the same purpose as the SS.⁶⁹ It is conducted in the same way as the SS, but for a period of seven to ten days during the summer vacation of the schools in the Kanyakumari district.

The students and tutors

Apart from the students of the SS there are additional children in the VBS who come to visit during their vacation and they stay with families of local parishes.

The SS teachers serve as tutors of the VBS. Some of the tutors attend the director's training of the VBS, held in the diocese for a weekend. Immediately after the training, the directors form different teams and conduct the VBS at local parishes in the diocese. There are usually five to seven directors in a VBS team, and one who acts as the chief director manages the training programmes in the parishes.

The method

Songs, story-telling and role-plays are the main methods of study. Study notes, textbooks, and work books are provided for students to complete and colour in. Children enjoy refreshments, love feasts, times of meditation, flower-shows, doll-shows, creative worship services, and processions that enable fellowship among the students and tutors.

The curriculum

Every year the diocese chooses a particular theme of study around which the songs and stories are formulated. The curriculum of the VBS includes Biblical studies, Church

69. 'To lead the children to Christ' is the common purpose of both the SS and the VBS.

history and God's mission. Every year after the events feedbacks and the impact of the training are assessed. This assists with the planning of the consecutive VBS.

c) **Christian Endeavour Programme**⁷⁰

The origin and aims of CE

CE with its motto of 'For Christ and for Church' was started in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese during 1977. Its aim is to enable the youth to understand their Christian faith and to take on greater responsibility in the church.⁷¹

The curriculum and study material

The first curriculum and study material introduced in 1980 for the CE included the biographies of a few of the Early Church Fathers and missionaries in India. It included worship, Bible-studies, leadership training, the discovering and developing of talents, fellowship through rallies, retreats, seminars on socio-political issues and Social Action programmes. Students in general participated in the planning of these activities.⁷²

The method

From 2000, the CE classes have been organised for students ranging normally from eight to thirty-five years. There are three levels of study,⁷³ the Sub-junior CE, the Junior CE and the Senior CE.

d) **The Communication and Renewal programme**

The aims and the target group

Through its training programmes, the department of the CR enables the members of CSI Kanyakumari diocese, for example, the writers, musicians and the drama-players to

70. The *Christian Endeavour Programme* is abbreviated as *CE*. The CE is the training programme of the Youth Department.

71. The CSI Kanyakumari diocese (ed), *Christian Endeavour Guide lines*, 2001, p. 1.

72. CSI Kanyakumari diocese (ed), *op. cit.*, 2001, pp. 6-7.

73. Sub-Junior CE students are below fifteen years, Junior CE students are between fifteen and twenty two and the Senior CE are between twenty three and thirty five.

utilise their arts and talents to share the Good news of Jesus Christ more effectively in the context of the contemporary Kanyakumari district.

The curriculum and the methods of training

The CR assists parishes to organise choirs and presents regular training programmes for choir-masters. Recently a team of writers has been enabled to edit a book of hymns and lyrics for members of the diocese. In addition, 'Desopakari', the regular monthly magazine of the diocese is edited and distributed by the CR. The members of the diocese are facilitated to write news and reflections in it regarding socio-political factors and issues influencing their lives. The CR also conducts revival meetings for four evenings annually during the season of lent. It also stages a drama using modern light and sound equipment for four evenings annually during the week of passion.

e) The Church Workers Theological Training Programme⁷⁴

The early attempts of theological training in the CSI Kanyakumari

Since its formation, the diocese felt the need to recruit, train and station pastors in parishes who are able and capable of equipping their parish members to understand the Good News and respond to the socio-political challenges. In addition, the need arose soon for the diocese to apprehend the spread of heretical teaching by popular preachers. Gradually in 1973 the CWTTP was initiated particularly in response to those who could not join full time theological training programmes in recognised institutions.⁷⁵ Since 2000, CWTTP is administered by the department of Human Resource Development.

The training programmes presented through CWTTP

From May 1973, short courses were presented to church workers, giving special attention to evangelism and dialogue with people of other faiths. Systematic meetings were held for church workers, at the beautiful seashore called 'Muttom', in Kanyakumari. At Muttom, study programmes are now presented to the Church Workers comprising

74. The Church Workers Theological Training Programme is abbreviated as CWTTP.

75. In addition to those who were graduated by other recognised theological institutions in the vicinity.

different categories; for instance, those with no regular full-time theological training programmes, those with basic certificate or diplomas in theology, and those with first degrees in theology. Since 1996, the CSI Kanyakumari diocese began to expose the church workers to the socio-political context while preparing for ordination. They were also trained for God's mission to the hill-tribes within Chennai for a specific period before their ordination. Moreover, the students of CWTP are encouraged to utilise the pastors' library, which was started in 1975 in the diocesan office at Nagercoil.

f) The training programmes of the WF

The origin of the WF and its training programmes

Since the formation of the diocese of Kanyakumari, the diocesan WF began to organise various training programmes in response to the socio-political issues.

The aims of the WF training programmes

The aims of the WF include:

uniting members meaningfully in prayer, service and witness,
upholding the sanctity of Christian marriage and family life,
training women to participate and lead in church and society and
serving the underprivileged and promoting justice for all.⁷⁶

The training programmes presented by the WF, CSI Kanyakumari include homily, retreats, seminars, leadership training, school for the blind, health and care education at home for the lepers and abused women. Some local units of the WF organise possible projects related to the socio-political factors.

2.6.2 Some of other training institutions working in the diocese:

The following are two popular training institutions⁷⁷ working in Kanyakumari district through which the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese are benefited:

76. K. M. George, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

77. More information will be obtained in the later stage of this research, especially in the second stage of the study during the empirical research.

i) Student Christian Movement in India

The origin and structure of the SCMI⁷⁸

In 1895, the World Student Christian Federation was founded in Sweden. The Federation grew strong with the emergence of its national movements. The SCM⁷⁹ of India was founded in 1912 at Serampore in the district of Kolkata, in the State of West Bengal in India. The local units of SCMI are the main expression of the life of SCMI. They are organised in the colleges of the diocese. A number of local units of the SCMI come together and constitute regional SCMIs, assisting each other to sustain the regional programmes of reflection and action. The SCMI has thirteen regions all over India, covering nineteen States with a rich and large cultural diversity.⁸⁰ The SCMI brings all the regional SCMs in India together to develop student agendas and to function as the national movement. The national office of the SCMI is based in Bangalore.

The vision of the SCMI

It is said that, “The members of SCMI aim at discerning their socio-political context and God’s mission. It enables students to be aware of the social realities around and try to articulate their faith in response to the challenges of the socio-political issue”.⁸¹ The researcher feels to a large extent, that the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese, who join the study of the SCMI, strive to relate the gospel to their daily life situations.⁸²

A few training programmes of the SCMI

Seminars: SCMI organises short socio-political issue-based seminars with relevant resource people, running for an hour, in the colleges.

Bible-studies: Regular studies are organised in some units of the SCMI, relating to socio-political issues including bribes, dowries and violence.

Magazine: A monthly magazine, ‘AIKYA’ is distributed with information and

78. The SCMI stands for the Student Christian Movement of India.

79. The SCM stands for the Student Christian Movement.

80. The Student Christian Movement of India, (ed), *The public relation information sheet*, 1996, p. 1.

81. *Op. cit.*, 1996, p. 2.

82. After having served for four years in a leadership formation programme of the WSCF, based in Norway, the researcher concurs, to a large extent, with what the respondents say, the “SCMI has been an effective instrument to equip students to be involved in the struggles for fuller humanity”.

viewpoints regarding reactions to the socio-political issues in contemporary India. It is circulated as study material.

ii) **The training programmes of the Union of Evangelical Students of India**

The origin and structure of the UESI⁸³

A number of local study units of the UESI are organised in the colleges of the diocese.

The vision of UESI

The UESI seeks to evangelise students in the colleges in India, care for them and train them as disciples of Jesus Christ to serve the church and society.⁸⁴

The commitment of the UESI

According to Gnanasingh, the coordinator of the UESI in the district of Kanyakumari, the UESI is committed to:

Evangelism: To present Jesus Christ, so that other students may personally experience a new spiritual birth through Jesus as Savior, Lord and God.

Fellowship: To experience fellowship with all the students by way of study and prayer; thus, to encourage one another in the bearing of witness for Christ.

Testimony: To testify to the truths of the historical Christian faith and to present their messages towards the whole of humanity's life.

Mission: To present God's command for missionary work, and by doing this, to assist students towards discovering and obeying God's will for them at home and abroad.

2.7 A description of the key word – 'Socio-political factors'

As workers apprehending the training programmes, we work for the common good of all individuals in our society. We explore people and their relationships as a whole. We

83. The UESI stands for Union of Evangelical Students of India.

84. The Union of Evangelical Students of India, (ed), *Public relation information sheet*, 2001, p. 2.

realise that the daily lives of individuals are influenced and shaped to some extent by the social, religious, political, economic, and ecological issues of their society. These areas of life do not exist as separate entities, but are inseparably connected in their daily lives. A narrow approach, for instance, limits a health survey only to information about diseases and the possible medical facilities. A more comprehensive approach may identify the socio-political issues like the role of family, the castes, access to safe water and personal beliefs about holiness and cleanliness. It includes the role of the church to caution on the consequences of unhealthy ways of life, to exemplify God's love and to care for the sick. It includes economic issues such as poverty, malnutrition, and health hazards in the work place. The survey will not be complete without attending to the issues of the environment such as the pollution of the environment and the food chain. The researcher, therefore, intends using the word socio-political factors⁸⁵ in an all-inclusive and comprehensive sense. Hence, this word describes the social, religious, economic, political, as well as the ecological issues of society.

2.7.1 The church and socio-political factors

God as the Creator gives unity, order, and purpose to a world of different creatures. Being created in God's image, people exist in relationships - with God, others, and the rest of creation.⁸⁶ Panneberg as perceived by Grenz, describes this reality as, "...human "openness to the world".⁸⁷ Relating this view to the gospel, Bush in his article on 'Transformational Covenant' states: "To be faithful to the gospel the ministry of the body of Christ must be holistic... Anything less than concern for all spheres of life is to misrepresent the all-encompassing Lordship of Jesus Christ over the world".⁸⁸ Thus, we relate the gospel to our daily inter-personal and socio-political context, as we express our holistic or comprehensive faithfulness to the gospel. The gospel initiates us into God's act of new creation and engages us into the ministry of reconciliation of the world with

85. 'Socio-political factors' is used to describe the social, religious, economic, political as well as the ecological factors and issues of the society. Ref. Section 1.2.2, *The Context of the Research*

86. Gen 1:27, 2:15.

87. S. J. Grenz, *Wolfhart Pannenberg's Quest for Ultimate Truth*, n.d., <<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=59>> (25 November 2005).

88. L. Bush, *Transformational Covenant*, n.d., <http://www.transform-world.net/article_read.asp?id=7> (19 October 2005).

God⁸⁹ Johnson comments on this transforming act of God: "... Jesus was also involved in socio-political issues. Jesus was a teacher ...of a *way of transformation*. He ...proclaimed the way of transformation as being a new heart centered in God and dying to the self and the world".⁹⁰ Therefore, church has continued and continues to work within the socio-political context selflessly, through its living unity with the Messiah in his life, death, resurrection and through the indwelling of God's Spirit.⁹¹ Hence, to proclaim the gospel and to be a community of the disciples of Jesus depends on how we live in our daily life-situations as neighbours.⁹² Obviously, gospel does not take the church out of the world but instead calls it to affirm and to enter more deeply into the world.

On the other hand, the gospel does not allow the church to accommodate to the ways of the world. The ELCA's first social statement delineates this succinctly, as cited by Miller: "The presence and promise of God's Reign makes the church restless and discontented with the world's brokenness and violence. Acting for the sake of God's world requires resisting and struggling against the evils of the world."⁹³ Evidently, the gospel not only has 'socio-political implications', but that the very substance of the gospel has a social character. Our response to socio-political factors is not just an implication, or an addendum to the gospel; it is an intrinsic part of the gospel. Preaching the gospel is more than a verbal exercise; it is an engagement, a living among people in their socio-political context, serving God's Kingdom that has come in Jesus Christ.

89. Rom 3:11-12; 5:12. Cf. 2 Cor 5:17-20.

90. L. M. Johnson, *The Quest for Historical Jesus*, 12 December 1995, <<http://mysite.verizon.net/vze7veii/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/questpaper.doc>> (10 May 2005).

91. The intimate relationship between Jesus and the church is like a 'corner stone and household of God' (Eph 2:20), 'temple and God's Spirit' (1 Cor 3:16,17; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21), and 'vine and branches' (Jn 15: 1-8). Thus, we cannot have a general Christology or general ecclesiology.

92. Mk 1:15; Jn 10:10-11; Mt 24:14; 28:19. This makes it imperative to enter God's Kingdom, for a rich young man to sell all that he has to give to the poor, or a corrupt tax collector to go and repay all he had robbed. Mk 10:21; Lk 19:8 Jesus the Head of the Church makes it known that what separates the sheep from the goats is not their ability to spout pious doctrine. It is their constant readiness to visit the sick, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and give drink to the thirsty Mt 25:35-36.

93. C. Miller, *The ELCA's division for church in society*, n.d., <http://allsaintsnet.org/TakingTheLead/div_of_church_in_society.htm> (10 May 2005). Cf. Mt 5-7.

2.7.2 The socio-political factors and the training programmes

As persons, we are social beings. Dietrich and Wielenga states the following “Society is already there, before we are born in it, in a family. The day to day socio-political factors and structures of our society do affect us”.⁹⁴ They continue saying, “By our gender, family, caste, class, and job, we are linked with certain groups of people and distinguished from other groups. So we know persons better mainly from their social background”.⁹⁵ They mean that the socio-political factors influence and challenge us. On the other hand, we are called, ‘the salt’⁹⁶ and ‘the light’ of the world.⁹⁷ Popular educators too say:

... church does not stand above the dynamics of socio-political life; it is an integral part of it, a participant in society. So, interpreting our faith requires maximum effort to understand what is going on in the world today at the utmost profound levels.⁹⁸

Some respondents believe that the socio-political involvement empowers their parishes in the diocese to be the salt and the light of the world. They argue that they as individuals shape their society by their training programmes. They believe that being aware of the contemporary socio-political factors, getting to know the ways they influence our daily lives and being trained to live responsibly in such a context, we can bring about constructive changes in our society.

2.8 The socio-political factors and the training programmes of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese

Linthicum portrays the stand of many churches today on socio-political involvement: “So, increasingly, the church became a commuter congregation with people traveling into

94. G. Dietrich and B. Wielenga, *Towards understanding Indian Society*, 1997, p. 3.

95. G. Dietrich & B. Wielenga, *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 5.

96. Mt 5: 13.

97. Mt 5: 14.

98. J. R. Cochrane, J. W. De Gruchy & R. Petersen, *In word and deed – towards a practical theology for social transformation*, 1991, p. 18.

the city and into that neighbourhood in order to attend that church, but whose lives are lived out in another community”.⁹⁹ He laments that the church does not feel any particular attachment to or responsibility for the neighborhood around it. He reminds the position of some congregations in CSI Kanyakumari diocese. Nevertheless, several respondents talked about discerning and doing God's will in contemporary society.¹⁰⁰ Hence, the intention is to do empirical research to ascertain if, and how far the training programmes in the diocese reflect aspects of today's socio-political problems, and address those issues and problems.

2.8.1 The social issues and the training programmes

The following are a few major social issues as presented by the respondents during the preliminary interviews and as reported in the related literature.

i) A ‘paternalistic dominance’¹⁰¹ in family and training programmes

Dietrich and Wielenga states that the “Family belongs, like the clan and tribe, to the oldest primary forms of social organization”.¹⁰² Children are born, nurtured, are cared for and loved in a family, not only in the relationship with parents, but also between children. These relationships are still strong and intensively extended to other relatives outside the nuclear family. The family in the Kanyakumari district, however, has also been the core institution of paternalistic dominance for a long time.¹⁰³ The eldest male acts as the head of the family and makes decisions for the others. The other males, often also the youngest, join the head to make decisions for the female members. Further, in families duties and rights are unequally distributed. Subordination of male children to the father's dominance is temporary; for instance, till they themselves are in charge of households.

99. R. C. Linthicum , *The church in, to and with the city*, n.d., <<http://www.piut.org/excerptedarticle.htm>> (06 July 2004).

100. This implies that the traditional studies in the SS or the WF reflect the past records of God's action in society; yet, they provide signals to see that the mission of God is still at work in what is happening in the world today. This is what the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese need to discover for themselves.

101. G Dietrich & B Wielenga , *Towards understanding Indian Society* 1997, p. 4.

102. G. Dietrich & B. Wielenga , *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 38.

103. *Op. cit.*, 1997, p. 38.

The subordination of female children and wives, however, is usually permanent. The paternalistic dominance in families causes much of the suffering of women, just as violence to them and the lack of access to resources.

The respondents from the WF, argue that the position of women in society influences their training; for instance, women, especially those with a minimal education, or those from a class or caste lower than their male counter parts, often feel shy while with men at classes and committee meetings. According to them, the organisers and tutors of their training programmes should have considered these evils as urgent matters for reflection and action. In response, the WF seems to include in their curriculum self-subsistent jobs, such as tailoring towards improving the self-confidence and self-reliance of women.

ii) **Castes and training programmes**

In Singarayan's view,

Many missionaries of the London Missionary Society struggled to liberate the Nadars from the clutches of the high castes. The converts from different castes were accommodated within the mission compounds where they could live together, yet they kept different places of worship and were unwilling to have matrimonial alliances amongst them".¹⁰⁴

Some respondents during the preliminary interviews confirmed that 'castes' is still a problem in Kanyakumari. There are still a few parishes in the diocese that hesitate to receive pastors of another caste. This does not reflect the original image of the church as the one living body of Christ where believers with differences constitute the one body.¹⁰⁵

A respondent of the SCMI reported that they addressed castes to some extent, especially through their magazine namely, 'Aikya'. They reported that the curriculum of the CWTTP had promptly addressed the issues of colonialism and racism in the early CSI.

104. This was a statement of one of the respondents of the present study, namely Mr. Singarayan, a patriot in South India. Apparently, many social scientists view the castes-system as a social hierarchy in India. One's status in the society is determined by the caste to which she or he belongs to. People at times either segregate or favour their colleagues and neighbours based on caste, while working together, and while deciding on appointments, promotions, and marriages.

105. Cf. Gal 3:28.

Now, however, they failed to address the many conflicts based on caste and creed. In my view, this signals, to some extent, the need for them to update their analysis of the situation in the light of the changing socio-political factors. Some respondents of the CE say that proper assessment of the impact of the training on the graduates in the light of the burning socio-political issues, such as the castes will assist shaping the programmes to become more relevant.

iii) ‘Dalits’¹⁰⁶ and training programmes

Dalits are mostly poor, agricultural and even bonded coerced labourers. The Nadars in Kanyakumari district exclude themselves from and discriminate against the Dalits. The Dalits have their own places of worship. With the assistance of the missionaries of Salvation Army, the Dalits have organised their own medical, educational, vocational and other institutions. Arulraja is correct when he presents the present unjust perspectives of the Indians in general of the Dalits, saying, “For an Indian, a Dalit is a Dalit, whether Christian or not, even inside the Church”.¹⁰⁷

In the above context, the respondents, especially from the SS, emphasise the struggle for a new just society, based on equality, where there is a justified place for everybody. They urge that the attention of the organisers of the training programmes be focused on the Dalits when determining their objectives. Some argue that tutors are to be recruited by assessing their socio-political backgrounds. According to them, equal representation of staff from different castes will assist in the situation analysis. This will make the curriculum more inclusive of and responsive to socio-political challenges. Hence, the researcher examines to what extent the issues of the so-called untouchables is addressed in the training programmes of the CSI Kanyakummari diocese.

106. ‘Dalit’ is a Sanskrit word meaning the oppressed or the broken or the untouchable communities. The system of the castes divides Indians into the pure and the polluting. One's caste is identified from the prefix or suffix to one's name, from customs, while choosing matrimonial alliance, renting out a house or from one's profession. To assist the oppressed castes out of their misery, already during the British rule in India prepared a list, that is, a ‘schedule’ of the oppressed castes from among the thousands of castes in India. Thus the Government of India Act 1935 introduced an official term, ‘the Scheduled castes’ to refer to the Dalits.

107. M. R. Arulraja, *Jesus the Dalit*, 1996, p. 16.

iv) The discrimination of women (and men) and training programmes

According to the respondents, **eve teasing**¹⁰⁸ increases day by day at homes and in the streets of the Kanyakumari district. On the other hand, there are women who punish their unfriendly male neighbours, by accusing them of eve teasing. When a young woman or her parents wish to punish others, they report them to the police of being guilty of eve-teasing.

Sometimes **women in the Kanyakumari district are discriminated by men**, for instance, they are raped while they are in fields, in offices, or at home. When a higher caste landlord rapes a Dalit woman various Dalit movements¹⁰⁹ deal with the matter. On the other hand, it is more difficult when violence occurs among Dalits and when there are problems within their own ranks.¹¹⁰ Often Dalit women try to conceal violence of Dalit men against them and they do not wish their movements to deal with it. Moreover, it happens that wives beat their husbands, forcing them indirectly to commit suicide, or to disappear from home, as they feel ashamed.

The respondents from the WF believe that proper training in counselling, Christian faith and gender relationships would address discrimination of women, especially violence against women. Others believe that proper situation analysis in some training programmes is lacking. The respondents from the WF feel lament the fact that some of their programmes do not portray essential foci or perspectives on these issues. In the context of Kanyakumari where women are treated as second class citizens, they believe that the issue of the abuse and powerlessness of women must be dealt with as one of the essential focus points in the curricula.

Some men in Kanyakumari keep women powerless. Due to the increase in the cost of living, recently both husband and wife, in an increasing number of families at

108. Men accusing women of being objects of lust and thereby mock and insult them on the basis of their gender.

109. The movement of people of the scheduled caste struggling for their basic rights, including food, shelter, clothing, land and education.

110. For instance, Dalit men acting against Dalit women, or Dalit workers beating up their wives.

Kanyakumari district, went to work and to earn an income for their livelihood. The custom, however, was soon established that the men worked only for a number of fixed hours for a few days, returned home and then relaxed in general, leaving the women to attend to all the work at home again. The work done by women at home¹¹¹ is seen as secondary. In addition, some men in the Kanyakumari district spend a lot of their income on alcohol, tobacco, and gambling, while women on their own take care of the living standard of the household. This attitude of the men causes their children to suffer from malnutrition and a decline in morality. In the researcher's view, this also paves the way towards women and children suffering impoverishment. Moreover, in parishes too, women do a lot of the work for practical arrangements; for instance, preparation for guests, cleaning and decorating the places of worship, and collecting funds for ministries and missionary work. Yet, according to some members of the diocese, they are neither fully recognised, nor elected to serve on committees where decisions are made.

Some respondents are of the opinion that training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese generally do not include the above issues in their curricula and tutors' guide. Others point out that the departments of the WF and SS offer leadership programmes towards awareness building and empowerment of women. Some of them believe that proper leadership training for male youth and elders in the church will enable them to appreciate women and provide equal opportunities to them.

Some respondents commented that women were denied access to resources, thus leaving them powerless. The struggles of the peasants in the Kanyakumari district have recently demanded land to the tillers. In response, territories as property are recorded to the tillers, but not in the name of the women who labour in the land. The social analysis by Dietrich and Wielenga reveal: "They didn't train women to raise the question of ownership of land for them. This meant: the most involved agricultural labourers were excluded from any share and control of the resources of land and water".¹¹² The researcher shares the opinion of some respondents that the entitlement of women for land would have given

111. For instance, cooking, cleaning, washing, bathing and caring for children are always regarded as 'women's work', in addition to their daily work out in the fields.

112. G. Dietrich and B. Wielenga, *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 227.

them better protection against domestic violence, including the option of separating from violent husbands, at least for a while. Others commented on the masculine desire to keep for themselves the power that money represents. An organisation namely 'Family Care International' sums up the above discussion: "Poverty, cultural traditions, and national laws restrict women's access to financial resources and inheritance in the developing world. Without money, they cannot make independent choices about their health or seek necessary services".¹¹³

Some respondents are of the opinion that systematic situation analysis and the exploring of the backgrounds of the landless, the Dalits and the plight of women will make a difference in the effectiveness of the programmes.

v) **The abuse of alcohol and training programmes**

During the preliminary interviews, some respondents reported that many in the Kanyakumai district abuse alcohol, due to various reasons.¹¹⁴ Parents who abuse alcohol generally do not supervise and guide their children in choosing their friends and careers. When their children get in trouble, they fail to counsel them. Consequently, others gradually mislead and deceive their children, who too in turn begin to abuse alcohol.¹¹⁵

Emphasising on the benefits of the practitioners of training programmes working hands in gloves with community based organizations, Costa writes: "... working together with community-based organisations allows scholars both to share their ideas and knowledge with groups and individuals outside ...and to test their theories against what they encounter in the "real world."¹¹⁶ Some trainers, for instance, in the CWTTP and the CR,

113. Family Care International, *Safe Motherhood: A matter of human rights and Social Justice*, 1998, <http://www.safemotherhood.org/facts_and_figures/human_rights.htm> (18 May 2004).

114. For instance, they drink as a matter of status, for health reasons, to forge friendships, as entertainment, taking examples from television programmes and films, to forget poverty and because of unemployment and loneliness.

115. S. Amirtham and S. Israel, *Combat alcoholism*, 1982, p. 22. They also say: "Abusing alcohol makes people lazy, cynic, weak and ill. They are accused, unloved by others and so abuse alcohol more and get addicted to drugs, sex and so on. They become unable to make use of the worship, prayer, sermon, teachings and ministries of the church".

116. L. M. Costa, *Activist intellectuals: Scholar- NGO interfaces in Thailand's civil society*, February 6, 2006, <<http://www.asiasource.org/asip/costa.cfm>> (10 February 2006).

are concerned about this issue, but their curricula still need to include programmes that address the abuse of alcohol. Others propose new programmes, including Christian counselling, vocational guidance, and Christian ethics, hoping to assist the members of the diocese to address these issues.

vi) Luxury, licentious life, and training programmes

The respondents declare that the spirit of consumerism drives several members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese to luxurious and licentious life styles. For instance, it is now a custom in some families that the bride donates one kilogram of golden jewels as a dowry.¹¹⁷ Others are forced by members of the extended families of the bridegroom to do the same. On the other hand, some borrow money with a high interest to build huge houses to increase their social status. Others dream and work only for their vested interests; they regard their individual opportunism higher than inter-dependency. Some view the above situations as promoting jealousy, evil competition and crime; it causes some members of the diocese to become poorer. They also claim that it does not encourage the members of the diocese to set good examples or establish role models to others in society. It is contrary to the Christian spirit of simplicity, modesty and generosity towards people who suffer.

Some members of CSI Kanyakumari diocese expect their training programmes to use creative resources to emphasise the significance of inter-dependency. Others hope that the programmes would enable members to balance their materialistic needs with other values of life, including solidarity with the suffering, sharing and serving. Training programmes, including the WF and the CE, equip people towards better financial management and cultivate the practice of giving and sharing. In addition, some students of the SCMI argue that it is important to develop skills in analysing their society, which in turn would equip practitioners to address the above evil practices and unjust structures.

117. Members of the diocese who are rich and others who involve in bribes give much money and gold as dowries. This tempts others who are unable to afford also to borrow money for meter interest in order to give impossible dowries.

vii) Violence, crimes and the training programmes

As indicated earlier,¹¹⁸ those who can't afford luxurious life styles are involved in violence and crimes. For instance, the price of one kilogram gold, given as a dowry, is often worth the livelihood of a small family for several years; hence, people kidnap and kill others. Rich members of the diocese and others involved in bribes grant a lot of money and gold as dowries. This also tempts more people, who do not afford it, to borrow money to grant impossible dowries. Some kidnap and murder people to steal their gold. Some men divorce their wives, hunting for other women whose parents may offer more gold as dowries. It is shocking to note the recent increasing trend of senior police and judiciary officials of the Kanyakumari district involved in theft and other crimes, abusing their authority in this field and controlling the public with a spirit of fear. The respondents reported that providing huge sums of money as loans with 'meter interest'¹¹⁹ result in the borrowers being unable to repay even the interest during their life-times. They become poorer and commit either more crimes or suicide; others join or organise illegal organisations of violence.

A few of the respondents appreciated some local units of the SS and the CE that had included this issue as one of the essential foci in their curricula. Others suggested refresher courses to their tutors and graduates, enabling them to respond to the recent trends in violence. Yet others said that regular evaluation and forward planning of the training programmes in the diocese could also assist resolving the above crises.

viii) Migration and the training programmes

The growing governmental and multi-national corporations' developmental projects are mainly introduced in towns. As a result, members of the church migrate increasingly from villages to towns; consequently, the proportion of the population lives in cities grows, and become unmanageable. This puts extra stress on urban areas. For cities to expand and immigrants to be housed, land must be made available. Scarcity of land results in urban land shortages, rising housing costs, slum settlements and a decline in the quality of public services and living conditions. Many become poor, homeless, and

118. Section 2.6.2. vi), *Luxury, licentious life, and training programmes*.

119. 'Meter interest' is the amount of interest allotted to the loan of money per day.

addicted to alcohol and drugs. Some respondents explain how this situation in the slums produces evil consequences including a sense of alienation, helplessness and the depersonalisation of people.¹²⁰

Society must and will develop from one stage of development to another. The respondents were aware that such a transition ‘urbanization is an essential component of development. Nevertheless, they did not approve the concentration of the development projects in cities. The respondents from the SCMI and the department of the CE said that they tried to present the Good News of Christ from the perspectives and experience of these powerless people described above. They aspired as much as possible to reflect in their study material the painful life situation of the migrants. Some made an effort to extend their programmes, as well as to make them more accessible to people in the slums and the outskirts of the towns.

ix) Education for money and the training programmes

Dietrich and Wielenga refer to the Universal declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, and state, “Everyone has the right to education. It must be free, at least in the elementary schools, whereas higher education should be equally accessible to all based on merit”.¹²¹ A director of a local unit of the CE said that education became a commodity instead of a right on the level of primary education, and overwhelmingly so regarding higher education in the Kanyakumari district. Even those who get free admission by the government, as a result of their meritorious performance in their studies are required to pay donations which coerce their families into severe debt. Consequently, those who succeed in obtaining admission for professional studies plunge into corrupt practices in their later professions towards settling the debts of their study. The researcher agreed with a respondent when she said that obtaining feedback from people in the community and following it would assist the training programmes to address such issues more effectively. Referring to their guide book¹²² the practitioners of the SCMI said that the teaching-learning process is not used for profits; instead, it must empower the members

120. For details of such evil effects, Ref. appendix-2, *The development of the CSI Kanyakumari Diocese*.

121. G. Dietrich & B. Wielenga, *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 249.

122. Y. Hajjar, (ed), *Education for liberation*, WSCF books number 5, 1981, p. 17.

to address the problems of bribes and corruption. Others proposed education for liberation and related courses to be included in their curricula. Thus, in this regard, the researcher is challenged to examine the stance of the diocese training programmes.

x) The endless court-cases: A challenge to the training programmes

According to the respondents, one of the curses that has pervaded the churches in South India today is the endless court cases between the LMS¹²³ and the CSI; it unsettles the unity of churches. All types of unnecessary litigation and disturbances have plagued the CSI Kanyakumari diocese, poisoning the life of the churches. Nevertheless, it is vital for Christians in India to stand united, for the Christians are a minority in society. Robinson estimates that the Christians are far in the minority and that, “The rest of the people in India, nearly 85% Hindus and 9% Muslims...”.¹²⁴ This urges the necessity for Christians of the Kanyakumari district to remain united. Moreover, they are members of the extended families in the district and thus, they are relatives. This increases the curiosity and interest of the researcher to find out how far the training programmes empower the members of the church to realise their spirit of ecumenism.

xi) The perspective of multi-religious faith and the training programmes

India is a multi-religious country where world religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism are well established. Alarming, there is a steadily increasing spirit of religious fundamentalism and intolerance.¹²⁵ In this context, some respondents argued that like Jesus the training programmes of the diocese must proclaim with courage and conviction the Good News of God, being the parent of all Indians. According to them, such relevant training will create a climate for dialogue, gaining awareness from their various spiritual resources to sustain their power towards responding to the socio-political factors in their district.

123. The churches in the CSI Kanyakumari were formed mainly out of the work of the London Missionary Society. Those churches joined the union of the CSI in 1947, except for a few who call themselves ‘LMS Churches’.

124. G. Robinson, *My God and my people*, 1999, p. 3.

125. Hindutwa is an ideology, which the fanatic Hindu groups strategically promote today in India, as they dream of India to become a Hindu country. With the resurgence of Hinduism, Christians are often blamed of being exclusivist and parochial because of their western patterns of worship, music and architecture. It probably developed as an appendage of colonialism. The unholy nexus between religion and politics has led to the increasing violence against religious minorities.

According to a respondent during the preliminary interviews, the curriculum of the SCMI includes the study of other religions. They reported, however, that it appeared that their graduates did get along well with people of other faiths. In his view, the overall aims of their training focuses solely on the area of student knowledge and do not influence other domains of learning, such as the students' attitudes and values.

xii) Displacement and dispossession, and the training programmes

Some diocese members are displaced due to programmes of large-scale irrigation, broadening railways, setting up a military base, building roads to a port and new technologies. Thus, the poorest and the powerless pay the highest price for the sake of the development of the others. For example, to the Adhivasis¹²⁶ of the Kanyakumari district, the loss of land is not only a financial loss, but also a spiritual deprivation and amputation. All their precious treasures are displaced; their ancestral sacred places are desecrated, their kinships scattered, mutual support systems have broken down and links that sustain livelihood are severed. They feel many times unable to submit legal documents to receive compensation. A number of women and children of the Adhivasis became homeless and beggars. Their men desert them, seeking their own livelihood.

The Adhivasis are a minority in the Kanyakumari district. Consequently, some members call for the curriculum to reflect this issue in the study books, the tutors' training guides and programmes, enabling the trainees to side with the Adhivasis, towards advocating their rights. Others say that the Adhivasis can be empowered by training programmes regarding community organising and leadership.

2.8.2 Political issues and the training programmes

According to Abraham, as indicated by Gladstone, "Power is constantly misused by

126. The aboriginals, whose lives are inseparably linked to their ancestral land and who strictly adhere to their original culture in spite of socio-political changes around them, are known as 'adhivasis'. 'Adhivasis', literally means 'indigenous people' or 'original inhabitants'. They are about 70 million in India, who are socially distanced and often face violence from society. They are at the lowest point in every socioeconomic indicator.

individuals or groups to dominate, marginalise and manipulate others. This distortion is present in the Church, in politics and in culture in India”¹²⁷.

i) The loss of credibility of political parties and the training programmes

There was a disconcerting question raised during the last elections, namely, ‘can we trust political parties to ensure the wellbeing of the nation?’ Unimaginable disorderly and unsystematic alliances came into being between parties and leaders of various persuasions, and betrayed the trust of the people. Principles were cast aside.¹²⁸ Many, including the educated, do not prefer the strategy and guiding principle of democracy to elect their governmental as well as their church leaders by ballot. They do not regard this as a way towards controlling their own direction and destiny, but consider it a wasteful exercise towards appointing the rich and powerful in authoritative positions, while the masses remain powerless.¹²⁹ Programmes in this context, such as the UESI, focus on life after death issues. Others contend that the UESI aims at guiding the poor and needy mainly towards emotional security and individual mobilisation. Some respondents of the CWTTTP maintain that they endeavour, reeducating the church workers of the diocese regarding the meaning and significance of democracy and the credibility of political parties. Others suggest that it is beneficial for this type of consciousness rising to utilise well-informed resource people in the current socio-political contexts, and to conduct workshops and organise week-end retreats at parish levels in the diocese.

ii) An ‘over-dependence’ on leaders and training programmes

There is a growing over-dependence on leaders. The respondents claim that vital decisions are left to the leaders in the absence of people’s feasible participation in power-sharing; for instance, a pastor who initiated programmes relevant to the life and work of a

127. W. Gladstone, (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 155. Power is necessary to maintain order in society and for development. The powerless are subjugated and exploited. In the development of a marginalised group, it is necessary that it gains power. Moreover, persons chosen as leaders are given special responsibility which involves exercise of authority and power without which there is chaos and disorder.

128. G. Dietrich & B. Wielenga, *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 266.

129. People at home and at the work places are divided by the castes, creed and region by their ‘divide and rule’ policy. Others expect to become relevant by joining political parties. They call the situation, ‘the end of the party’.

parish is unexpectedly transferred to another parish by the whim of politicians. What is more, if the successor does not agree with the previous commitments and ideals, the whole development process is overturned. Others have indicated that unjust policies and precedence were established because of the self-interests of the leaders. Policies must be practical, taken collectively and be made for long terms utilising the available resources. They must address the real needs of people. Even if vital leaders are transferred, others can persevere with projects of real development. The respondents from the SCMI urged that it is the need at present to train people in participating in decision-making. To be effective, some maintained that the programmes of various departments have to enable members of our diocese to develop initiatives towards designing and controlling their future.

iii) Powerlessness of the workers and the training programmes

Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment”.¹³⁰ High levels of unemployment at present seem to be an unavoidable part of the market economy. Unemployment weakens the bargaining power of the working class. In addition, at present in India, all public sectors, for instance, transport and post and telegram industries have been privatised. Private owners look forward to more profit. They introduce more technologies and thereby reducing the number of workers. Even those who have secure jobs are paid meager salaries and, in any case, can be suspended at any time, depending on the whim of the owner. They are not in control of resources and consequently, feel and are powerless.¹³¹

Despite this depressing context, apparently some training programmes either ignore this issue, or focus on the so-called ‘spiritual needs’. As the curricula didn’t include these crucial problems, the respondents lament the fact that the tutors did not reflect on these burning issues towards study and action. A few respondents, however, have pointed out

130. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, article 23.1, n.d., <<http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm>> (12 June 2004). For more details on unemployment and related issues refer to appendix-2, *The development of the CSI Kanyakumari Diocese*.

131. G. Dietrich & B. Wielenga, *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 159.

that the curricula, study materials and tutors' guides comprising the training programmes of the SCMI and the department of the CE, address unemployment and powerlessness, by discussing education, relevant to life and community development, education for self-reliance and self-support, effective leadership and so on.

iv) Violence, terrorism in politics, and the training programmes

Violence at different levels, based on regional, religious, caste, class, linguistic and other differences, has exploded among the people in the Kanyakumari district. The role of violence as a medium of political discourse seems to have increased strikingly since the nation's independence with the assassination of Mahathma Gandhi, who is admired as 'the father of the nation'.

In Kanyakumari politics violence is endorsed by individuals as well as political parties, for example, to avenge enemies, or to eliminate promising leaders from the political scene. Some organise groups of young hooligans for this purpose. Many youths join these thugs because of poverty and they are involved in large scale violence, killing children, and burning trains and buildings. Some politicians and terrorists have a consistent and profound impact on national politics, continuously threatening and killing people in powerful authoritative positions, as well as among the innocent public.

This dire situation calls for immediate reaction from the training programmes in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese. Some members of the diocese, being aware of the consequences of this increasing violence in India, contend that it is important to cultivate community values for living, such as tolerance and solidarity. They propose urgently that the training programmes focus primarily on these human and social values.

2.8.3 Economic issues and the training programmes

i) Impossible dowries and the training programmes

Impossible dowries lead to enduring bitterness and divisions among families in the Kanyakumari district, especially among those with an elevated status, for example,

doctors, teachers, lawyers and pastors. The respondents of the CE, the WF and the SCMI uttered that since this has become the order of the day, those who can not afford to save money for dowries experience hardships, suffering and poverty. They are even forced to sell their lands, homes, and properties to be able to grant dowries.

ii) Bribes, corruption and the training programmes

This following claim is valid: “Bribes and corruption seems the order of the day. Corruption spreads fast in government offices”.¹³² Most of our politicians serve mainly their own dependents. They detest approaching people to deal with their problems, except at election times when they seek votes. People in search of their rights, approach politicians repeatedly with the help of associates close to the leaders and with large sums of money as bribes, but they are brought to a standstill and they are deceived. Some diocese members have recounted stories how school and college officials, starting from the nursery level, demanded huge sums of money as bribes and pay off grants from people to acquire admission or appointments.

Unfortunately, corruption has also taken control of the churches and it manifests in the daily lives of the members, as well as in the educational, medical, industrial, and other institutions of the diocese. Even as the election of the highly spiritual office of the bishop takes place, candidates spend a lot of money. Hectic activities, canvassing and promising favours have become a necessity to win an election.

iii) Disparity between urban and rural parishes, and the training programmes

Members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese in urban areas are generally educated and employed. Many of them serve on the various diocese boards and committees. They maintain active parish communication facilities with the head office of the diocese. These advantages, however, contributes to the urban parishes becoming richer and, consequently, they benefit more than the rural parishes.

Some respondents are keen to obtain relevant theological orientation in their training

132. F. Hranhuma & S. C. H Kim, *The Church in India: its mission tomorrow*, 1996, p. 15.

programmes; for instance, comprehension of liberation theology. According to them, this will enable members of the diocese to seek ways of bridging the economic gap between the urban and rural parishes in a gradual way. It is important to other people that the curriculum of a relevant training programme reflects these economic issues, and that the tutors are exposed to various forms of liberation theology that have emerged from different global contexts. Other respondents have recommended that the training programmes would include creative and contextual study material in their curricula, hoping that this would value the spirit of equality and community life in the diocese.

iv) The current monopolising and alienating trends of the mass media today

The media in South India is monopolistic, accumulating, and assigning vast communication power to a few people. Consequently, the right to information and the role of public opinion has given way to commercial considerations; for instance, multi-national corporations in cooperation with the government spend money on advertisements, increasingly selling new commodities. Music, sports and arts are used to underscore their messages. Wielenga and Dietrich reveal the following:

A dangerous weapon of capital is the persuasive power. It appeals to hidden desires in our soul, manipulates them promising to satisfy these desires. So even in small huts we find people buying on loan with high interest, color televisions full of commercial advertisements.¹³³

Some members of the diocese explain that the multi-national corporations employ psychologists to find out how to focus on our hidden desires; for example, sexual desires are manipulated to seduce us to buy a motor-bike or a car. They appeal to our dreams of freedom and satisfaction, or they tickle our desire to be in a position to be envied by others, or be the regarded as most important persons. Moreover, Christians in India generally feel that their convictions in the media are rejected owing to the resurgence of Hinduism. Yet, others believe that if the training programmes in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese continually identify and actively respond to the various socio-political issues, the media in India will be compelled to present Christian views and role models too.

133. G. Dietrich & B. Wielenga, *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 266.

The impact of the monopolising trend of media is obvious: Several members are shaped as passive recipients. They are made objects on the receiving end of messages and advertisements aimed at by those in power. They are not enabled to live as subjects who decide and work together in partnership. Discussing this issue, some members argue that collective methods of making curriculum and participatory methods of learning in the training programmes can certainly address this situation.

v) Globalisation¹³⁴ and the training programmes

Jothi claims the following regarding globalisation: “Globalization increases trade, new technologies, foreign investments, media and internet connections. It offers choices for people to enrich their lives and to eradicate poverty in the 21st century. It enables a shared commitment towards development”.¹³⁵ Some people in the Kanyakumari district disagree, stating that all this sounds like a pie, but still in the sky. According to them, the harms and insecurities caused by globalisation are horrific. Jothi, however, agrees with these critics, disclosing the following:

Globalization was earlier the colonialism. It is a take over of the rights of citizens by corporation. It dismantles the structures and rights of the states that are responsible to protect people. Through internet, it is concentrated on the rich. Moreover, the growing travel spread AIDS. It serves profit, demoralizing our value system like mutual trust and concern for the weak. Instead, it cultivates an antisocial value, ‘consumerism’. It misguides habits, lifestyle, attitude to possessions and interpersonal relationships.¹³⁶

Some members of the diocese have reported that the SCMI had included the issue of globalisation in its study material. Hence, it will be interesting to examine closely the endeavour of the various training programmes regarding globalisation.

134. The respondents in general explain that globalisation as a cultural process generating a common (universal) set of values. In it one dominant culture from Europe or North America with political power brings all other cultures in line with its own norms and patterns, resulting in erosion of the traditional culture.

135. M. Jothi, *Globalization and Freedom*, Journal of theological reflection, Vidya jothi 2003, p. 15.

136. *Op. cit.*, 2003, p. 16. Ninety-five percent of the 16,000 HIV people infected every day reside in developing countries.

2.8.4 Ecological issues and the training programmes

i) Giving priority to renewable energy

We rely daily on fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas for an ever-increasing supply of energy in our kitchens, industry and for transport. Members of the diocese are aware of the fact that these sources are non-renewable and limited, and that they cause severe pollution, which becomes a heavy burden. Others say that modern agriculture in Kanyakumari drains the environment beyond its regenerative capacity by using chemical fertilizers and pesticides; it destroys eco-systems for the sake of large-scale operations. On the one hand, this results in the rising costs of inputs and, on the other, declining productivity. This also affects the physical and mental health of people. Some respondents of the preliminary interviews explained that it was a contradiction that some training programmes had underscored stewardship and yet not considered these issues.

Some of the WF and the CE respondents state that receiving systematic and frequent feedback on these crucial issues will assist them. They state the following: “Receiving feedback systematically and frequently will assist the members of the diocese to be aware of this issue and give priority in their day to day life to renewable energy”.

ii) The facing of other eco-crisis and the training programmes

Owing to natural disasters such as long droughts and floods, some farmers in the Kanyakumari district have experienced severe loss of livelihood. In the past, those who had become redundant in agriculture obtained other jobs. At present, neither capital-intensive industries, nor the service sector can create job opportunities on a scale large enough. This forces people to become unemployed and causes the abuse of alcohol and drugs; poverty forces them to migrate to the cities and, consequently, they get involved in crime and acts of violence. The poor are also the first victims of the pollution of air and water, and of deforestation, floods and droughts. Hazardous waste is dumped near the living quarters of the poor, where they are forced to live. Moreover, some Christians have lamented the fact that ‘ecological movements’ in South India ignored socio-political problems; for instance, they have demanded the closure of the polluting industries. The

question has arisen, however, who would provide other jobs to the workers of these industries. In their view, many members of these ecological movements are a part of the upper class or caste.

Some trainers and trainees of the diocese discuss the ecological crises and their consequences. Others reflect on a safe environment and peaceful development. In addition, others beseech strategic training to obtain the attention of the government regarding these ecological crises.

iii) Space for people to develop

People need space to interact, rest to organise their lives and to live with dignity. Children need space to play, develop their bodies and to learn. Some members of the diocese report the ruthless denial of space to powerless people in the name of ‘development’ and ‘modernisation’. Capital interests push for expansion of the ‘infrastructure’, such as roads, harbors and airports, towards facilitating international trade in the context of globalisation policies. Multi-national corporations buy land for new industrial projects, such as the manufacturing of cars. People living on and off these lands lose their livelihood and have to move to slums. The rich claims space for lavish bungalows, luxury housing colonies, posh shopping complexes, parking spaces, and cricket courses. They buy land with their ‘money power’. They subvert and change ‘ceiling laws’ with their political influence and remove all barriers in their way.

Some members of the diocese feel strongly that the above situation calls for an urgent attention and a daily response from the members of the diocese. Yet, they feel distressed that some training programmes do not relate these issues to their curricula and study material.

2.8.5 The threatening diseases and training programmes

Members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese are threatened by chronic diseases, such as AIDS, cancer and diabetes. These are family problems. If a member is lost, the whole

family suffers. It influences the basic freedom of children to study and play, forcing them to look after their parents and elders who suffer. Thus, children are forced to be involved in labour, manufacturing bricks and matches, breaking stones, cleaning tables at hotels and baking cashew nuts, to earn money to care for other people in need.

The victims of chronic illness are left alone as individuals to cope with their diseases as if it is a private struggle for survival. Some training programmes have responded to this situation just to support praying for the healing of these ill individuals. Others claim that most health problems are caused by poverty. They urge that tutors' guides and study material should include these analyses. Others stated that some programmes only remain faithful to the original curriculum that neglects issues such as globalisation and the outbreak of threatening diseases; the changing life-situations, however, call for a continued reformulation of the curricula and learning sources.

2.9 Some conclusions from the links between socio-political factors, and the different components of the training programmes

After taking into account the above points of view of the respondents of the preliminary interviews and taking into consideration other convictions from related literature, the conclusions drawn so far are listed below. They are put together in categories under the major areas of the relationship between the socio-political factors and the training programmes in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese. This will hopefully assist the readers to familiarise themselves with the specific field of research. This has also enabled the researcher to formulate some questions as a research tool towards accumulating data during the subsequent empirical research.

2.9.1 Organisers and socio-political factors

- i) The socio-political backgrounds of the organizers, for instance, gender, religious, wealth and educational differences influence students.

- ii) An understanding of the socio-political issues of the study-centres enables the organisers to be effective in their work.
- iii) Staff development programmes equip the staff to address socio-political issues.
- iv) Making organisers' guidebooks to reflect on their socio-political factors contribute to the development of a relevant training programme.
- v) Encouraging organisers to participate in the local social organisations and cultural societal activities of the students ascertains a relevant training programme.

2.9.2 The aims of the programmes and socio-political factors

- i) All parties participating in the designing and application of the aims of the programmes, relating them to the socio-political contexts, ascertains the relevance of the goals to the socio-political Issues.
- ii) When the goals embrace all dimensions of learning, for instance, knowledge, skills, attitudes, imagination, feelings, moral commitments, and values, the students address the socio-political issues effectively.
- iii) Utilising appropriate resources, methods and follow-up actions sustain the fulfillment of the socio-political-oriented aims.

2.9.3 Curricula and the socio-political factors

- i) The participation of all parties in designing curriculum makes the programme more relevant to the socio-political factors.
- iii) Sufficient consultation with professionally trained experts on curriculum relates the programme to its socio-political context.
- iv) Relating the essential foci and perspectives of the curriculum to the socio-political factors enhances its relevance.
- v) Identifying and relating the students' characteristics,¹³⁷ gifts and calling in the curriculum to the socio-political factors makes a programme effective.

137. For instance, motivation, experience and vision of the practitioners.

2.9.4 The resources of the study and the socio-political factors

- i) Utilising resources,¹³⁸ related to the socio-political issues enrich the designing of a relevant training programme.
- ii) Accommodating resources from people of other religious faiths and community workers in South India enhances the relevance of the programmes.

2.9.5 Study materials and socio-political factors

- i) Altering the reading materials to react to socio-political changes that affect the students, particularly their interest in what they read and their critical ability, augment training programmes to be effective.
- ii) Providing relevant in-depth addenda to students makes the study material more interesting and relevant to the socio-political context.
- iii) Maintaining mechanisms to sustain the interaction between the writing of study materials and the changing of socio-political factors, enriches a programme.
- iv) Setting the necessary standards¹³⁹ for a programme in the light of the socio-political contexts is rewarding.

2.9.6 The accessibility of the training, and socio-political factors

- i) The more comprehensive the training is regarding the daily life situations of the students¹⁴⁰ the more relevant the programmes are to the socio-political factors.
- b) The more the training is inclusive regarding the academic level of the students the more relevant the programmes are to the socio-political factors.
- c) It is found advantageous to organise a staff orientation programme regarding the training curricula in the diocese and to relating the various components of the programme to the student's socio-political factors.

138. For example, people, dialogues, communication tools and physical surroundings.

139. For instance, the lay out of texts, text books and tutor's guides.

140. For instance, the extension type of training and workshops in service.

2.9.7 Feedback and socio-political factors

- i) Identifying and addressing the various socio-political factors, as received from the feedback, assists the designing of an effective training programme.
- ii) Encouraging all parties of a programme to take the feedback seriously and to react to it makes the programme relevant.
- iii) Having effective mechanisms and administrative structures to receive and react to the feedback enhances the relevance of a training programme.

2.9.8 The students and the socio-political factors

- i) The various socio-political issues either hamper or foster the development of the students in training programmes.
- ii) Students feel uncomfortable in discussion groups based on their gender, class, ages, and education levels, because of their socio-political background.
- iii) Designing training programmes relevant to the socio-political contexts, assists students to react to the challenges of the socio-political issues of their community.
- iv) Designing mechanisms of interaction between the students' research material and the daily socio-political involvement, promotes the relevance of the programme.
- v) The students' realisation that it is their vocation to create contextual theology makes their training relevant to their socio-political contexts.

2.10 The exposition of the advocated theories¹⁴¹

The above conclusions in section 2.9 can be formulated into the following promoted theories:

- i) The theological and theoretical orientation and the praxis of an organizer/tutor determine the relevance of a training programme.
- ii) If the goal of a training programme focuses on the practical life experiences, the

141. 'Advocated theories' is another name for 'promoted theories'. Ref. chapter-1, Footnote 31.

- praxis of the participant rather than just on a particular biblical view of praxis, then the programme is relevant to both the biblical and the socio-political contexts.
- iii) Designing curricula with the focus on socio-political issues makes a training programme relevant.
 - iv) If the resources of training programmes respond constructively to socio-political factors, the programmes will be more relevant to their socio-political contexts.
 - v) Maintaining an interaction between the study material and the socio-political issues, makes training programmes more relevant to their socio-political contexts.
 - vi) The amenable accessibility of training enables students to respond constructively to the socio-political factors and contributes to the relevance of a training programme.
 - vii) Relating the participants' feed back to the socio-political factors, and acting on them, enhances training programmes to become more relevant to the socio-political contexts.
 - viii) The theological and theoretical orientation and the praxis of students enable them to acknowledge and contribute to relevant training programmes.

2.11 Constructing the questionnaire for semi-structured interviews

The above advocated theories assisted the researcher to construct a questionnaire,¹⁴² which he intends to make use of, during the empirical research to facilitate his semi-structured interviews.

2.12 Summary

At the outset of this chapter the meanings and background of the key concepts, the CSI, Kanyakumari diocese, training and the socio-political factors were explored. Preliminary interviews were conducted with a few members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese, at various levels, who had practical experience of training programmes; these interviews

142. The questions that the researcher posed during the interviews in order to initiate and continue the conversations are attached in the appendix-1 of the present thesis.

were on the connections between socio-political issues and the training programmes of the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese. Professional educationalists and popular community workers were consulted on the recent socio-political issues in South India, and particularly in the Kanyakumari district. Related literature was studied, focusing on the various components of the training programmes and the socio-political contexts of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese. At the end of the chapter, the conclusions were listed according to each major component of the training programmes. In turn, this enabled the researcher to construct some advocated theories on the viability of the training programmes with regard to the socio-political issues; this assisted the researcher to develop the questionnaire for his semi-structured interviews.

CHAPTER –III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, the researcher introduced the background, the necessity, the major areas, the nature, and the approach of the present research. He also explored the meanings and backgrounds of the key-words namely ‘CSI, Kanyakumari diocese’, training and ‘socio-political factors’. He listed the findings of the preliminary interviews and the related literature, focusing on the connection between the various components of the training programmes and the socio-political factors in CSI Kanyakumari diocese. In turn, he constructed some advocated theories on the viability of the training programmes regarding the socio-political factors. Based on them, a questionnaire was designed as a research tool, to collect the required information by way of empirical research. The present chapter depicts the empirical research work, the chosen research design and some vigorous issues related to it.

3.1 The different phases of the empirical research design

3.1.1 Phase 1: Preliminary interviews, literature, and setting up a questionnaire

At the initial stage of the research, the researcher

- i) explored preliminary interviews;
- ii) reviewed related literature and
- iii) established a questionnaire for semi-structured interviews.¹

1. The researcher held semi-structured interviews with the respondents in order to obtain their responses on the relationships between the training programmes and the socio-political factors.

3.1.2 Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured empirical research was undertaken to discover what was happening in the day-to-day practice of members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese² and in the actual work of constructing and promoting a training programme.³ Hence, during this phase of the research, more attention was given to the day to-day experiences and the views of those who are involved in the training programmes than the opinions of others and of the related literature. The semi-structured interviews focused on the relationships between the training programmes and the socio-political factors.

3.1.3 Phase 3: Organising the collected information

The researcher

- i) organised the transcripts and field notes⁴, and classified the information towards interpretation;
- ii) transcribed and studied the cassette recordings⁵ and field notes.
- iii) compared the interviews with recordings towards the interpretation of silences and exclamations.
- iv) The researcher monitored non-verbal communication⁶ during interviews. He listened to possible cognitive dissonances;⁷ this assisted him to confirm or doubt the expressed views. It also alerted him to exaggerations and distortions in the

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2. Members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese were categorised into different categories for the purpose of research, as follows: organisers, course designers, writers of the study materials, promoters of the programmes, ordained and unordained members of CSI Kanyakumari diocese.
 3. In this second stage of the research, the researcher had to repeat some of the attempts that had already been made during the preliminary interviews in phase-1.
 4. The researcher used notebooks for information on events; the field-notes were typed after the interviews.
 5. Before interview, the researcher made sure that the tapes and recorder were functioning well and labeled each audio cassette properly. Moreover, although it was a time consuming task, the researcher opted to type himself and transcribe the information from the tape recorder.
 6. Some respondents were prone to exaggerate their successes or devalue their failures. The researcher noted the respondents' body language, change in voice tone, gestures, facial expressions, postures, emotions, and general attitudes expressed during the interviews. This information was filed in a computer.
 7. The researcher detected that sometimes non-verbal communication did not agree with the responses.

- stories. Taylor and Bogdan pointed out: “All lie a bit, cheat a bit”.⁸
- v) The field notes included striking problems and challenges. The notes assisted the researcher with the interviews, although some of the respondents did not feel at ease with recordings.⁹
 - vi) An abundance of information was produced towards research¹⁰ and the researcher conceptualised the information towards conclusions.

3.1.4 Phase 4: Interpreting, evaluating the information and deriving guidelines

Bogdan and Biklen explained interpretation as, “...a phase, discovering what is to be learnt, from the analysis of the information in the context in which they are collected. This is a phase when the researcher decides what he will tell others”.¹¹ The researcher concurs with them and in the final phase,

- i) interpreted¹² the connection between socio-political factors and the training programmes;
- ii) classified particular theological and social positions of the responses;
- iii) explored biases, the challenges and the impact of pre-conceived notions;
- iv) evaluated the genre of the presentation of the responses and the findings from the responses; and
- v) derived some guidelines for the practitioners, to improve their training programmes.

8. S. J. Taylor and Bogdan, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 98.

9. The researcher could not record some of his respondents since they did not feel at ease with the recordings.

10. After every interview, the researcher listened to the cassettes recorded. He also read repeatedly his field notes that had information on the various socio-political issues of Kanyakumari district today and the different components of the various training programmes, as described by respondents. He kept track of his findings on the relationships between the different components of the programmes and the socio-political factors. Familiarising with the information already collected enabled him to move on spontaneously with the inquiry.

11. R. C. Bogdan & Biklen, *Qualitative Research Education*, 1992, p. 153.

12. Only a portion of the information was used in the final investigation and evaluation.

3.2 Some issues of the research design

3.2.1 The selecting of a sample of respondents

In a single thesis, it is hardly possible to research all the training programmes and to expect reaction from all those who are involved in them.¹³ Moreover, the interviews were in detail and required a lot of time from each respondent. Consequently, the researcher carefully selected respondents from the various programmes. It was important to find a balance in representation. He, therefore, drew respondents carefully at random from the various programmes in the diocese. For instance, the choice of the training organisation depended on whether many members of the diocese attend the training organisation, and whether it is popular in Kanyakumari district.

The principle applied in the selection of a sample is that of building a pool of respondents. The researcher contacted the directors of the following programmes, who in turn assisted to choose the potential respondents:¹⁴

- i) The training programmes at parishes and districts
- ii) The Sunday School Programme (SS)
- iii) The Christian Endeavour Programme (CE)
- iv) The Communication and Revival Programme (CR)
- v) The Women's Fellowship Programme (WF)
- vi) The Vacation Bible School Programme (VBS)
- vii) The Church Workers Theological Training Programme (CWTTP)

In addition to the above major training programmes run by the CSI Kanyakumari diocese, the researcher chose respondents only from the following popular CSI-related training organisations working in the contemporary CSI Kanyakumari diocese. They have served

13. There are thousands of students and hundreds of staffs in a training programme of the diocese.

14. For a description on 'snow balling model', refer to J. Taylor, & R. Bogdan, *An Introduction to qualitative research method*, 1984, p. 98. When snow falls one enthusiastically catches a handful of snow that reaches one's hands. Then she or he adds more snow that suits with the original snow at hand, until she or he obtains the amount of snow sufficient to the size of the snow-ball she or he intends to make. Similarly, in the present research, the researcher approached the directors of the training programmes to be the respondents. In turn, with their help the researcher included other respondents for interviews.

the diocese for a long time and contributed to the formation of the life and leadership of the members of the diocese:

- viii) The Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI)
- ix) The Students Christian Movement of India (SCMI)

These programmes functioned ‘by extension’, expanding the training opportunities to a maximum number of members of the diocese at their homes, colleges, parishes and working places.

The respondents included all ‘types’ of members of the church, the women and men, the youngsters and the adults, and the ordained and the lay people. There were representatives of all practitioners of the training programmes, that is, the designers, promoters, directors, members of the governing board, tutors and students.¹⁵ Besides, the researcher selected a few people from the different walks of life in his society¹⁶ as respondents; they were to examine the relevance of those programmes briefly towards addressing the socio-political factors. The researcher endeavoured to obtain feedback through interviews with the respondents using semi-structured questionnaires. These attempts would also be helpful to the researcher at the later part of the second stage of the research towards gaining further insights helpful to devise a few guidelines; they were to assist in shaping the training programmes of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese to be more relevant to its socio-political contexts.

3.2.2 The questionnaire for the empirical research

The questionnaire set up from the advocated theories was utilised during the empirical research, which assisted to determine the relationship between the training and the socio-

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- 15. The members of the church who participated in the programmes were called, ‘students’. Being one of the parties of a training programme, they too were also named as ‘practitioners’. The respondents who were practitioners of the programmes had a working or learning experience with the programmes for at least two years. This assisted the researcher to have respondents who could understand and offer the necessary information regarding their training programmes.
 - 16. For instance, graduates of a few training programmes, workers, employees, community workers and others in society, who were positively or negatively influenced by the impact of the training programmes.

political issues. This also ensured the researcher that his respondents understood exactly what he had tried to explore from them. Moreover, the respondents had only a limited time and the semi-structured interview schedule enabled the conversation to flow systematically. It restricted prompt judgments, even if based on relevant information. The researcher could also ensure to follow a standard procedure without inhibiting the spontaneity of the responses. A set questionnaire would also assist future researchers.

3.2.3 The pilot study

After selecting the respondents as described above and designing an instrument of research, namely, a semi-structured questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with a few respondents. This assisted the researcher to investigate whether the semi-structured interviews would find out the respondents' opinions regarding the relevance of the different components of the training programmes in relation to the socio-political factors. It also identified the components of training programmes and described the relationship between the components and the socio-political factors. This was also helpful to design the semi-structured interviews in a more congruent fashion;¹⁷ for instance, the researcher ascertained the respondents' opinions regarding contents of the programmes to be more relevant to the socio-political factors. He also got to know to some extent their views on what factors influences and causes had determined the relevance of the programme to the socio-political factors. This pilot study helped to correct, replace, or substitute the original questions in the questionnaire. This helped to establish the validity and reliability of the interview scheme, before proceeding to the entire sample of respondents. Using these procedures made the author more confident in the continued procedures and methods until the completion of his study.

3.2.4 The semi-structured interview

While conducting the practical theological research, the researcher held semi-structured

17. Moreover, as a result of the pilot study, the questions in the questionnaire could become clearer and more direct to complete the study.

interviews with the respondents using the semi-structured questionnaires. These final interviews were regarded as important because they gave greater clarity on the assumptions regarding the relationship between the training programmes and the socio-political factors.

During the semi-structured interviews, the researcher combined an informal conversational approach with semi-structured interviews. The interviews began with naming each theme of the discussion, for instance, the ‘organisers, and socio-political factors’ of a training programme. Consequently, the respondents were encouraged to react to these themes. The researcher relied on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of the conversation. Whenever responses deviated from the immediate context of discussion, the researcher went with the flow of the conversations. He could usually get his respondents back on track through subtle gestures¹⁸ and sometimes gently changing the subject during breaks in conversation.¹⁹ An open-ended questionnaire, however, had been set up, as mentioned earlier,²⁰ and was used whenever needed. This assisted the researcher to obtain the systematic information from the long and ‘free’ conversations that he had with the respondents.

The replies of the respondents included their views on the following aspects:

- a) The various socio-political factors contributing to the designing and developing of the training programmes for the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese.
- b) The various components involved in the constructing of each of the existing training programmes for the members of the C.S.I., Kanyakumari diocese.
- c) The practically integrated socio-political factors in the training programmes of the C.S.I., Kanyakumari diocese and how they influence the programmes.

The views, experiences and reflection of respondents from other members of the society regarding the relevance of the training programmes were recorded.

18. For instance, stop nodding head or stop taking notes.

19. For instance, saying, “I would like to go back to something you said earlier /the other day”.

20. Section 3.3.2, *The Questionnaire for the Empirical Research.*

3.2.5 The procedure of collecting information

The researcher obtained the information with repeated personal encounters regarding the relationship between the training and the socio-political factors. Although the interviews were held individually at different times in different settings, the information was collected in similar fashions from all respondents, as follows:

The personal particulars of respondents were noted. The researcher explained the purpose of the research; this stirred spontaneous motivation to react. Sufficient time was set aside²¹ for a description of the relationship between the training and the socio-political issues based on their experiences. The researcher tried his best to be clear and precise in his questions. Interviews were in a relaxed atmosphere. The researcher treated the respondents with consideration and sympathy. He expressed his sincere interest in what the respondents were saying, keeping in mind when and how to probe and ask the right questions. All respondents were inclined to exaggerate their success and to hide their failures regarding the training and socio-political issues.²² Consequently, the researcher had to probe for sufficient evidence to ascertain whether they were fabricating a story or sharing life-experiences. As the researcher was known by most of the respondents, honest opinions were more readily expressed.

Body language such as the tone of voice, the talking pitch, and facial expressions were confidentially recorded. The use of a tape recorder by mutual agreement was helpful to remember more information. The researcher took notes of major points and key words expressed by the respondents, in his field notes. This assisted to formulate new questions. This also assisted to check the correctness of earlier disclosures.

21. At least an hour, but sometimes more.

22. This could be assessed from the expression of the words, gestures, emotion, and body language of the respondents.

3.2.6 The genre of the presentation of information

The members of CSI Kanyakumari diocese told their life stories and they mainly reflected on the socio-political factors in a ‘narrative²³ form’. The researcher realised that they were contextual theologies of the praxis model, and were not logically articulated in the manner of traditional types of theology. Using the narrative form of communication, the respondents were spontaneous to recite and interpret their tensions, worries, surprises, disappointments of their experience in training. In Huyssteen’s view, “...narrative theology grows directly from the deep conviction that temporal narrativity constitutes the substance of personal human dignity...it is aimed at the ultimate interpretation of the stories of our lives”.²⁴ Novak, as indicated by Mair goes further to pronounce that, “Story articulates a change in experience”.²⁵ An open and dynamic story-telling of the practitioners nurtures creative interaction with their hearers and transforms reality in and through the telling. Relating their training programmes to the socio-political factors in narrative form is indeed promising change and development in their training experiences. Bevans, as perceived by Moon, proclaims that: “It is through story that the false powers of this world are unmasked and dethroned”.²⁶ The information collected through the semi-structured interviews included both the ‘internal’ and ‘external stories’²⁷ of the respondents. The researcher classified the stories, towards facilitating their interpretation.²⁸

23. According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, “... a narrative is a story, an interpretation of some aspect of the world that is historically and culturally grounded and shaped by human personality”. Ref. Wikipedia, *Narrative*, 23 March 2006, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative>> (23 March 2006).

24. W. V. Huyssteen, *Essays in post foundationalist theology*, 1997, p. 180.

25. M. Mair, *Kelly Bannister and a story telling psychology*, August 1987, <<http://www.oikos.org/mairstory.htm>>, (17 June 2005)

26. C. H. Moon, *Models of Contextual Theology: The Struggle for Cultural Relevance*, The Ecumenical Review, July, 1995, <www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2065/is_n3_v47/ai_17386941> (10 September 2005).

27. The self-description of the practitioners on how they view the connection between their training programmes and socio-political factors is known as ‘internal stories’. The past stories of the connection between their programmes and socio-political factors, as understood objectively from the perspective of the observers in the community are known as ‘external stories’.

28. The author, however, realises that this is not completely free from a reductionistic methodology.

3.2.7 Evaluating the information

The information from the interviews was evaluated with a puzzle-solving approach rather than a critical-rationalistic manner of problem solving. This assisted the researcher to acknowledge his own assumptions and avoid seeking absolute and so-called objective classification of the findings.

Philosophers of science such as Popper and Bartley, as denoted by Huyssteen assert that there is a clear break between critical rationalism and the enquiries of logical positivism in philosophies of science. Advocating critical rationalism, they argue that unlike logical positivism, critical rationalism assists to create possibilities to redefine rationality and objectivity of a reality or fact.²⁹ Nevertheless, critical rationalism has also created problems and challenges to theology, including practical theology. For instance, critical rationalism could not describe adequately the role of rationality in theological traditions as well as in the beliefs and commitments of theologians. It is evident that the Christologies of the practitioners as well as the vision or evangelism/mission of the church do not fully escape from their pre-conceptualised beliefs and commitments.

Pronouncing a comprehensive or pan-critical rationalism, Bartley as perceived by Huyssteen argues that everything, whether it is positivistic rationalism or a personal religious commitment, can still be subjected to criticism and constant testing. He believes that, “Truly critical thinkers may be convinced of the truth of something without being irrationally committed to the specific truth; they should have the courage of their convictions, but also the courage to keep criticizing them”.³⁰ He cautions us against an uncritical adoption of any ultimate commitment as an immunisation strategy to defend our preconceptions in formulating theological axioms. Notwithstanding, in Huyssteen’s view, as a critical rationalist, Bartley had not only adopted empirical criteria for all observation, he also agreed with Popper in formulating hypotheses and theories that

29. W. V. Huyssteen, *Theology and justification of Faith*, 1989, p. 47. Cf. chapters 3 and 4 of the same book. The author of this thesis realises that this, however, is not completely free from a reductionistic methodology.

30. *Op. cit.*, 1989, p. 41.

would be open to criticism and thus to falsification. Hence, Bartley's pan-critical rationalism had compelled him to adopt a view of rationality in which any form of commitment was regarded as irrational. Interpreting his stand, Huyssteen says, "Ultimately, faith is accessible to us only through our statements of faith, and statements of faith refer directly to conceptions of faith, which in turn are rooted in premises and convictions".³¹ He concludes that, "Bartley is trapped to commit himself to non-commitment... cherished with the illusion that the pan-critical approach eliminates any ultimate commitment".³² He further explains that Bartley had hinted the theorising implicit in the theologising premises. Huyssteen, therefore, believes that it is sufficient for theologians to be aware of this, and not necessary to suspend their pre-theoretic commitment. He declares that it is not the commitment, but the concepts of their convictions that must be exposed to full criticism.

Moreover, Huyssteen is convinced that the puzzle-solving perspective of science is suitable to evaluate the study like the present one that deals to some extent the concepts and praxis of convictions and commitment. Hence, he opts to evaluate the scientists and their creativity, using puzzle-solving method. He believes that: "... the problems confronting scientists challenge their creative originality in the same way as chess problems or crossword puzzles. Scientists themselves, their creative ability, are the problem being tested, rather than the problematic theory".³³ The puzzle-solvers, in general believe that scientific thought is "...primarily concerned not with testing - whether as verification or as falsification-but with the capacity of a theory or various theories for adequately explaining certain data and thus providing solutions to puzzles".³⁴

Therefore, the present thesis follows a puzzle-solving perspective of science rather than a problem-solving perspective in evaluating the collected information.

31. *Op. cit.*, 1989, p. 43.

32. *Op. cit.*, 1989, pp. 42-43 (summary).

33. W.V. Huyssteen, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 56.

34. *Op. cit.*, 1989, p. 56.

3.2.8 The pointers

The various theological positions and religious actions that influence the programmes and their interaction with the socio-political factors are introduced in this study as pointers. **The pointers are not so-called ‘pillars’ of truth but rather indicators pointing the direction of the movement where theological views cross socio-political challenges.**

3.2.9 The time and the length of study

The semi-structured long interviews were often difficult to arrange and time consuming. The researcher collected the required information through such interviews over a period of several months.³⁵ In this way, the researcher, however, could obtain required information in a face-to face situation. Nevertheless, there are some negative effects of these long interviews. For instance, changes might have occurred in socio-political factors in Kanyakumari district during the period of interview. Some training programmes might have reformulated their curricula in the light of such changes. Moreover, some values, concepts, and views of the respondents might have also gradually changed. **This has been also taken in to account**, while discussing the practical guidelines after carrying on the first two stages of the present research.³⁶

3.2.10 The dependability and the ethical measures of the study

The purposeful ‘**snow-ball method**’ of sampling in the present research as well as the **description and evaluation of the data** ascertain the transferability of the findings. The aforementioned **description of the method of data gathering** as well as the **inquiry and interpretation of the data** using the pointers confirm the dependability of the present study. The authenticity of the study is endorsed, since **the research was based on experience and vision of the respondents**. Being a qualitative research, the study was rich with details, insights, and extrapolation into respondents’ experiences of the world,

35. The researcher began to collect information for his empirical research since January 2002.

36. The two stages of the present research are shown in chapter-5 of the thesis.

which may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience and thus be more meaningful.

The following ethical measures were adhered to during the research: The researcher ensured the quality of the research, informed consent of the respondent, ensured confidentiality and anonymity, protection of the information from harm and provided feedback on the project to the respondents whenever needed.

3.3 Summary

The present chapter commenced with an introduction to the research design. It moved on to include a brief description on some issues of the research opted by the conductor in the present study, including the sample drawing, the pilot study and the collection of information procedure. The chapter is completed with a brief explanation on why the researcher had followed the puzzle-solving approach rather than problem-solving approach in the present study.

CHAPTER - IV

SIGNIFICANT THEOLOGICAL ‘POINTERS’

Introduction

It is intended to present in this chapter the findings drawn as conclusions from the study of the information collected from the various training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese. This chapter delineated important theological ‘pointers’¹ or theological positions, by exploring the information collected from the interviews regarding the training programmes. The findings ascertain that these theological positions or approaches have influenced the programmes and their interaction with the socio-political factors.

4.1 Conclusions from the responses

According to Taylor and Bogdan, “Data collection and analysis go hand in hand. They are interwoven”.² Patton has contributed to this view, saying, “Analysis and interpretation of information are not neatly separated in practice”.³ The researcher has agreed with these suggestions and studied the information as soon as it was collected. Consequently, he interpreted the information⁴ and identified six of the most important theological ‘pointers’⁵ He examined the responses of the different training programmes related to these significant pointers and drew the following findings as the conclusions.

An overall review of the responses revealed that the training programmes pursued their contents in two divergent and competing paradigms:

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1. The ‘pointers’ are theological positions or approaches, which took into account the connections between the training programmes and socio-political factors.
 2. S. J. Taylor & R.C. Bogdon, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 1984, p. 128.
 3. M. Q. Patton, *How to use qualitative methods in evaluation*, 1987, p. 144.
 4. S. J. Taylor & R. C. Bogdon, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 130.
 5. The pointers identified were the vision of the church, the theology of the church, the task of evangelism and mission, the ministerial resources, pastoral counselling and communication. These theological resources, positions and actions are essentially the different areas of concern of practical theology.

i) Socially oriented paradigm

The training programmes of the diocese, namely the SS, CE, CR, WF, CWTTP and the parish-based programmes constituted a socially oriented⁶ paradigm; and the training programme of the SCMI bordered on this socially oriented paradigm. Practitioners of these programmes opted for a Christology that was personal, contextual, and socially oriented; they regarded Christ not only as a personal saviour, but also as a socio-political liberator who liberated people from these problems.

The socially oriented paradigm was essentially community-oriented and problem-focused. It was pragmatic, providing the necessary conceptual knowledge as well as practical skills and expertise to address the socio-political issues effectively. The programmes within this paradigm viewed the world from the perspective of the victims of socio-political crises, such as women, youngsters, children, the poor, and other exploited groups. They read the Bible and nurtured their faith from the perspective of people with pain and suffering. The aims and curricula of these programmes related not only to the religious domain of the practitioners, but also to all life spheres of influence. The paradigm interacted with the socio-political, historical, and psychological aspects of life. Although the SCMI programmers worked away from the parishes in the colleges, they opted for a contextual approach to theology.

The responses further disclosed that unlike the liberals,⁷ the respondents of the socially oriented paradigm **did not believe that they could usher in and develop the Kingdom of God on earth**. To them, God's Reign included the transformation and redemption of society to fulfill God's creational intent. They believed that they were witnesses to God's Reign together with Christians across the world. As followers of Christ, they saw life as a

6. 'Socially oriented' means relating matters to people's day-to-day life situations in the society. Practitioners of these programmes opted for a contextual socially oriented Christology.

7. The liberals took roots and flowered by the 1890s within American Protestantism in the United States of America, when Protestantism became indistinguishable from American democracy and capitalism. They placed their emphasis on the application of Christian principles to society's problems. Nevertheless, their theology was largely based on rationalism. As Hines presents in his article on 'Evangelicals and the social gospel', "An evidence of this whole concept is Charles Sheldon's book, 'In His Steps' written in 1906. 'In His Steps' said all social problems could be solved by asking one simple question, "What would Jesus do?"

Ref. M. Hines, *Evangelicals and the social gospel*, 06 November 2005,
<http://www.christianchronicler.com/history1/evangelicals_and.html> (15 March 2006).

whole as being subject to the lordship and the redeeming power of Jesus. Consequently, they attempted to bring their Christian faith into their day-to-day lives. Thus, what they believed could be seen in the way they addressed their socio-political factors.

ii) Pietistically oriented paradigm

The training programme of the UESI functioned in another paradigm, namely ‘the pietistically oriented approach’.⁸ They considered Christ as a pietistic redeemer in their Christology, who sanctified them, setting them free from personal sins such as hate or obsessive drinking. They focussed on the spiritual success and prosperity of people. They related largely to the religious domain of the students. Their practitioners were tempted to exclude themselves from people of other faiths, calling them, ‘non-believers’. They were inclined to function as a “separate holy community, not corrupted by society”, as a respondent from the UESI put it. Their desire for spiritual prosperity directed them towards ignoring their socio-political context to a large extent, and not to focus on unjust socio-political issues and structures.

The respondents of both the above paradigms developed their convictions, based on the Word of God and the gospel.⁹ Yet they differed inevitably in their interpretation of some verses/texts in the Bible and in their orientation of theology. Consequently, they had different applications for some biblical messages and commands. They did not perfectly agree on some of their opinions and persuasions.¹⁰ Nevertheless, none of them could claim perfect wisdom or understanding. Over time and continued interaction with God, one another and their life-situations, some of them had revised their persuasions and developed new views and visions.

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8. The UESI opted for pietistic confessional approach in their Christology; they saw Christ as a pietistic redeemer who sets them free from personal sins like hate or drinking. It seemed as if they shifted their socio-political responsibilities upon God, while they were indifferent to or ignorant of their own role in their socio-political context. Ref. V. Karkkainen, *op. cit.*, 2003, pp. 12-13.
 9. They all believed that there is only one Savior/ Mediator and only one Gospel (1 Cor 15:1-8,11; Acts 4:12), that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for their sin so that we might receive the free gift of salvation and become the children of God through faith alone in Christ. (Rom 4:4-5; 5:8-11; 2 Cor 5:14-19; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-5; Rev 21:6 ; 22:17).
 10. The term ‘opinion’ is used in the sense of an individual’s desire or personal preference, with respect (and often cooperation) with those who disagree; ‘Persuasion’ means to have a ‘filled-in, settled belief ‘or ‘full assurance’. However, ‘full persuasion’ should not be used as a basis of dividing personal fellowship with another believer or neighbour.

The interpretations and conclusions regarding the responses under the different ‘pointers’ have been presented below.

4.1.1 The vision of the church and the socio-political factors

“Where there is no vision, the people perish”.¹¹ As the earth’s gravity drags water down the mountain stream, or as an area of low pressure air pulls in the wind relentlessly into a particular direction, it is vital for the church as an organisation or a movement to follow a ‘vision’ that unites its members and directs them towards their goals.

God's glorious vision and purpose for the universe and humankind was unfolded at God’s act of creation and salvation.¹² By his life and work, Jesus declared that God’s Reign had drawn near, and called for a response.¹³ The disciples regarded Jesus as the source of their inspirational vision.¹⁴ Peter experienced a creative vision that inspired the Early Church to be vibrant.¹⁵ Popular religious educators also emphasised the close connection between vision and action; for instance, Freire, as shown by Schipani, portrayed a prophetic church as visionary and dynamic: “The prophetic church, like Christ, must move forward...always in a state of becoming...”¹⁶ He stressed that it was the vision of a prophetic church that normalised the church’s task of training its members effectively.

It became clear from the responses that the members of the diocese had different visions of the church, and their visions of the church determined the viability of their training programmes to socio-political issues.

i) Vision of the church as a ‘Foretaste of God’s Kingdom’

Describing the new curriculum of their parish-based training programme, a factory worker viewed his parish as a foretaste of God’s Kingdom. He stated:

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11. Prov 29:18 (KJV).
 12. Gen 1:26-31 Jn 1:1-4, 14; 1Cor 5:17.
 13. Mk 1:15.
 14. Mt 5:13-14; Lk 11:20; Jn 13:1-11.
 15. Acts 2:14-24.
 16. D. S. Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology*, 1988, p. 9.

Our pastor assisted us to review the ‘**Nazareth manifesto**’.¹⁷ Despite initial resistance, we designed a relevant curriculum. We developed creative study material that helped us to discover and utilise our talents in addressing our socio-political issues.¹⁸ We discovered how to create our own resources towards learning. We wish our parish to grow as a foretaste of God’s Kingdom, like the Early Church.¹⁹

The pastor had introduced Jesus’ statement of God’s mission at Nazareth as a guide for his parishioners to shape their vision of the church as the foretaste of God’s Kingdom. In practicing this vision, they had attempted to follow the example of the Early Church. This had inspired them to engage in the process of designing a relevant curriculum and creative study materials. The parishioners shared their resources²⁰ to discover and use their gifts and talents in addressing their socio-political issues. By way of gestures and voice tone, the respondent expressed the hardships they had to endure; for instance, some of the parishioners initially resisted the re-designing of the curriculum, because they were afraid of the risk involved in opting for something new and creative. Others also feared that the new curriculum would not safeguard their vested interests.²¹ The pastor, however, inspired the parishioners to sustain their unity around the vision of the church and the goals of their study, and won their support for this course of action. Consequently, they took initiative to address some of their current issues, individually and together as a parish; their programmes became more relevant.

Addressing the lack of drinking water in their village, a member of the WF commented:

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17. ‘The Nazareth Manifesto’ of Jesus (Lk 4:18-21) challenged the contemporary socio-political habits; for instance, men treating their wives as possessions whom they could take or leave away as they please; treating children secondary or as the least (Mt 19:3-9;13-15); Roman and Gentile rulers abused their positions and power, demanding others to serve them. Jesus taught others that the purpose of a position or power delegated/attributioned to someone is to serve and not to be served (Mk 10:41-45). He appreciated the faith of the gentiles like the centurion, Canaanite women, Samaritan as exemplary even to His Jewish contemporaries (Mt 8:5-13, Mk 7:24-30, Lk 10:30-37). The risen Jesus led his disciples to follow a different style of life, addressing the challenges of the socio-political issues. (Jn chs. 20-21; Mt 28; Acts chs. 1-2).
 18. For instance, the castes, joblessness, poverty and the abuse of alcohol and discrimination against women (or men).
 19. The parishioners took initiative to set up a fund to support the poor and the destitute. They also organised visits to and pastoral counselling for the chronically ill and victims of dowries.
 20. They shared their views, talents and resources of learning such as study journals, reports, books and digital devices; they extended financial assistance to the parishioners in need.
 21. According to the field notes, they proposed a few topics that could promote their own situation and personal interests.

“When we discovered to view the issue within the framework of ‘**God’s Kingdom and justice**’ we managed to address our problem”. Obviously, using the word ‘Kingdom’ and ‘framework’ she meant their vision of the church. They began to cultivate the values of God’s Kingdom, such as God’s justice and peace in their communities.

Because of their vision of the church as the foretaste of God’s Kingdom, some members of the diocese experienced the **church as a movement that sought unity, crossing the barriers based on gender and creeds.**²² In this regard, an organiser of a local unit of the WF said: “Women are seen as secondary citizens in our society. So, we train them that they may set role models for effective leadership.” She was convinced that if more women shared the leadership in the church on an equal footing, the church would be empowered to address the discrimination against women. Her experience reassured her that the church could contribute to the transformation of society towards God’s Reign.²³

Some practitioners cultivated the **vision of the church as the foretaste of God’s Kingdom in the context of religious conflicts and violence** that steadily increased in the Kanyakumari district. Relating their story in this regard an organiser of CE said:

We held a series of seminars on the ‘Kingdom of God and the vision of the Church’. The recent one was on the ‘Kingdom of God and the Copernican vision of the Church’.²⁴ As a result, we held sports contests and conducted arts and music festivals for the youth in our village at every New Year. Several Hindu and Dalits youngsters attended them. Recently we organised a grand sale and raised funds for the poor.

The striking analogy in the seminars of the CE signified that the church revolved around the Kingdom of God, like a planet around the sun. Citing the Copernican view of astronomy, the organiser explained to the members that the church existed for the sake of God’s Kingdom, of which it was a sign and foretaste. The ongoing series of seminars assisted them to view God’s Kingdom as a ‘life-situation’ in which people could live

22. They believed that they had been called to be ‘God’s chosen generation, royal priesthood, holy nation and purchased people’. Cf. 1 Pet 2: 9.

23. She happily named women who had developed leadership skills through the WF and contributed to effective leadership at different levels in her society, addressing their daily socio-political problems, such as chronic illness, illiteracy, unemployment, the castes and dowries.

24. E. L. Verdier, *A church for all peoples*. 1993, p. 22.

together as brothers and sisters, irrespective of their castes and creeds. They experienced the vision of the church in their programmes as helpful to revive and strengthen their social relationships with their Hindu and Dalit neighbours and trust between them.²⁵

The vision of the church as **the foretaste of God's Kingdom signified to the practitioners of the VBS to follow the role model of Jesus** in addressing socio-political factors. Some organisers of the VBS identified potential tutors for staff development programmes. Describing her experience in this programme, a tutor expressed feelings of awe and joy, and said the following:

Our organisers presented Jesus as the embodiment of the Kingdom of God and as a role model²⁶ that contributed to our personal formation. They taught us through role-plays to view ourselves as pilgrims, to relate ourselves to Jesus and to resist bribes and adultery. They illustrated God's honesty as seen in Jesus and in their personal lives. We learned to present our insights in poems, prayers, and articles. Some of us have joined cooperatives and kept on resisting evil.

The VBS organisers viewed Jesus as 'the embodiment of God's Kingdom' and 'honesty' as a value of the Kingdom. They viewed themselves as pilgrims, seeking direction from Jesus. They were convinced that God's words and deeds were inseparable.²⁷ Through their study groups, and individual reflections on the Bible and faith, they allowed Christ to examine the integrity of their lives. This caused changes in their own attitudes and characters, and nurtured the values of God's Kingdom, such as honesty and justice. Consequently, this personal transformation inspired them to conduct a series of weekend programmes for tutors, aiming at enhancing their personal formation. Some tutors were impressed by the organisers' exemplary lives. As a result, the tutors started to work with a cooperative spirit that resisted adultery and bribes. Eventually they could re-design their VBS programme, making it more relevant to their life-situations. The above respondent

25. G. Robinson, *My God My people*, 1998, p. 3. He estimates that by 1988, nearly 85 percent of the people in India were Hindus; 9 percent were Muslims. Buddhists, Sikhs and Jainists were the other major religious groups in India.

26. The concept 'model' was used and understood in the context of personal and spiritual formation. Being a 'role-model' was to share with another person the ideals that one aimed at; it was according to the behaviour and values of the model that people evaluated, corrected, and developed towards their own maturity. The model's values became 'principles' of behaviour.

27. He explained his faith in God who was revealed in the name, 'I am that I am', and whose honesty to Israelites were demonstrated in the events of Exodus. Ref. Ex 3:14. Cf. Jn 13:14-15.

expressed feelings of awe and joy, confirming that she indeed experienced a memorable foretaste of God's Kingdom in their programme.

The vision of the **church as a foretaste of God's Kingdom connoted to some members 'a goal-directed life and learning'**. Schipani supports this vision, saying, "The prophetic vision seeks to elicit a creative and transforming learning process involving 'growing participation' in the interaction of an ideal society and doing God's will...".²⁸ In this regard an organiser of CE said:

Our pastor held a Bible-study on, 'Arrows in the hands of a warrior',²⁹ presenting God as a warrior who sent words, like arrows, to accomplish what God wished.³⁰ Being God's Word, Jesus was sent like an arrow with a goal.³¹ Through His birth, words, deeds, death and resurrection, He inaugurated God's Reign.³² Being the followers of Jesus, we too were challenged to lead a goal-directed life and engage in the work of God's Reign through our studies and daily socio-political involvement.

There is a strong indicator in the above response that the pastor, by way of Bible studies, provided an adequate motivation for the CE students to lead **goal-directed lives**. Referring to the life of Jesus as 'God's arrow', he presented Jesus as their role model for their **purpose-driven lives**.³³ In response, the practitioners viewed themselves as followers of Jesus and developed goal-directed lives; they developed goal-directed studies, related to their socio-political issues.³⁴ They took the words, deeds, death and resurrection of Jesus as a model, guiding them to strategically design their studies in observable and discernible patterns. They asked God to move them toward ways of becoming more loving to God, themselves and to each other. Consequently, they had

28. D. Schipani, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 68ff.

29. He derived the image of a warrior from Ps 127:4; it was used as a key verse for reflection. The function of the study programmes with a goal is compared to that of an arrow sent by a warrior.

30. Cf. Is 55:11.

31. The purpose of Jesus' coming is to announce that the Reign of God has come; cf. Mk 1:15.

32. Jesus declared God's Reign by observable behaviour such as his words, deeds, death, and resurrection.

33. The organiser sounded being determined and persuasive in training his students towards a goal-directed learning.

34. They were surmounted by several issues such as discrimination of women (and men), 'eve teasing', abuse of drugs and alcohol.

planned exactly what they wanted to do during and at the end of their courses.³⁵ They reviewed their studies regularly and shaped their programmes to become relevant in their socio-political contexts. They believed that their studies and lives in their socio-political context contributed to the extension of God's Kingdom.

ii) Vision of the church as 'Kingdom of Heaven, after earthly life'

The practitioners of the programmes with a pietistically oriented paradigm maintained a vision of the church as 'part of the Kingdom of heaven', a reality after death.³⁶ In this regard a tutor of the UESI stated with enthusiasm: "The church is the light of society. So, we ask our students to come to the church 'out of' their spoiled society, to be holy and to make sure that they would receive the imperishable Kingdom of heaven at the end." The tutor seemed to use the word 'church' to refer to the assembly of believers as well as to the building where they gathered for worship. According to this view, life on earth is temporary and Christians must find salvation in the church to prepare them to be received in the Kingdom of heaven. They replaced the phrase, 'the Kingdom of God', generally with 'the Kingdom of heaven' and viewed it as God's Reign after death. The organisers of the UESI also viewed the church as God's people being 'called-out', as they demanded from their students to be separated from others in society and not to relate the courses comprising socio-political factors and thus, trying to be 'holy'. Citing an illustration from her experience, another tutor of the UESI³⁷ conveyed how zealous she was in preparing her students for 'the Kingdom of heaven'. She said:

I staged a role-play on how Jesus had forgiven a paralysed man, and after healing him, separated him from his society and led him to a 'holy' life. My students realised that chronic illnesses are God's curses.³⁸ They confessed their sins and joined a 'holy and true' church nearby. Some of them entered into God's mission of winning 'souls'. They all prepared themselves towards the Kingdom after their 'race' on earth; they waited earnestly for the 'second coming' of Christ.

35. They analysed and reflected on their socio-political issues; they sought God's guidance regarding these issues with the help of Bible studies and they prepared action projects. They reviewed their projects on a regular basis.

36. The practitioners of the UESI generally expressed this view during the interviews.

37. This tutor of the UESI conducted his programmes in one of the schools of the diocese.

38. During the interview, the researcher ascertained that members of the congregation suffered from chronic illnesses, yet, the respondent did not encourage her students to visit them, or to attend to the ill. Moreover, the tutor kept updated notes for her lessons, but she did not write down the names of her students and parishioners suffering from chronic illnesses and the kind of diseases they suffered from; she did not have any note on the causes or possible ways of healing.

She believed that the Kingdom of heaven would come with Christ, at his return again. Consequently, she asked her students to be ‘holy’ by joining a ‘true’ church.³⁹ She advised them not to relate to the socio-political evils, as they were God’s curses. By keeping God’s Reign as a reality after earthly life, she and her students missed the opportunity to realise God’s presence and the gracious deeds of God’s Reign in her society. She believed that God’s mission was to call people out of their society and win their ‘souls’ for heaven. The theological factor that encouraged her separation of personal faith from social reform was the ‘pre-millennialism’, an eschatological doctrine that emphasised the imminent coming of Christ and God’s final judgment, destroying the world as we know it. She was pessimistic about Christian’s role in transforming society. The thoroughgoing corruption of the present society meant to her that Christians were to have nothing to do with social restructuring. She believed and intended that Christians should remain ‘neutral’ and should not take deliberate steps to address socio-political issues. Hence, she concentrated on the eternal spiritual condition of her students.

4.1.2 A theological position and the socio-political factors

In general, the term ‘theology’ has been used to refer to any discussion of the ‘nature’ of God, or the ‘gods’, or any religious topic. Christians used ‘theology’ with a slightly different sense of the root ‘logos’, not to mean ‘rational discourse’ but ‘word’, or ‘gospel’, or ‘God's revealed messages’.⁴⁰ The gospel declares that since the fall of humankind in sin, God continues to direct all of creation toward salvation.⁴¹ Eventually, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus became the focus of God’s Reign. It continued to be disclosed in every human life-situation and throughout the world. As ‘Gospel and Our Culture network’ depicts it:

39. The tutor singled out some believers as part of the true church and regarded them as the ‘holy’ church on earth before death. This church is identical with the Kingdom of God; cf. ‘the bride of Christ’, Rev 21:2, 9; 19:7ff.

40. Wikipedia, *Evangelism*, 29 April 2006, <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelism> (29 April 2006).

41. Gen 3: 9, 15. Cf. Rom 8:22-23; Col 1:17-20; Mt 28:18-20; Rev 21:5.

The Gospel or good news of God's in-breaking Kingdom was proclaimed by Jesus in a particular cultural context, and the same has been true of every proclamation of the Gospel since. The Gospel is essentially embodied *in persons and communities in particular historical and cultural contexts*.⁴²

Thus, there is but one gospel among many cultures, each of which might develop its own theological reflection.

The South Indians in general and the members of the CSI in particular, are religious. The responses indicate that **they treated their view of theology as the nerve centre of their training programmes**.⁴³ They were doing theology in the socio-political contexts of Kanyakumari, taking into account of the spirit of the gospel, whether accompanied by western technological process or introduced by the grass-roots struggle of the people's movements for equality, justice, and liberation. As Abraham says, "Asian theologies are contextual theologies; they are also people's theologies... It grows out of people's struggle and sufferings, their stories and myths, their persecutions and protests as well as their sorrows and joys".⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the religious educator, Thompson, raised a key question regarding the theology and religious education: "How does theology affect the content, methodology, aims, curriculum, and administration in religious programmes?"⁴⁵ The inquiry and interpretation of the findings of the present research illuminated these questions. They provided some pertinent responses on how the theological positions of the training programmes affected the socio-political factors.

i) Two types of contextual theological positions

The inquiry of some responses revealed that the practitioners of the training programmes of divergent paradigms differed in their theological characteristics. Practitioners of the socially oriented paradigm opted for either of these two types of contextual theological g

42. The Gospel and Our Culture: *Resources*, n.d., <gospel-culture.org.uk/resources.htm> (13 February 2006).

43. The daily lives of the practitioners were permeated with the view of theology and Christology that they opted for. They based the components of their training on their theological positions.

44. K. C. Abraham, *Asian Theology in a Changing Asia: Towards an Asian Theological Agenda for the 21st Century*, 1992, <<http://www.cca.org.hk/resources/ctc/ctc97-cats1/ctc97-cats1h.htm>> (08 January 2006).

45. N. H. Thompson, (ed), *Religious Education and Theology*, 1982, p. 14.

positions: Ascending Christology or Descending Christology.⁴⁶ Following the Ascending Christology, some of them focused on the true humanity of Jesus. They began with the earthly compassionate ministry of Jesus as portrayed in the synoptic gospels, and its impact on their daily lives. They viewed God’s Reign in the person, words, and deeds of Jesus Christ.⁴⁷ Others who chose the Descending Christology began with proclaiming Jesus as the Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Word of God or Logos preexisting from all eternity.⁴⁸ They focused on how Jesus Christ entered the human condition as a human. They believed that by becoming flesh and dwelling among people, Jesus in a certain way united Himself with each person. This implied to them that Jesus regarded inestimable dignity and by His death and resurrection restored meaning of life to each person. In response, they were actively involved in socio-political actions to voice for the voiceless and protect the weak.

The practitioners of UESI were pietistically oriented in their Christology.⁴⁹ Some of them adapted the Descending Christology to some degrees. Consequently, they prayed for human dignity and basic human rights. Nevertheless, they did not feel comfortable to react to socio-political factors; they left it to the social workers.

ii) Theology in different life-situations

A respondent from the CR, who is the editor of a sermon book,⁵⁰ narrated their interesting “...experience of balancing their theological position and practice, to address various life-situations”. He stated:

46. Ascending Christology was also known as ‘Low Christology’ or ‘Christology from below’; some named Descending Christology as ‘High Christology’ or ‘Christology from above’.

47. Mk 1:15; Lk 4:18-19; Mt 5:3ff, 11:2-5. They explored the gospel stories in the reality of God’s Reign, as Jesus saw it, the longings of the ‘lowly and the last’ of the world. For instance, the poor, mourners, and of those who thirst for justice (Mt 5:3ff, 20:16) were fulfilled in God’s Reign. Consequently they were inclined to heed and obey to the moral imperative given to them by Jesus, to live righteously and strive for social justice here on earth (Mt. 25:45).

48. Jn 1:1-5, 14-18. They preferred John and Paul who presented the meaning of the ‘Jesus event’ to the Christian life and the church, than the Good news of Synoptic gospels.

49. Section 4.2. B), ‘*Pietistically oriented paradigm*’.

50. Collection of sermons written by pastors of CSI Kanyakumari diocese for services of Sundays and other special days throughout a year. It serves as a hand book for pastors of the diocese to prepare their sermons on those occasions throughout the year.

Some pastors believed that the socio-political factors and how they were related to God's Word differed from parish to parish. Some didn't like to contribute to the 'sermons – 2003'.⁵¹ Hence, we attached a few guidelines to the 'sermons – 2004',⁵² enabling pastors to develop their own sermons by relating them to their life-situations. Several pastors reported that the 'sermons – 2004' guided them to make their sermons more relevant to their contexts than in the previous years.

One could conclude that the 'sermons - 2004' was better prepared⁵³ as some pastors had not written their sermons towards the collection of sermons for the year 2003. The 'Sermons – 2004' contained ideas and guidelines to support the study of the pastors regarding the life-situations of Bible texts. It also included some guidelines to explore the differing socio-political contexts of the members of the diocese. There were suggestions in the responses that the guidelines of the 'sermons – 2004' were 'open-ended' and were based on their experience. They inspired several pastors to feel free to develop their reflections, emerging from their immediate life-situations. While preparing their sermons, they accommodated the perspectives of society's victims in their contemporary socio-political issues. It was exciting to note how the 'open-ended' contextual Christological perspective of a few pastors⁵⁴ encouraged the development of a handbook for pastors to prepare their sermons, relating to the different life situations within the diocese. In turn, this equipped their parishioners towards acting in response to the socio-political issues.

iii) Images of Christ from different contexts

The practitioners of socially oriented paradigm re-examined the contemporary 'images of Christ' that they conveyed to others; they realised the manipulation, 'conditioning' and 'relegating' of the 'image of Christ'. Consequently, it was necessary for them to rediscover the image of Christ relevant to their contexts, accepting some traits of Jesus

51. 'Sermon-2003' is the sermon-book released by the diocese for the year 2003.

52. 'Sermon-2004' is the sermon-book released by the diocese for the year 2004.

53. A review of the sermon book-2004 by the researcher indicated that it had included a brief analysis and explanation of a few theological words from the Bible and that of the concepts and words related to the contemporary socio-political contexts in Kanyakumari District. It had considered the fact that almost all parishes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese come from multi-religious contexts.

54. The pastors who took initiative for the new sermon-book included pastors with both the Ascending and the Descending types of Christologies. They were convinced that God in Christ affirms and appreciates human life. Consequently, they were well committed to relate the gospel to the downtrodden, voiceless and the powerless people.

and rejecting the remaining ones from the contemporary ‘images of Christ’, in the light of their view of God’s Reign. Galilea affirms this saying,

We have to resolve the problem of Christ in our lives. Often we believe in a **distorted** Christ, an incomplete Christ, a Christ adapted to particular interests of our own. We need to purify our idea of Christ his teaching and his discipleship. This is central; here lies the crux of so many problems and so much confusion about the church and its mission.⁵⁵

Moreover, **the image of Christ as the representative of the victims of socio-political factors made several practitioners to contextualise Christology.** In this regard a young enthusiastic tutor of the WF said:

We held a series of studies on ‘**Jesus in our village today!**’⁵⁶ based on the beatitudes⁵⁷ and other gospel texts. We also explored our customs, traditions, and social structures. This made us aware of the increasing social evils around us⁵⁸ and inspired us to participate in Jesus’ concerns for today. Gradually we started to visit the nearby hospital, to conduct counselling and to pray with those who suffer from leprosy, cancer, and AIDS. We also arranged some support for the patients.⁵⁹

It became clear that the WF tutor’s contextually oriented portrait of Jesus and her view of Christianity inspired her students to become more involved in socio-political issues. The members of the WF discovered the role model of Jesus and His socio-political involvement by exploring texts of the gospel. They searched for the relevance of those texts for their contemporary socio-political problems. In addition, the messages of the ‘Beatitudes’ emphasised the significance of Christ and His Kingdom for their society. Thus, they were alerted to experience Jesus who inspired and empowered them in their day-to-day socio-political involvement.

A student of the SS narrated their interesting role-play on ‘Inviting Jesus for a lunch’:

55. S. Galilea, *The Beatitudes*, 1988, p. 7.

56. These studies were based on Lk 4:18-19.

57. The Sermon on the Mount was generally regarded as a representative text in the gospel, as it contained the gospel’s core message.

58. She named chronic illnesses, ‘eve-teasing’, dowries, domestic violence and child labour.

59. They raised money towards their medical expenses and assisted their children’s studies.

A beggar came to a great banquet in ‘rugged’ clothes. He was lame and starving. The head of the family beat him and chased him away. Eventually Jesus came to the same feast in his best robe. He was asked to bless the food. Placing the sleeves of His robe on the food, He remained quiet for a long time. Then He removed his robe and showed them the wounds caused by the head of the family. We all realised that it was Jesus who had come earlier as the hungry beggar, but that He was rejected. The role-play really changed us; we wanted to be like Jesus!

The response revealed that by staging the role model of **Jesus being a wounded and starving beggar** the SS aimed at promoting Jesus’ values of extending God’s love to neighbours. They intended to equip the practitioners to ‘opt for the poor’, to attend to the chronically ill, and to identify with their sufferings. By placing the sleeves of his robe over the food and remaining quiet for a long time in the role-play, Jesus exposed the inhuman values of the head of the family, who devoted himself to Mammon, including luxurious food, lavish clothes, and status. According to the respondent several students of the SS took note of Jesus; as they watched and listened to Him, they desired to be like Him. Consequently, they improved their day-to-day association with the wounded and starving beggars in their neighbourhood. To some extent, they experienced transformation in their inner lives; they became more socially oriented by the power of God. Thus, the socially oriented Christology nurtured through the role-play, inspired the students of the SS towards active socio-political involvement.

The WF held a ‘fancy dress competition’⁶⁰ A poor, illiterate Dalit woman said:

I presented **Jesus as a rejected and detained Dalit** to reassure us of Jesus’ love to all the rejected, irrespective of class, gender and caste;⁶¹ We were easily exploited by our landlords and were helpless. Our working hours were not fixed with fixed wages; life was bitter with debts and ‘meter-interests’. One day when I assembled a group of workers and started talking about taking charge of us, I was taken into detention. As my friends and neighbours visited me more and more, I was cruelly tortured and for a long time was not released from jail.

60. It is a popular contest in South India; the participants of the contest dressed and acted as the role models they have chosen. The one who enacted the role model best won the prize.

61. She explained what she had done during the fancy dress contest. Cf. V. Karkkainen, *Christology: a global introduction*, 2003, p. 278. Ref. section 2.11, ‘Dalits’. The Dalit theologian, Arvind Nirmal, enumerated six meanings of the term ‘Dalit’: “(1) the broken, the torn, the rent, the burst, the split, (2) the opened, the expanded, (3) the bisected, (4) the driven asunder, (5) the downtrodden, the crushed, the destroyed, (6) the manifested, the displayed. Dalit Christology represents a liberation movement for these people at the bottom of society”.

In the response, there was a portrayal of the ‘image of Jesus’, presented in a training programme of the WF to empower the poor Dalit women to reclaim their dignity and equality with others in church and society. The respondent represented the women who took risks in their daily lives to resist the socio-political evils, such as dowries, the castes, poverty, and discrimination against women (and men). She was convinced that they portrayed the passionate heart of Jesus for freedom and justice, and His compassion for the powerless women. Obviously, the members of the WF upheld the socially oriented Christology, which led them to stage the image of Jesus as a detained Dalit woman.

It was also evident that the members of the WF were unwilling to think of God exclusively in terms of the violent ‘conqueror’ male images of some of the Scriptures. They projected their views on the feminine role of God by displaying the role model of Jesus as a rejected and detained Dalit. Thus, they fostered a sense of self-worth and self-esteem as a part of the healing process, recovering from the abuse and hurts of the past.

iv) Some distorted views of Christology

Two of the UESI tutors with Pietistically oriented Christology⁶² presented the following outlook of their socio-political involvement:

Being in the ‘days of distress’,⁶³ our society becomes more and more corrupt. Today’s politics is evil. It is necessary for social workers to react. We are born again. Like Jesus, we desire to be meek and ‘holy’, and to meditate daily on God’s words. We wish to be patient in our sufferings. We humbly desire to submit all our problems to God in prayer.

The tutors did not side with any socio-political evil, but prayed regularly for the basic rights and freedom of their neighbours. Their pietistic view of Christ, however, did not encourage them to react to their socio-political issues. They were convinced that Jesus kept Himself ‘holy’ by not relating himself to any socio-political evils. Believing that they lived in the last days of distress, they needed personal spiritual prosperity, rather than to attend to socio-political problems. Consequently, their programme remained

62. One respondent organised the UESI at a sub-district level, and another one at the level of a local unit. Ref. Section 4.1 B, *Pietistically oriented paradigm*.

63. 2 Tim 3:1 ff.

metaphysically oriented. Moreover, because of their belief in predestination⁶⁴ they taught others that the socio-political context could never be changed. They promoted a **dualistic view. Consequently, socio-political issues were seen to be evil in themselves; they had nothing to do with a life of spiritual ‘light’.**⁶⁵ When they focused on ‘personal holiness’, therefore, they did not regard it as a means to address their socio-political issues. To them ‘personal holiness’ was mostly an instrument towards conquering their fears of being influenced by the evil world of socio-political issues.⁶⁶

A middle aged, unemployed woman who was a student of the UESI has recently attended one of their revival programmes. She reported how she learned to follow Christ, the meek and suffering, gentle Lamb of God:

The speaker conversed in the Holy Spirit. I was relieved from all my problems. I gave my coins for his ministry. By grace someone loaned me money for my expenses for travel back to home. Yet, here I am in hell again; my husband was drunk and fought with someone in my street. I continue, carrying my cross and following Jesus.

This response contended that the ‘revival event’ presented **Christ as a meek and gentle Lamb of God, suffering, defeated and basically passive.**⁶⁷ Christ represented a tragic victim with this image, focussing on a creature making amends without personality and power, as a cult of death. In response to such an image of Christ in the revival programme this student decided to remain passive, although she struggled with several socio-political issues. Consequently, after returning from the revival meeting she felt as if she was in hell, as she did not experience any change in her day-to-day socio-political issues. She looked sad and frustrated; she sounded genuine in her tears. Obviously, she was silent and submissive, because she had been trained in the programmes of the UESI, especially in its revival programme, to be passive. She regarded her socio-political

64. Their belief that ‘God has predestined some for life and others for evil practices and related sufferings’ impeded them from any socio-political involvement.

65. Often 2 Cor 6:14 was interpreted out of context to establish this stand of the UESI.

66. They preferred to think and talk about spiritual matters rather than socio-political issues. To them, talking about such issues could divert their attention and devotion away from spiritual matters.

67. Some members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese said that the students of the UESI kept pictures and paintings of Jesus in their homes, portraying Jesus as hanging on the cross as a corpse and as a helpless baby on the bosom of Mary.

problems as a ‘cross’ to bear daily and to follow Christ.⁶⁸ Hence, she left her problems passively unattended and found the programmes irrelevant towards her life-situation.

Another tutor of the UESI stated that she was promoting the classic image of **Christ as the idealised and glorified heavenly King**; Christ appeared in imperial garments as the almighty Ruler; He judges, and curses sinners into hell. She told her story and related her experience of **Christ as a healing Messiah** to her students, “I explained clearly how Jesus cautioned the healed man of Beth-za’tha later in the temple;⁶⁹ God would curse him with illness and poverty if he did not ‘leave’ his society and become ‘holy’. Hearing this, my students confessed their sins to ‘escape’ the wrath of God”.

This response reflected the tutor’s belief that disease and poverty were solely the result of people’s sins and God the Almighty King’s curse and wrath on their sins. In her opinion, Jesus cautioned the lame man, who had received forgiveness, not to sin again by being ‘away’ from society and by not relating to any socio-political evil. In her lesson, she emphasised the piety of individual Christians rather than the realisation of God’s Reign or society’s transformation. The outcome of the tutor’s lesson was that she missed the opportunity to encourage her students to address the socio-political issues such as chronic illness and poverty. Moreover, the tutor presented Christ mainly as ‘a miracle worker’ and a ‘baptiser with the Holy Spirit’, who was the source of power and holiness for physical healing and personal salvation of people’s ‘souls’.⁷⁰ This left her students without confidence to relate Almighty God and to their socio-political factors that are essentially evils. In turn, the students found their training programmes irrelevant regarding their life-situations.

v) **An ‘Intermediate’ (in-between) orientation of theology**

The responses revealed that some practitioners changed from a pietistic-oriented theology

68. She was taught that socio-political issues always remained the same. Her role was not to address them, but to keep them at a distance and be ‘holy’; she was trained to view the consequences of those political issues as the cross for her to carry, day by day, just like Jesus.

69. He was ill for 38 years and was waiting at the pool of Beth-za’tha for healing. (Jn 5:3-5).

70. V. Karkkainen, *op. cit.*, 2003, p. 16: The classical ‘five-fold gospel’, depicting Jesus Christ in his role as ‘Saviour’ (or justifier), ‘Baptiser’ with the Spirit, ‘Sanctifier’, ‘Healer’, and ‘Soon-coming Glorious King’ became popular among the practitioners of UESI, and among the parishes influenced by Pentecostal and Charismatic sectarian groups in the name of ‘the full gospel’.

to a context-oriented theology, and vice versa, due to pragmatic reasons. Consequently, they maintained a wavering intermediate Christological orientation. In turn, such a vacillating theological position determined the viability of the training to react to socio-political factors. Emitting feelings of despair in her gestures, a young SS-tutor stated:

We were ready to have an orientation regarding our study material and how related to our socio-political context. Some young pastors as resource people tried to introduce thirty lessons in an hour. They had no teaching aid or related literature to facilitate our discussion. They wrapped up the workshop in half a day although it was set for a full day.

On the one hand, the study material had been written relating to socio-political issues. Yet, a closer focus showed the belief of the organisers of the SS that the young invited pastors were the only resource people,⁷¹ ‘chosen and delegated’ by God, to promote skills in the socially-oriented Christology. In their view, the tutors were just passive learners; they were invited to receive the study material and to attend the training objectively.⁷² They did not view it as a combined effort of both the organisers and the tutors to ‘develop skills in a socially-oriented Christology and to relate the study to the socio-political context’. On the other hand, the resource people made themselves available only for half a day to the tutors, although a full day was set apart for the proposed workshop. It is disclosed that due to their swaying intermediate Christological orientation, the organisers, and the resource people had tried to avoid comments and criticism from the tutors on the new study material with a socially oriented Christology. As a result, the tutors felt deceived and that they were treated like empty shells to be filled with information.

4.1.3 The task⁷³ of the church and the socio-political factors

Jesus depicts salvation as "entering the Kingdom of God".⁷⁴ Those who repent and enter the Kingdom of God experience salvation. They joyfully do God's will.⁷⁵ After reviewing

71. The young pastors referred to here have had a socially oriented Christology.

72. Eph 4: 11-13 had been quoted by the organisers to establish their view as themselves being the ‘donors’ of training, and the tutors being regarded as the ‘recipients’ of the training.

73. The ‘task’ included the evangelism and mission of the church.

74. Jn 3:3ff, Mt 4:17; Mk 1:15.

75. Mt 7:21.

several definitions of evangelism⁷⁶, the evangelist Abraham conceives evangelism as:

... that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the Kingdom of God for the first time... To be initiated into the rule of God is to encounter a transcendent reality that has entered history and to find oneself drawn up into the ultimate purposes of God for history and creation.⁷⁷

He re-connects evangelism with the sovereign Reign of God on earth. In his view, the dynamic Reign of God was ontologically grounded in the work of Jesus and is continued by grace through the inimitable activity of the Holy Spirit. The church is called to initiate and firmly ground people into that Reign so that they can be God's agents of compassion, reconciliation, and peace.⁷⁸ Abraham is convinced that evangelism can not be restricted with the heralding aspect of the gospel. Substantiating his view, Maggay uses the term 'witness' to "denote all that the church does to make itself shine like a city upon a hill. The word carries with it the need to have 'presence' as well as 'proclamation' in our preaching of the Kingdom".⁷⁹ He means that the proclamation of God's Reign has a 'social action (presence or visual) aspect' as well as a 'evangelism (proclamation or verbal) aspect, signifying that the church is both a sign and a herald.

Likewise, Micah Declaration attempts to guide the recent discussions on mission:⁸⁰

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76. The Greek word for 'gospel' is 'evangelion', meaning, 'Good News', that is the coming of God's Kingdom in and through the life, death and resurrection of Christ.
77. W. J. Abraham, *Definition of Evangelism and It's Implications*, n.d., <<http://www.evangelism.gfmuiuc.org/evangelism-def/>> (17 May 2005).
78. Mt 7:21; 21:28-32 Ref. section 2.7, *The Church and Socio-political factors*. The Gospel of God's Kingdom is: Whoever will believe in Jesus Christ, and will obey and follow Him, has entered into the Kingdom of God and has received eternal life/God's Reign, and the power to walk in righteousness by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:5). In our obedient faith in Jesus Christ, God saves us from the penalty of sin and puts us in right relationship with God. Rom 3:24. Salvation of the Lord includes overcoming the power and practice of sin through the empowerment of God's Word and indwelling Holy Spirit. Through salvation, God works in us enabling us to live and be like Jesus. Cf. W. J. Abraham, *Definition of Evangelism and It's Implications*, n.d., <<http://www.evangelism.gfmuiuc.org/evangelism-def/>> (17 May 2005).
79. Maggay, *The task of the church*, n.d., <<http://www.cscoweb.org/maggay.html>> (18 December 2005).
80. The Greek word for mission is 'apostelein' meaning 'to send'. Richardson described the concept of 'mission' as, 'being sent to continue and participate in the movement of God towards man, which began with the mission or sending of Christ and the Holy Spirit'. Ref. A. Richardson, *op. cit.*, 1950, p. 146.

Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel ... our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. ...If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing, and saying are at the heart of our integral task.⁸¹

In line with these insights, the members of the diocese generally viewed both evangelism and mission virtually identical in both meaning and content,⁸² and perceived it as the inseparable task of the church. Therefore, this section would present the conclusions regarding the influence of the evangelism and mission training programmes on the competence of the practitioners in addressing the socio-political problems.

i) A parish-based mission of God and socio-political factors

In a parish-based training programme, the parishioners have been challenged by their new curriculum to stimulate their approach in evangelism and God's mission. Describing the experience of the parishioners, a popular deacon⁸³ said the following:

We met in fellowship on Fridays to explore the task of the church. This led to a series of 'full-moon gatherings' together with people of other faiths at our village playground and open market. We have had cultural events and orations to create an awareness of socio-political issues,⁸⁴ and of God being with us, transforming our society. In response, we learned to plan as individuals and families, and to dedicate ourselves to work with God.

81. Christians Poverty and Justice, *Micah Declaration on Integral Mission*, 27 September 2001, <http://micahchallenge.org/Christians_Poverty_and_Justice/96.asp> (17 June 2005).

82. According to a statement of the World Council of Churches, "'Mission' carries a holistic understanding: the proclamation and sharing of the good news of the gospel by word 'kerygma', deed 'diakonia', prayer and worship 'leiturgia' and the everyday witness of the Christian life 'martyria'; teaching as building up and strengthening people in their relationship with God and each other; and healing as wholeness and reconciliation into 'koinonia' — communion with God, communion with people, and communion with creation as a whole... "Evangelism", while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional voicing of the gospel, including the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship". Ref. *Conference on World Mission and Evangelism*, Athens 2005 Documents, n.d., <www.oikoumene.org/Preparatory_Paper_N_1_M.795.0.html> (22 August 2005).

83. A deacon is an elder who is a member of the parish committee. During the interview he was with a few youngsters of his parish who affirmed and complimented the story.

84. They tried to make the people of the villages aware of poverty, unemployment and the abuse of alcohol.

The parishioners believed that God was in their society, transforming it. They viewed themselves as stewards to one another in God's mission. Hence, they carefully chose their daily life situations, such as their playground and market place as the environment of their training programmes. Through their 'full-moon gatherings' they attempted to combine their knowledge, skills and resources in social analysis. This practice equipped them to identify and promote awareness in their villages regarding their socio-political factors and God's mission. They also took initiative in addressing their socio-political issues by planning individually and collectively as families.⁸⁵ Moreover, the parishioners experimented with a creative approach regarding the holistic growth of the church, reaching out to others in their community. They discovered that their programmes were dynamic and helpful to react constructively⁸⁶ to their socio-political issues.

ii) Encounter with other religious faiths

Some responses indicated that the task of evangelism and mission was effectively performed in their encounter with the world religions. Some training programmes reviewed the concept of 'ecumenism'. Trying to break down the barriers of creed and castes, they strove for unity between Christians and people of other religious faiths. In their view, 'ecumenism' was more than a unification of the different denominations; it included developing dialogues among Christians, Hindus, and Muslims in the Kanyakumari district. In this regard an organiser of the CE stated with full devotion:

In our context of increasing religious conflict and violence,⁸⁷ I took my tutors to my poor Hindu Dalit neighbour on 'Diwali'.⁸⁸ His house was lit up with lamps. Sitting in a circle they sang and told us a story of how 'the god of light conquered the god of darkness'. We compared it with 'Jesus, the light of the world', and were gradually led to review the darkness of socio-political issues, and to react to them. We continued to endeavour establishing ties of community and to work in unity with our Hindu neighbours, addressing poverty and the castes.

85. For instance, some families took initiatives to plan and set up a mini-library and seasonal and friendly sports and games. This led several youths to get involved in socio-political activities and they gradually gave up their habit of abusing alcohol and drugs.

86. Here, "to respond constructively" means to minimise, and wherever possible, to eradicate the evil consequences of the socio-political issues.

87. Some organisers informed the researcher during the interviews about some of the recent severe tensions and conflicts that occurred between Hindus and Christians in the Kanyakumari district.

88. The word 'Diwali' is the slang of the Sanskrit word 'Deepavali'; here 'Deepa' means 'light' and 'Avali', means 'a row'. 'Diwali' means a row of lights and, indeed, illumination forms its main attraction. Every hut of the poor, or the mansion of the rich is lit up with the orange glow of twinkling 'diyas' - small earthen lamps - to welcome the god of light, of salvation and prosperity.

On the one hand, during their conversation the practitioners of the CE discussed with their Hindu neighbours the fact of God being ‘a light that overcomes the darkness of evil’ in their village and in the world at large. During their exchange of stories and insights, they gained insight in the Hindu myths and beliefs, regarding God being the light,⁸⁹ they eventually related this to Christ as the light of the world. On the other hand, their Hindu neighbours too became open to relate their festival of lights to what they heard from the practitioners of the CE about the person and work of Jesus. According to the organiser, both they could search together for the universal aspects of Christ, the light of the world. Thus, they had realised that Jesus was to some extent **the open Way, and anyone at any time could follow this Way**. Moreover, they realised that it was vital to accept one another; also to sit, eat and celebrate the joy of being together, crossing the barrier of castes, class and creeds.⁹⁰ They developed a dynamic social relationship with others rather than excluding them just because they were Hindus or Dalits. Subsequently, they affirmed their oneness and involvement in God’s mission; they continued to address poverty and the problem of castes, following Jesus as their fellow Struggler.⁹¹

A young woman from the CE narrated a similar inspiring experience; She expounds:

In response to religious conflicts we held a series of workshops on ‘**inter-religious dialogue**’, which our Hindu and Islam friends attended. We identified our differences and explored possibilities for further dialogue and common activities. Combining our insights, we planned to address our socio-political issues. Gradually, we set up our tiny fraternal community, namely, the ‘Religious Friends Circle’,⁹² towards sustaining dialogue and unity.

89. The story discloses that the demon king Narakasur, ruler of Pragiyotishpur, (a province in the South of Nepal), after defeating Lord Indra, snatched away the magnificent earrings of Aditi, the Mother Goddess, and imprisoned sixteen thousand daughters of the gods and saints in his harem. On the day of Diwali, Lord Krishna killed the demon and liberated the imprisoned ones, and also recovered those precious earrings. This day focused on abolishing laziness and other social evils.

90. During festivals in South India, people usually dined together with others of their own religion. Hence, it was new for the organiser and the tutors to visit and eat at the house of their Hindu neighbours on the day of Diwali. The organiser reported that during interviews some of his tutors initially resisted the idea of meeting and speaking to the Hindu Dalit neighbours. He, however, opened their eyes to see that it was against God’s will to treat others as profane and unclean; he related their context to the contents of Acts 10:28. The respondent was happy to say that some of their Hindu Dalit neighbours had joined the Christians in their recent public march, protesting against the dowries and the castes.

91. G. Robinson, *My God and my people*, 1999, p. 18.

92. It is an Inter-religious Fraternal/Association, where friends of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam could meet and have dialogue on issues of common interest and involvement.

Initially people of different religions from the village found it difficult to come together; they even had conflicts with one another, based on their creeds. The practitioners of the CE were concerned with this issue. They organised a series of workshops, aiming at nurturing a ‘spirit of dialogue’ among the villagers. Their patient and painstaking efforts gradually promoted appropriate attitudes, such as mutual tolerance, trust, service, and cross-cultural enrichment. Because of their continued inter-religious dialogue they began to discover and appreciate differences in their beliefs and values. Thus, they developed trust and a spirit of cooperation among them. Consequently, they planned combined action in response to their common socio-political issues, such as dowries, divorces, and discrimination against women (and men). The ‘Religious Friends Circle’, the inter-religious association that they set up, is indeed an expression of a milestone in their commitment towards continued dialogue and partnership in socio-political involvement.

iii) Issue-oriented evangelism and mission

Narrating their experience of God’s mission, two students of the VBS stated:

The theme of our ‘VBS – 2000’ was the ‘fullness of life’. Our tutors introduced Jesus and taught us that he brought fullness of life. They conducted follow-up classes and explained the values of God’s Kingdom. We realised that it was against the gospel of Christ that kids were forced to work overtime without pay. They explained that God’s Kingdom was for such people as these kids.⁹³ Consequently, following Jesus, we resist evil action against kids.

The tutors of the VBS led their students to accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour. They held follow-up programmes for them to promote the values of God’s Kingdom. Consequently, the children realised that forcing them into ‘cheap labour’ was against God’s will. In addition, they learnt to keep Jesus as their role model. They believed that Jesus also reviewed God’s mission and sought God’s guidance⁹⁴ in His daily struggle against the socio-political problems of his time in Palestine. Following the ‘young Jesus’, they heeded to the proper and timely guidance⁹⁵ of their tutors and reacted to unjust child labour. Furthermore, they learned from their tutors that Jesus resisted evil

93. Mk 10:14-15.

94. Lk 6:12, 13; Cf. Lk 2: 46.

95. Prov 11:14. The students received regular guidance from their leaders and tutors.

up to the death of the cross, and conquered unjust practices and structures through His resurrection. Thus, being empowered, the students of the VBS began to confront their socio-political issues promptly and creatively.

A pastor narrated the experience of his parishioners, saying,

Some parishioners attended a series of studies on, ‘God and chronic illness’. Yet, I heard them commenting that chronic illness is God’s curse. I assisted them to reconsider their views regarding illness.⁹⁶ They re-evaluated their attitudes of judgment. Consequently, we discovered how God began his mission with people in pain. They joined me visiting people in pain and worshiping with them. Though some still regarded victims of AIDS as worse sinners, they agreed with me to initiate a support group for them.

It is found that after the first session of their study on ‘**God and chronic illness**’ some parishioners still hesitated to identify themselves with ill victims. They said that chronic illness was the sign of God’s wrath and curse.⁹⁷ The pastor earnestly listened to them. He approached illness from Christ’s viewpoint and from the experience of the chronically ill victims. Based on his perspective on God’s mission to the sick, he inspired others to review their convictions of ill victims. They realised that God’s mission concerns the whole person, created by God,⁹⁸ and that all relationships in the community were restored ‘in Christ’.⁹⁹ Some of them, however, blamed AIDS victims as the ‘worst sinners’ and refused the pastor’s call to organise a support group for them towards prayer and compassion. Yet, their continued study regarding the chronic ill victims influenced them to overcome their resistance towards sharing God’s love with them. They learned not to divide a person into a body and a spirit. They stopped judging ill people as if they were necessarily affected by their spiritual illness. Eventually, the parishioners studied the causes of such chronic ills, served as a support-group to ill victims. Thus, they experienced their programmes relevant.

96. People suffering from diseases like AIDS, diabetes and cancer.

97. The former pastors might have stressed that ‘Jesus loved only the holy, for He is always holy’. They had obviously cultivated such views due to the influence of pietistically oriented Christology. The emphasis on this conviction about Christ at the cost of the stress on his compassion for sinners may have caused the conviction of parishioners that illness is the result of God’s curse on sinners.

98. Gen 1:26.

99. Rom 5:17-19.

A woman who was a victim of poverty, unemployment and discrimination¹⁰⁰ and who was a member of the WF cheerfully reported:

A series of contextual studies on women in the Bible assisted us to reflect on our life-situations. We drafted our mission statement¹⁰¹ and set up self-help projects as a response.¹⁰² We continuously reviewed our plans in our regular workshops in the light of our aims.¹⁰³ We explored the causes of unemployment instead of just being satisfied with finding jobs. This assisted us to seek various ways of promoting social justice.¹⁰⁴ Gaining self-confidence, I began to promote awareness for the unemployed Dalit women in my neighbourhood.¹⁰⁵ Subsequently, they assembled and resolved some of their problems.

This respondent whole-heartedly accepted and appreciated the WF programmes. It became clear that the mission statement and the contextual approach of the WF in God's mission impressed the respondent. Moreover, the projects set up by the WF and the related workshops empowered her to address her socio-political issues. In turn, she empowered the unemployed Dalit women around her to address their socio-political issues. Evidently, the contextual study of the gospel texts empowered the members of the WF. They were involved in a process of interaction between the gospel of God's Reign and their day-to-day lives. This motivated them to make it a priority to be in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. This involved accompanying them in their sufferings arising from violence, exploitation, and socio-political domination. To the respondent, this meant working with Dalits who were the marginalized women on the fringes of her society. Interestingly, being the victims of socio-political factors, they shared their stories among themselves like the people of God in the Bible.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the ongoing reviews

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100. Being a poor and young abused woman, she was counselled and given a job by the WF in the diocesan WF canteen.
 101. It reads, "We believe that God in Christ lives in our society today. So, we are called to give a hand to God. We are convinced that God sides with the people in pain, seeking justice and peace".
 102. Projects responding to the socio-political issues such as poverty, abuse of women, chronic illness, unemployment and broken families.
 103. 'Serving the under-privileged and promoting their justice' was an aim of the WF.
 104. They sought possible ways and means of promoting social justice regarding the victims of unemployment, 'meter interest', dowries and discrimination of women (and men).
 105. She viewed mission as identifying with God's transforming acts in society and setting people free from their socio-political problems. She worked in the 'Dalit resource Centre', which has been a WF project.
 106. The contextual studies of various Bible texts informed them regarding the way in which others shared their worries and hopes, and organised themselves in addressing their socio-political issues. Ref. Ex 5:19-21; Esth 4:1-17.

and planning of their programmes through regular workshops transformed and sustained the WF as a source for her active and steady socio-political involvement.

iv) **Community organising and the task of the church**

Two unemployed youths, who are students of the CE, shared the following story of how their initiatives on Christian discipleship led them to community organising :

In one of our seminars¹⁰⁷ on '**Christian responsibility and unemployment**' we learned to make pickles and juice. We prepared and sold them; we created public awareness of nutritious food and the problem of unemployment. We, however, could not compete with the low prices of the large companies. Consequently, we switched to bee keeping and candle making. As the competition was still fierce, we worked as cooperatives to promote our home industries. Following Jesus, we resisted the competition of the companies with writings and protests.

The study of 'Christian responsibility and unemployment' disclosed the staunch faith of the students of the CE that Christ was involved in their daily socio-political struggles. They were convinced that Christ was with them, leading them to combine their feedback and initiate follow-up action. They became aware of the fact that God sided with the weak, and never broke a bruised reed or quenched a smouldering wick; God provided fullness of life.¹⁰⁸ The tutors of the CE also initiated continuing studies for their students¹⁰⁹ and provided consultation opportunities throughout their studies. In addition, the study focused on unemployment, enabling them to evaluate the roles played by the rich and the multinational companies in obstructing home industries, initiated by the unemployed youth. The practice of frequent evaluation and social analysis inspired their strategic involvement in addressing unemployment. Abraham in his book, 'The logic of evangelism' confirms their convictions: "Initiation into God's Reign is also a matter of learning to give oneself fully in the work of the Kingdom".¹¹⁰ Subsequently, the youth created public awareness regarding the problem of unemployment and of addressing it more effectively.

107. As students of the CE, the youth conducted a series of seminars related to their overall aim, 'For Christ and for church'. Their recent seminar focused on 'Christian responsibility' and explored the implications of unemployment as a socio-political issue.

108. Mt 12:20.

109. The series of seminars equipped the youth to continue reflection and related action.

110. W. J. Abraham, *The logic of evangelism*, 2001, p. 103.

A local unit of the WF equipped their members towards socio-political involvement by addressing **the lack of drinking water in their village**. Elucidating their experience, one member said:

There was a drought and we had a problem with our public water system. We formed long queues, fighting to buy water. We prayed about this in our weekly meetings and reflected on the problem from within the framework of ‘God’s mission’. Soon we sorted out the in-fighting amongst the village women; and finally, we organised ourselves, went together to the ‘water supply authorities’, and obtained their assistance to attend to our problem.

When there had been no drinking water for long due to drought and problem with their public water pipes, the members of the WF had taken steps to resolve it. They prayed together as the WF and viewed it from the perspective of God’s mission. Hence, they had explored the root causes of the problem. This assisted them to overcome their divisions and to unite the village women to address the issue through concrete action.¹¹¹ It boosted their confidence to have resolved the matter with the authorities. Remarkably, their faith in God in prayer had empowered them. This caused them to realise their basic human rights and to unite in their daily struggles and hope for better living conditions.¹¹² They regarded God’s mission as an act of love towards the transformation of each individual, as well as the whole of society.¹¹³ This experience instigated them to review and update the WF programmes towards their socio-political context.

v) Biographies of missionaries and socio-political factors

A student of the CR narrates their study on the biographies of evangelists and missionaries who wrote hymns:

111. The respondent explained during interview that the issue of lack of water was left unattended for sometime, and the WF had taken initiative to create awareness among women in addressing it. They based their reflections on Mt 6:33 and Ex 17:2.

112. The public water-pipe system had been damaged months ago and the authorities left it uncared for. Although the public reported this matter repeatedly to the water-supply authority, they showed carelessness, expecting bribes. Hence, the women reflected on the issue from a contextual perspective of God’s mission. As a result, they organised themselves and went together to the water supply authority and settled their problem. This is a common practice in South India, including the Kanyakumari district.

113. A fermented, yeast-like nature of God’s Kingdom. Cf. Mt 13:33.

We held a series of workshops for our deacons¹¹⁴ and lay leaders on the topic of ‘hymns’. Thus, we learned how specific writers of hymns regarded their daily socio-political involvement as God’s mission, and how they received insight for composing their hymns. Although it was long ago, their lives, like the life of Jesus, inspired us to address our contemporary socio-political issues. Indeed, a lit candle ignites another unlit candle!

Motivated by the exemplary lives of the authors of hymns,¹¹⁵ they organised workshops on ‘hymns’ for the deacons and lay leaders of the diocese. A review of the firm faith of the missionaries of the past and their contributions towards addressing socio-political issues nurtured their own faith and socio-political involvement. In turn, they became, to some extent, the continuation of those missionaries in the diocese.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the socially oriented perspectives of the authors of hymns were the source of their contemporary socio-political involvement. They took the life of Jesus with His teachings as their role model in God’s mission, who guided others like a shining light in addressing their socio-political issues.¹¹⁷ The respondent referred to a popular saying in the Kanyakumari district regarding a lit candle igniting another;¹¹⁸ thus she illustrated the authenticity and relevance of her experience in her socio-political context.

vi) **Some distorted convictions and the task of the church**

One of the tutors of the UESI regarded ‘**the winning of souls**’ as the main mission of the church. She appeared as very serious and burdened, and commented:

We presented workshops on the topic of the church’s mission and declared that our bodies would perish, but that our souls were ‘holy’ and immortal. Our students received the burden of winning souls for Christ. They responded to our ‘altar-calls’ and sacrificed their lives for missionary work.

114. ‘Deacons’ are the members of a parish council or local church committee; ‘lay leaders’ are those who serve as leaders of the ministries of the church among children, youngsters and women.

115. For instance, the respondents quoted hymn 356 from the diocesan hymnbook, “Oh compassionate Lord...” which had been written by the first bishop of the diocese, namely, I. R. H. Gnanadhasan. He introduced this hymn while advocating the plight of the poor in the Kanyakumari district and the lepers of the island of Papua to whom the CSI sent a missionary.

116. According to the respondent, the practitioners of the CR recalled the voices of the apostles and the writers of the epistles, saying, “Remember your leaders, those who spoke the Word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith”. Ref. Heb 13:7 (NRSV).

117. The organiser quoted Jn 1:4 to validate his view. The organisers of the workshop were pastors, skilled in contextual theology, who lived in solidarity with the people in pain and struggles for their basic human rights and for social justice. This was clear in some of their writings, presented in the back issues of ‘Desopakari’, a monthly magazine of the diocese.

119. ‘A lit candle ignites another unlit candle!’ is a common saying in South India.

According to this tutor, the task of the church was to preach the gospel. Evangelism was to win ‘souls’ for Christ. Nevertheless, it seemed that the UESI had a **predetermined dualistic conviction of people**, specifically, soul and body, holy and unholy, and immortal and mortal. Further, on the one hand, they believed that ‘spiritual matters’ was holy and ‘immortal’. On the other hand, they viewed socio-political issues as unholy and ‘mortal’. They motivated their students to relate the gospel only to people’s ‘souls’, and to become missionaries to win ‘souls’ for Christ. Consequently, they missed their opportunities to address their contemporary socio-political factors. During this specific interview, this tutor showed no interest in any socio-political involvement.

The practitioners of the UESI regarded **evangelism as a tool to convert non-Christians** towards becoming members of the church. A well-educated young student of the UESI uttered the following with pride and confidence:

We are ‘born again’. We are ‘holy’ when we do not relate with sinners and pagans.¹¹⁹ We dream to convert all ‘non-Christians’ of our district to Christianity. As the socio-political evils increase day by day, we should be busy, winning ‘souls’ for Christ and for his fold.¹²⁰

This student has had a pietistic approach regarding the task of the church. His belief indicated that once people joined the church they would be perfect in personal holiness. He made it clear that when people became holy they did not relate with ‘sinners’ or ‘socio-political evils’. Consequently, the practitioners of the UESI refused or, at least, hesitated to address socio-political issues. In addition, the respondent viewed the victims of the socio-political issues as ‘wicked’, and the non-Christians as ‘pagans’, who lacked wisdom. Hence, the programme was found irrelevant regarding socio-political factors.

A young woman expressed strong feelings and signs of frustration over **‘the double standard’** promoted in her training programme.¹²¹ She said:

119. By ‘pagan’ the respondent referred to people who were not Christians.

120. The respondent referred to the Christians who followed classic pietistic Christology as the ‘fold’ or ‘true church’.

121. She was a student of UESI. She looked sad, her voice was soft and heavy with sorrow; she expressed feelings of anger especially when she mentioned how the UESI ignored the widening gap between the rich and the poor in South India.

We were presented booklets and posters of the sacrificial biographies of various missionaries as role models. They, however, over-emphasised the rewards that the missionaries would receive in heaven and the riches and positions their children would receive from God on earth. This advocated a spirit of ‘a pious life, but seeking luxury, status, huge houses and important positions as God’s blessings’. Yet, the gap between the rich and poor in our district widens day by day.

The study material did not encourage students to review the gap between the rich and the poor that is widening steadily in the district. A conclusion from the response was that the gap between the rich and the poor was unbridgeable. Moreover, the missionary biographies were misinterpreted as if luxury and status were justified, as long as the practitioners were children of contemporary pastors or missionaries. The ‘pious’ Christians who gave alms to the poor were also not discouraged from seeking luxury and developing a spirit of consumerism. Thus, the programme was found unhelpful to address the socio-political issues.

4.1.4 The ministerial resources

A popular African story about war tactics went as follows: “The Zulu King Shaka, a popular warrior in Southern Africa, used to take his soldiers away from the front line of the battle, provided them with enough food and other resources so that they were strengthened to fight again. This assured success...” Likewise, the strength for Christian life and ministry is to “... grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ”.¹²²

By ‘Growing up’ Paul means the development of inner resources. Our growth process or spiritual maturity takes time and effort on our part to utilise the ministerial resources like the Bible, prayer and team ministry.

A general observation to reiterate regarding Christian life and work is that people are asked to put their faith or spirituality into action, as if faith did not include action. Jesus, however, pronounces that spirituality is interwoven with action and daily socio-political involvement.¹²³ As Hammar skjold writes instinctively: "In our era, the road to holiness

122. Eph 4:15 Cf. Phil 3:12-16.

123. Lk 6:43-45; Mt 5:13-16; Jn 3:8.

necessarily passes through the world of action."¹²⁴ Delineating this view further, Gilbert explains that people are capable of living their faith in all spheres of their daily lives:

Spiritual has to do with soul - that which is irreducible in us - an understanding that we are both homo faber-the working animal - and homo spiritus - the religious creature. We are the ones about whom there is no "bottom line." People are not cost-effective. We are both a deep well of faith and a teeming river of action which cannot be quantified.¹²⁵

Bible study, prayer and team ministry are some of the resources through which God inspires and empowers us, to act on our faith; this in turn deepens and strengthens our faith. Therefore, this section displays how the ministerial resources determined the socio-political involvement of the practitioners of the training programmes.

i) The Bible-study and the socio-political factors

The person who delights in the Word of God and meditates on it day and night will be "like trees planted by streams of water which yield their fruit in its season".¹²⁶ They are like "... a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on the rock".¹²⁷ Studying Bible together in a group gives vision for our participation in God's mission. It encourages our growth in Christ as His disciples, and increases our commitment. Mouw, as perceived by Sherry presents Bible-study relating to socio-political context as the first central activity of Christianity: "God's word has direct implications for politics, and those who have heard that word cannot keep silent".¹²⁸

A student of the CE described how Bible studies revitalised them:

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124. D. Hammarskjold, *Markings*, n.d., <<http://www.ivmdl.org/quotables.cfm?quoteid=917&cat=Work>> (18 March 2006)
125. R. S. Gilbert, *Confessions of a Militant Mystic: Spirituality and Social Action - A Seamless Garment*, 1996, <http://www.uuma.org/BerryStreet/Essays/BSE1996.htm>> (03 March 2005).
126. Ps 1:1-3.
127. Lk 6:46-49.
128. P. H. Sherry, *A review on Politics and the Biblical Drama by R. J. Mouw*, n.d., <<http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/jul1977/v34-2-bookreview2.htm>> (15 February 2006).

We chose the book of Exodus for our weekly Bible-study with the theme, ‘**God on our journey of liberation!**’ We reviewed how God heard the cries of the Israelites and delivered them from their slavery in Egypt at approximately the 13th century BC. Exodus revealed their experience of God’s guidance throughout their journey of liberation. Reviewing these experiences in the light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we gained understanding. It also raised some questions, but it inspired and empowered us to address our socio-political problems.¹²⁹

Through their regular Bible-study, the practitioners of the CE were convinced that during biblical times people had experienced God’s presence and acts in their daily lives. They also identified their daily needs according to socio-political issues. They tried to relate the biblical messages to their contemporary socio-political contexts. They confirmed the relevance of the Bible in the light of the life, words, and deeds of Christ and devised plans of action to address their daily personal and socio-political problems. They viewed their Bible-study of Exodus as their daily ‘community act’ of addressing socio-political factors. The respondent, however, was honest enough to say that their studies did not answer all their questions; this challenged them to keep on searching the Bible.

An uneducated member of the parish gladly described how their contextual Bible-study assisted them to grow together as a community. He told their story:

Recently we held a series of Bible-studies on ‘**Jesus, the good neighbour**’. The invited resource people were open for criticism. They ate with us and allowed us to tell them incidents from our day-to-day socio-political context. We viewed one another as neighbours and expressed our needs. We created our own resources of learning, following the early church.

The theme of the series of Bible-studies, ‘**Jesus, the good neighbour**’, showed Jesus, being involved in contemporary socio-political factors. The resource people with the parishioners endeavoured to create a vibrant learning climate. They sat together as a

129. For instance, killing baby-girls. Cf. throwing baby boys in the Nile river (Ex 1:15-22); becoming organised as a community of faith and addressing the socio-political issues such as dowries, unemployment and bribes; cf. the Israelites becoming organised under Moses and Aaron, resisting Pharaoh’s oppression; sharing resources; cf. the sharing of the Pascal lamb, manna and water (Ex 12:4ff; ch.16); decentralising power; cf. Moses’ sharing responsibilities (Ex 18); establishing policies and structures, sustaining equality and social justice; cf. laws set up to determine equality between the rulers and the ruled, the natives and the aliens (Ex 23).

token of being **good neighbours**. Mutual views, experiences, values, and visions were shared. This built up their faith that ‘the church as the whole people of God was a learning resource, studying the Word of God’. Moreover, the more they developed their skills in socially oriented Christology, the more spontaneous they became in relating the Bible texts to their daily personal and socio-political problems. As leaders and parishioners they became open to express their expectations spontaneously. Following the example of the early church, they fostered an attitude of sharing resources. Their regular practice of praying, Bible study and sharing with the needy encouraged a common devotion to address their socio-political issues. As a result, their programme became more relevant and vibrant.

A student of the SCMI, who originally harboured some fears and doubts about socially oriented Christology, attended a special programme of the SCMI where the participants were prepared to confront their socio-political contexts creatively. Cherishing her learning with joy, she stated:

Due to the influence of fundamentalism,¹³⁰ with the spiritualising¹³¹ of the Bible and promoting individual blessings,¹³² we found it difficult and unbiblical to do exegesis with the Bible, relating it to our socio-political contexts. The recent workshop on ‘**Towards a new creation: Combat unhelpful trends in Bible-studies**’, however, trained us in socially oriented Christology. Now I have found our workshops creative. I could also contribute to them.

As a result of the assistance and empowering of the SCMI training the respondent accepted her programmes with enthusiasm. Developing her knowledge and skills in the socially oriented Christological workshop, she began to apply God’s Word spontaneously to socio-political issues.¹³³ She showed pride and joy regarding the SCMI. She worked

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130. The religious fundamentalism has been referred to here. It was a spirit that denied socio-political change that took place. It considered every word of the Bible as a law and interpreted the Bible texts out of context. It also insisted them to seek a literal meaning of the Bible.
131. In an act of spiritualising, people misinterpreted matters related to socio-political contexts as not spiritual. Various ‘sectarian’ groups promoted this trend in the Kanyakumari district.
132. Various ‘sectarian’ groups promoted this trend in the Kanyakumari district. They presented a few biblical words and phrases as promises of God’s blessings to people who seek vested interests, without challenging them to respond to their socio-political issues.
133. Just like the rain that fell to the earth and effected what God intended it to do. Cf. Isa 55:11.

enthusiastically with others in the recent workshops and made fine contributions to the different programmes. Moreover, the biblical contextual approach empowered the students to apply God's promises of personal wholeness, as well as wholeness in the community and all of creation; this was important in a broken socio-political context. Consequently, they resisted the spirit of 'fundamentalism' and 'spiritualising the Bible'. Furthermore, they cautioned other members of the diocese to renounce the unhelpful ideologies of 'blessings'. They exposed members to the surprising news of God that challenged and transformed their personal and communal lives.

A young, poor Dalit student of the UESI, coming from an overcrowded area, shared her painful story with the groups. Her face and tone of voice expressed despair and depression while she uttered:

I shared my situation with my tutor as I did not have funds to continue my studies, and our little 'make-shift' house was broken into, while there was no electricity. Yet, he kept quoting Bible texts and encouraged me to pray. Although I prayed continuously and sincerely, I found no relief. He replied, however, 'the Almighty God had his own time'. Even so, why would Jesus not feed me when I was hungry, seeing that he fed the hungry multitude? Why would he not turn water into wine today at my home?¹³⁴

On the one hand, her description showed that she realised that the pietistic approach in the Bible-studies has not been relevant to address her daily problems. There is an indicator in the advice of the tutor quoting biblical texts and asking her to pray constantly that he had expected her to sustain her faith in Jesus as Almighty King, everything else would be set aright to her by itself. Yet, she had not felt free to continue reading and prayers. By referring to Jesus who fed the hungry she expected and aspired that Jesus would participate in her daily socio-political struggles. The society and even sometimes fellow Christians discriminated against her as a Dalit. She was discouraged to regard Jesus empowering her to address her socio-political issues; she was completely depressed and felt hopeless to a great extent about her UESI programme with its pietistic Christology. On the other hand, two tutors of the UESI exclaimed with passion that, "Like Jesus, we must become a holy nation, meditating daily on God's Word". By the

134. She quoted Jn 6:1-14 and 2:1-12.

word 'holy', the tutors of the UESI correctly showed the significance of the relationship of intimacy one needed to keep up with Christ, which was at the heart of Christian spirituality.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, there was an indication in their response that **adherence to certain ethical codes determined people's holiness, as well as an exclusive fellowship with others who strictly followed pietistic confessional Christology.**

ii) A daily devotional life with prayer, and socio-political factors

The history of exodus of the Hebrew slaves from bondage in Egypt begins with Moses' prayerful experience of God's intimate presence and self-revelation on Mount Horeb. It was in that prayer Moses received God's command to liberate his people from their socio-political oppression.¹³⁶ Likewise, the Lord's Prayer is 'the true Exodus prayer' of God's people. It unfolds God's promised Kingdom that breaks into the history and the world, summoning us to share it.¹³⁷ In turn, the Church around the world, particularly in South India strive to cultivate such an intimate relationship between their prayer and daily socio-political involvement and transform the society through those who cherish a vibrant prayer life.

Some responses of the members of the diocese showed that the training considered to some extent the significant role of prayer and Christian spirituality in the people's struggle for justice and socio-political transformation. The researcher scrutinised these responses and showed in this section how the training programmes with the different paradigms dealt with prayer and devotions in the light of the socio-political factors.

The responses indicated that the practitioners with the socially oriented paradigm experienced their prayers and daily devotions as a fruitful resource that empowered them in addressing the socio-political factors. In this regard, a senior student of CE explained:

135. Jn 15:15; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6.

136. Ex 3:1-12.

137. Mt 6:9-15; Lk 11:1-4.

Last year our textbook contained the biographies of some missionaries to India. We reviewed the life and work of these missionaries.¹³⁸ We initiated a prayer cell in our parish and prayed regularly for the victims of the socio-political issues around us. Initially only family members came together and later on people of various socio-political backgrounds¹³⁹ joined us. We began to work with the local socio-political victims;¹⁴⁰ in addition, we sent missionaries to work with the hill-tribes,¹⁴¹ addressing their issues.

Obviously, the sacrificial service of the missionaries to people of other cultures and their exemplary socio-political involvement had fostered the CE practitioners' spiritual formation. Their regular meditation on selected Bible texts and themes, and the feedback in their prayer cells transformed their values, attitudes, and priorities in life. The more they grew in God's love, the more they were involved in socio-political matters.

Eventually their prayer and devotions inspired their family members as well as their neighbours with various social backgrounds to attend their prayer cell. As they grew in their unity, they experienced additional strength in identifying and addressing the local socio-political factors, as well as those among the hill tribes.

It became known that the practitioners of the CWTP gathered regularly near the seashore of Muttom, almost a central place in CSI Kanyakumari diocese. Coming from far-off villages, they resided two weekends every month for prayer and study. A student of the CWTP sounded happy and honest when he said:

138. They acted like Emi Carmichael, William Carey and Ida Scudder. Emi was a missionary from the LMS who organised Christians to combat illiteracy; she was also involved in medical mission and promoted the rights of widows and orphans. Carey was from the Baptist Missionary Society who came to Kolkata in 1793. He was well known for his courageous acts of stopping the social evil of 'Sati', (a rite where the wife of a dead man was tied to his dead body and burned); he managed to translate the Bible, (and in some cases specific Bible texts), into forty Indian languages; he also organised a 'jute' factory and other projects for the unemployed, as well as establishing the University of Serampore. Scudder was a missionary from the LMS who founded Vellore, a Christian Medical College.

139. The Dalits, the women, the unemployed, the refugees, and the rich and powerful.

140. After regular visits the members of the CE established a fund to assist the poor and the needy in their parish and society. They also started an advisory group to work with the church committee to coordinate their programmes in addressing issues of illiteracy, dowries, the abuse of alcohol and 'meter' interest.

141. The prayer cell of the CE made a start to support the missionary work of the diocese among the hill tribes in the district of Salem, which is about 400 kilometres from the Kanyakumari district.

As we were in a ‘devoted’ place, we conducted daily devotions similar to Jesus and his disciples. Every day we prayed the Lord’s Prayer meaningfully.¹⁴² We met people of other faiths and castes and reflected on their socio-political issues. Thus, today we have understood them and God’s mission better. We identified our mutual characteristics and reciprocally supported one another in our struggle for social justice.

The CWTTP students made the necessary arrangements with their work responsibilities and with their homes, while staying in a ‘devoted’ place far away; they did this regularly every month for a weekend. Thus, they could relax and make themselves available to experience God’s presence in their life situations. Besides, the organisers supported them financially to travel and stay at their retreat centre. This enabled them to develop their prayers and devotions. Through meditation on set prayers, such as the Lord’s Prayer, they learned to extend solidarity with others in their worries and also in their vision towards their personal and socio-political development. Consequently, they made a start to cross the barriers of life based on castes and creeds; they started to work for social justice together with their Hindu neighbours. Besides, there is a hint in the response that they followed the role model of Jesus, who often went to a separate, ‘devoted’ place with the team of twelve for prayer and training towards God’s mission.¹⁴³ Identifying themselves with Jesus and his disciples, they fostered a ‘natural awareness’ of God’s presence and an integrated spiritual life.

A senior student of the CWTTP displayed the significance of their experience of prayer life that strengthened their team ministry, and, in turn, promoted the relevance of their programme regarding socio-political factors. Relating his story, he said:

142. He explained his understanding of the Lord’s Prayer, based on his learning at the CWTTP: “The Lord’s Prayer enabled us to experience God’s presence in our community. Saying ‘Our Father’, we acknowledged that we were inseparably tied together with others as sisters and brothers. We prayed for people in pain and for their basic rights. We renewed our trust in God’s empowering and guiding presence. By saying, ‘Yours is the Kingdom...’, we acknowledged that God’s transforming presence, and acts of justice and love would always be with us. Saying ‘amen’, we re-dedicated ourselves to God as his co-workers and living sacrifices”.

143. Mt 17:1-4; 26:36-46.

There have been several court cases between the CSI and the LMS.¹⁴⁴ It divided members of the same families. We soon realised how we had contradicted Jesus' prayer.¹⁴⁵ So, we made a start to attend the local 'Christian Union'¹⁴⁶ and prayed with the LMS workers. This led us to exchange views and we also discovered and appreciated the talents of the LMS members. We gradually modified our curriculum and addressed the issue of denominationalism more effectively.

These court cases disclosed that the spirit of division and animosity reached a crisis among the Christians of the CSI and the LMS in the Kanyakumari district. This situation showed that it was necessary that the students and staff of the CWTP developed a spirit of ecumenism based on Jesus' prayer for unity. Their experience of praying together as members of the CSI and the LMS created new attitudes of support and equality among them. It also led them to exchange mutual views; they started to empower one another by identifying and using their talents. Eventually, the members of the prayer group of the CWTP attempted to revive the curriculum in a way that it could address the growing spirit of denominationalism and other socio-political issues.

The respondents from the UESI claimed that prayer and socio-political factors did not relate to each other. Although she was jobless and abused, a young Dalit woman student of the UESI strongly argued, "...it is not God's will to mix prayer with socio-political factors". Obviously, she did not relate her prayers and meditations to her abuse and discrimination, based on caste, gender, and unemployment. Thus, she did not experience prayer as a resource empowering her to address her socio-political problems. Another student of the UESI said, "Though I prayed continually, I found no relief and I am frustrated". She was poor and came from an overcrowded slum area. They broke into her little makeshift house. Nevertheless, it seems that she did not feel free from her socio-political problems just by praying and not acting in response. Hence, she did not feel to continue with her prayers.

144. Churches of the London Missionary Society that did not join the union of the CSI are known as LMS churches.

145. Jn 17:21: "...that they may all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me". (NRSV).

146. 'Christian Unity' is a fraternity of church workers and pastors coming from different denominations in the village.

iii) Team ministry and the socio-political factors

People have always existed in relationships. The narration of the garden of Eden¹⁴⁷ reminds us that God has created human beings in God's own image to work in partnership with him, others and nature.¹⁴⁸ Working together in a team, we realise greater power,¹⁴⁹ equipping us to relate and react to socio-political factors.

The practitioners had worked in teams in their study-groups, task forces, committees, and boards. Some of these teams that achieved exceptional results disclosed a few consistently similar characteristics: The students of the CWTTP developed team ministry with the LMS and promoted a team spirit among them throughout their training at Muttom. A senior student said, "A team spirit inspired us to develop our talents and relationships with God, others and nature". As they were in a team for four to five years, they gradually became open to one another's views, fears, doubts, and hopes. They built strong trust in their team. They shared mutual criticism and became involved in one another's struggles. They also learned to allow members in the team to outperform other members. Their experience and Bible-studies taught them to treasure the inherent wisdom and value of team ministry.¹⁵⁰ As a team they addressed and transcended barriers of creeds, castes and class.

There was an effective spirit of co-operation and teamwork among the organiser of a unit of the SCMI in a college, the chaplain of the college and the CISRS.¹⁵¹ A young woman student of the SCMI, who migrated from her village to study, said the following:

147. Gen 2:15-24.

148. Gen 1:28; 2:15.

149. "In the multitude of counsellors there was safety and wisdom; if one faltered the others picked that one up". Cf. Prov 11:14; 15:22; Eccl 4:9-12. No one has had all the necessary gifts for a situation, thus, they complemented one another.

150. During the interview the respondent cited the following texts regarding the contexts of team ministries from the Scriptures: When Christ sent out His disciples, he sent them in pairs (Mk 6:7); He established a pattern of team ministry that continued after his ascension (Acts 1:21-26; 2:1). Thus, we see in the Book of Acts a type of ministry conducted by apostolic teams, such as Peter and John (Acts 3:1), and Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2); at the local level, a number of elders were chosen to guide and care for each new community of believers (Acts 6:1-4).

151. The CISRS stands for The Centre for Information and Study of Religion and Society.

The learning atmosphere¹⁵² in my college inspired me to join the SCMI. I noticed that their study material reflected my painful life situation.¹⁵³ Yet, they did not communicate with me.¹⁵⁴ Our chaplain, however, who worked in a team with the organiser of the SCMI, assisted me¹⁵⁵ to relate the material to my daily life. Moreover, the CISRS cooperated with the SCMI in enriching our material with more information on social analysis and reflection.¹⁵⁶ They knew that a chord of three strands was not easily broken.

This response of the student of the SCMI made it clear that the SCMI, the college chaplain and the CISRS could sustain an interaction between the study material of the SCMI and the socio-political factors. It became clear that they addressed common issues such as poverty, unemployment, and dowries that affected young students. They considered the victims of these issues as their common target groups and worked with them. This allowed them to exchange insights and experience in social analysis and socio-political involvement. Moreover, the chaplain had paid individual attention to students, counselled them in their distresses, and empowered them. Thus, team ministry had encouraged the practitioners of SCMI to address their daily socio-political issues effectively. They were convinced that "...a chord of three strands is not easily broken".¹⁵⁷

The story of a poor widow from a local unit of the WF revealed the fact that a genuine fellowship and combined worship with other members of the WF fostered a strong team spirit; in turn, it strengthened their socio-political involvement. The widow stated:

I have lived on a piece of land close to our parish and worshipped with my friends. Last year at my daughter's marriage, I needed a large amount of money to present as 'dowries'. A parish elder loaned me money, but with high interest. When I could not repay him, he 'pushed' me into a remote slum. I left my house for him. The WF members, however, bought the present land and built this house for me. On alternative Sunday evenings they held worship gatherings here. Other poor women joined us and we related to our socio-political issues.

152. She meant the facilities, for example, staff, fellow students, and the library that fostered the learning spirit of the students.

153. The respondent was from a broken family; daily violence and the plundering of her village affected her life and studies.

154. The format and the presentation of the information in the study material did not impress her.

155. He assisted her by counselling and conducting relevant Bible-studies.

156. The leaders of the SCMI received and used the material of the CISRS for social analysis and critical reflection.

157. Eccl 4:12.

It sounded as if this respondent was honest and satisfied. The socio-political issues such as dowries and 'dispossession' disturbed her deeply. As she was poor and deserted, the fellowship and worship with other members of the WF were crucial to encourage and sustain her self-confidence and faith. Consequently, she was cheerful and optimistic when she had the opportunity to attend worship meetings and the training of the WF. It was wonderful that the members of the WF assisted her to use their programmes; they treasured her spirit of learning and her willingness to face the daily socio-political issues. Thus, their team spirit triumphed and strengthened their regular worship; it cultivated their programmes to become more accessible and relevant to them.

A student of the VBS told the following story:

On the last day of our 'VBS 2003' we had a procession to advance slogans.¹⁵⁸ The public criticised us that we had acted 'against the spirit of Christ'. Our committee responded and worked with the tutors of the SS in a team towards creating new slogans, which related to our life situation.¹⁵⁹ Consequently, the public were happy to see the kids of different faiths enjoying the 'VBS-2004'. It indeed sowed the seeds of hope to build a caring community in our village.

Examining the feedback, the organisers of the VBS promptly delegated the VBS Committee¹⁶⁰ to develop new slogans for the VBS programme of the following year. In addition, they had observed, evaluated and noted the student's behaviour before¹⁶¹ and after¹⁶² responding to the feedback. They treasured and endorsed what they learned from their past experience. Furthermore, it was clear that their strong faith in God, who has brought harmony and beauty out of chaos,¹⁶³ contributed to their efficient teamwork. The sharing of success and challenges on a regular basis improved the quality of their action in response to socio-political factors, and also assisted to establish profound bonds of fellowship amongst the team members. It was noted that the villagers had involved in

158. For instance, 'Jesus is our King!', 'The cross is our symbol!' and 'India is for Jesus!' These slogans sounded parochial to the Hindus and Muslims in their villages. They felt excluded and offended by the Christians.

159. For instance, 'We are all God's people', 'We are sisters and brothers!' and 'Let's cross the barriers of the castes and creeds'.

160. A committee established in local parishes to organise the VBS for their parishioners.

161. That is, right after the 'VBS-2003'.

162. That is, right after the 'VBS-2004'.

163. Gen 1: 1-4.

conflicts based on the differences in their religions, and that they harboured bitterness towards one another. Children of various creeds attended the ‘VBS-2004’ and joined the final day procession in the village, raising the new slogans related to their common dedication to address the socio-political issues. As a result, they received feedback from the public saying that their ‘VBS- 2004’ was relevant to their socio-political context.

4.1.5 Pastoral counselling and socio-political factors

In South India, counselling was primarily regarded as a particular ‘**relationship**’ between people, leading to emotional and spiritual healing, growth and renewal towards becoming autonomous and caring in one’s life and one’s daily relationships. Many members of the diocese spent more time at work than at home. Consequently, the relationships with their professional colleagues became almost as important as that of their family members.¹⁶⁴ This often caused strain in their relationships at home, in their vicinity and at work unless they had balanced lives regarding their ordinary lives and their work lives. In this context, some counsellors in South India have named counselling as ‘therapeutic counselling’. They used words, such as ‘counselling’, ‘therapy’, and ‘psychotherapy’ interchangeably.¹⁶⁵ Though planned and professional counselling was a recent phenomenon, informal and valuable counselling had been conducted for a long time in the diocese. The responses revealed that members of the diocese spontaneously counselled as parents, cousins, uncles and aunts, teachers and ‘visionaries’.¹⁶⁶

The practitioners of the training programmes in general cheerfully named counselling as a regular ‘ministry’ of the diocese. They believed that they were involved in that ministry together with others and God. Christ has given to the church many ministries to build

164. The relationships of the members of the extended families in the Kanyakumari district remained strong for generations. Moreover, they worked together for long times in agricultural fields and at various institutions. They were engaged in common tasks as families, peer groups, colleagues at work, and as fellow believers at parishes.

165. J. Prashantham, *Indian case studies in Therapeutic counselling*, 1978, p. 11.

166. The SS, CE, WF, CR, and parish-based study programmes had their local units in each parish. The practitioners of these programmes were hence together during important family occasions of joy and sadness. Thus, they quite naturally brought their socio-political problems in their programmes for reflection, counselling and possible responses.

up the body of Christ.¹⁶⁷ Pastoral counseling particularly takes its cue as a ministry of the church from the traditional functions of a shepherd, that is to support, heal, guide, and reconcile.¹⁶⁸ Thus, the ministry of counselling aims at edifying the members in maturity that together they may serve and call the whole of creation to Christ. Accordingly, the responses unveiled that the ministry of counselling in the diocese considered the interplay among the universal process of human development, spiritual formation, and the socio-political context.

i) **Juvenile delinquency and pastoral counselling**

A number of youths in the diocese were involved in 'juvenile delinquency'.¹⁶⁹ They were maladjusted and displayed anti-social behaviour, such as 'eve-teasing', crime and acts of terrorism. Some training programmes reacted to such socio-political factors through counselling sessions. In this regard a pastor from a programme of the VBS stated:

I had to patiently counsel a difficult student who came from a poor, broken family. Gradually I insured God's forgiveness and told him how Christ had suffered and how He had been denied a place in the inn at His birth, and how his parents had to flee with him to Egypt seeking refuge.¹⁷⁰ I showed him how Jesus empowered troubled young people to become effective leaders. Eventually he followed Jesus, changed his life-style and assisted me to relate the theme of the VBS¹⁷¹ to the socio-political issues of other youngsters.

This VBS student had been difficult to others, contrary to the aim of their programme, '**Bearing witness to Christ**'. He also abused drugs. During pastoral counselling the pastor discovered that the student was confused and frustrated; he was seeking for God's forgiveness and meaningful values in his life.¹⁷² From the beginning, the pastor had established a relationship based on the compassion of Christ.¹⁷³ He enabled the student to

167. Eph 4:11-16.

168. Ps 23; Ezek 34:11-16; Jn 10:11-16. Jesus commanded Peter to feed his sheep, that is to the ministry of pastoral care and counseling (Jn 21:15-17). In Jesus' forgiveness and call to Peter, we see God using God's every member of the church as a shepherd. Peter, like Paul, exhorts other elders to shepherd God's flock (1 Pet 5 Cf. Acts 20:28).

169. 'Juvenile delinquency' denotes anti-social or illegal behaviour of young people, usually younger than eighteen years old. Ref. Geddes & Grosset, *Webster's Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus*, 2003, p. 271.

170. Mt 2:13-15.

171. The theme of the 'VBS-2002' was, 'Bearing witness to Christ!'

172. Cf. J. Prashantham, *op. cit.*, 1978, p. 49.

173. Jn 13:34-35; Phil 1:8; Gal 6:1-2.

review who he was in relationship to God the Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer. After talking this over based on the Bible and faith,¹⁷⁴ he settled down and discovered God's purpose for his life. Consequently, he gave up his drugs and overcame his depression. Through counselling, he gained freedom and fellowship with his pastor, who served as a sounding board with an attitude of unconditional positive regard. He meditated God's Word continuously and was empowered to realise his potential. Gradually he developed a staunch faith and, bearing witness to Christ, he was transformed into a new person. According to the pastor, he became a respectable and lovable young man, a newborn in Christ, growing up towards maturity.¹⁷⁵ He also developed a commitment to address socio-political issues.

ii) **Eve-teasing and the pastoral counselling ministry of the church**

Illustrating her experience, a middle-aged woman of the WF Programme said,

Some women in our village filed cases against young men, as 'eve teasing' increased in our streets. Consequently, we started to relate our weekly prayer meetings and Bible-studies to gender issues. Our prayers revealed to us God's will, to be transformed by love and to be 'Christ's hands and heart' in our society. Gradually our leaders assisted us to counsel one another in our group. Thus, we could handle these issues amicably and victoriously.

The leaders of the WF approached the people's problems from their personal Christian faith and socio-political perspectives. After trying various methods to assist the members to resolve their issues, they initiated long-term group pastoral counselling.¹⁷⁶ Eventually, they realised that 'eve teasing' was an understandable part of 'growing up'; the youngsters expressed, through 'eve-teasing', a great curiosity regarding sex and how it functions in relationships.¹⁷⁷ The more they were criticised and cases filed against them,

174. Rom 3:23-24; 6:10-12; 1 Jn 5:3-5.

175. Cf. 1 Pet 2:2. He became a new born being daily renewed in knowledge according to the image of Christ. Ref. 2 Cor 4:16, 5:17; Col 3:10.

176. During an interview the respondent said some women had experienced severe psychological disturbances, leading to physical illness; they needed constructive therapy, as well as medical treatment.

177. According to the respondent their colleges and hostels were the main places of 'sex education'. A lot of material was found there and all kinds of experimentation occurred among male and female youths towards affirming their manhood and womanhood. These youths' sexual crises were ultimately resolved through wholesome marriages or beneficial celibacy.

the more they reacted, expressing shame, guilt and anger. As a result of their Bible study and group counselling, however, the women discerned God's will and experienced strength. They developed positive attitudes and learned to relate to the youngsters with adult love. They regarded them as fellow members of their own extended families. They realised that filed cases, even with good intentions, created only hatred and a spirit of revenge. Consequently, the women sought alternative ways towards the wholesome development of the youngsters, to become responsible people.

iii) Poverty and the counselling ministry of the church

A student of the WF Programme, who was a poor widow, told her story as follows:

The organisers of the WF counselled me and arranged the studies of my children.¹⁷⁸ I started to attend the WF Programme. They provided us with study material on 'The God of compassion'. We discussed this with great interest in our weekly meetings. It reflected our life situations and strengthened our self-confidence and hopes. Now my worries have been alleviated and I felt stronger in my faith. Now I have even been able to assist some of my friends who were in distress because of the burning socio-political issues.¹⁷⁹

Being a poor widow who had been rejected and abused, the respondent had much worries and anxieties in her life. Her parents did not receive her, although her parents-in-laws had rejected her. Their pietistically-oriented Christology caused them to misinterpret Bible texts and make her passive towards the injustice of her in-laws.¹⁸⁰ The WF leaders counselled her and understood her inner struggles. With compassion they assisted her with their insights from the Bible and Christian faith to realise that God was with her, involved in her pains and struggles. Eventually this helpless and unhappy woman regained some of her skills and developed her potential.¹⁸¹ She attended the meetings of

178. The respondent recounted that after the death of her husband she was repeatedly ill treated and rejected by her in-laws; the problem was that her parents couldn't provide the dowries to the in-laws, demanded by them at their marriage. Her own parents did not want to receive her back in their home, since she had been 'married and sent to another family'. Thus, she could not meet her daily needs and educate her children.

179. For instance, poverty, chronic-illness, meter-interest, and dowry.

180. They yelled at her and quoting the Bible where Sarah addressed her husband as 'her Lord' and Ruth 'clinging to her in-laws'; they chased her away.

181. She had skills in embroidery work, interior decoration, culinary arts and in counselling.

the WF, started reading their study material and reflected on ‘The God of compassion’.¹⁸² This nurtured her attitude of learning and critical thinking. Consequently, she recovered completely and resumed counselling others in distress. She sounded cheerful and optimistic. Eventually the WF extended counselling to other members, produced relevant study material, and empowered other women to address their socio-political issues.

A student of the UESI commented:

Though my mother was very ill she worked hard and saved a little bit of money for my studies. My father, however, abused alcohol and took this money. Consequently, we had to borrow money for ‘meter interest’ and were immersed in debts. I was totally frustrated and could not study well. Luckily my tutor counselled me by consoling me, citing God’s Bible promises. He continued to visit, counsel and pray with me. I felt relieved, but wished someone would also assist me in resolving my problems at home.

Obviously, the student found the biblical counselling helpful to her. She, however, wished it to focus more on her socio-political issues that she had been wrestling with.¹⁸³ The pietistic theology of her tutor created a dualistic view of life. He divided her into body and mind, or something physical and something spiritual, and regarded these aspects as separate parts of one person. While counselling, he focused on the areas of her mind and spirituality alone, and ignored her physical socio-political problems. This could not assist her to address her poverty, and she found the training irrelevant.

iv) Crisis in social action and the counselling ministry

Having faced socio-political crises, the authors of the training programmes engaged in ‘crisis intervention’ counselling. They aimed at immediate relief to overcome crises. A social worker on the editorial board of Desopakari¹⁸⁴ told her story:

182. Encountering the experiences of the women with pain, due to socio-political factors, the leaders of the WF prepared their own study material on ‘The God of compassion’.

183. She was a victim of the abuse of alcohol, poverty, ‘meter-interest’ and the violence of a ‘money-lender’. Her gestures and tone of voice conveyed clearly that she was very frustrated.

184. Desopakari is the monthly magazine of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese, issued by the Department of Communication and Revival (CR).

Whenever I proposed new themes for regular study,¹⁸⁵ others on our board rejected them and I was frustrated. Subsequently, a senior member counselled us ‘like Jesus’ and initiated a basic pledge regarding our curriculum: To equip our readers to approach socio-political issues from the viewpoint of society’s disadvantaged. Subsequently, the board included relevant themes in the magazine to study.

The meetings of the Desopakari editorial board were at a complete loss at a specific point; they were unable to think critically and creatively any more. Consequently, a senior member counselled them, extending a call to them to pray, and ‘bear one another’s burdens’.¹⁸⁶ He gradually guided them to an unanimous pledge for a relevant curriculum towards the socio-political factors. They had a staunch faith that Jesus endured doubts and fears, and worked through pastoral care and counselling and, consequently, they accepted the new approach.¹⁸⁷ According to feedback of readers, the magazine’s study programmes became more helpful in addressing socio-political issues.

v) Migration from village to city and the counselling ministry

An organiser of the SCMI had a similar story to tell:

Like Jesus, we would like to be wherever our students are. We counselled students who came from far villages and enabled them to rely on God and respond to the town’s socio-political issues.¹⁸⁸ We also made our programmes accessible to other youngsters in slums and the town’s outskirts¹⁸⁹ where they encountered evil; this was the result of migrating from villages. All of them found our programmes accessible and relevant.

Having migrated from villages the youth had ended up in slums. From there, they attended their study in the colleges that were located in the city. They in the slums experienced health hazards and a lack of drinking water. In addition, they experienced alienation and problems, such as ‘eve teasing’. Through pastoral counselling the

185. For instance, ‘The castes and Christian Marriage’ and ‘Stewardship towards admissions and appointments’.

186. Gal 6:2.

187. In their view, Jesus knows people’s fears and counsels them to overcome them. Ref. Mark 2:8.

188. For instance, ‘eve teasing’, abuse of alcohol/drugs, and crime.

189. They conducted seminars, running for a full day or a weekend, combining it with social action such as introducing health care and literacy programmes in the local community.

organisers of the SCMI guided them and provided Christian fellowship. They also attended to youngsters in the slums who could not afford a college; the SCMI extended their training to them. The organisers believed that Jesus was present where there were people; Jesus would acknowledge the strengths, potential and the good in anyone.¹⁹⁰ As followers of Jesus they loved their neighbours abundantly. Realising God's love through the SCMI, several youth in the slums were gradually transformed; they became responsible and actively addressed their socio-political issues. The respondents expressed their contentment and joy over the relevance of their programme.

vi) Discrimination of women and the ministry of counselling

A member of the WF said:

At our last retreat, only two of us provided feedback, related to the Bible and 'spiritual matters'. Nevertheless, when we returned home, we expressed angry criticism against our leaders, as the WF was slow in addressing our socio-political issues.¹⁹¹ Finally, we left it to God to take care of our problems. Our leaders, however, patiently counselled us. They guided us with God's Word, towards providing feedback openly in our regular meetings and towards supporting one another to address our problems together. Now, our programme is more relevant.

The leaders of the WF empathetically listened¹⁹² and explained to the members how the women of the Bible reacted to their socio-political issues, and guided them to relate to God, following their examples.¹⁹³ This enabled them as the members of the WF to take individual and group responsibility to confront their socio-political issues. There is an intimation that the leaders had presented Jesus' expectation on them to be transparent in

190. Just as He did with the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4). In the view of the respondent, the SCMI believed that each youngster is a gifted person, endowed with potential. People should not deny their talents and not develop them; cf. Mt 25:14-30.

191. Some members of the WF complained about domestic violence against women and the prevailing culture of silence among women. Others mentioned how people abused power, sought vested interests, and were involved in acts of violence, crime and court cases. They were angry that the WF remained neutral towards these problems.

192. Empathetic listening occurs when we listen to another creatively in a way that reflects Jesus approach in Mt 7:12.

193. Miriam was organising others to resist the Egyptians throwing Hebrew boys in the Nile river (Ex 2:1-9); Deborah, a judge, assisted Israel to resolve their socio-political issues (Judg 4:4-6); they also explained how the risen Christ sent Mary Magdalene to organise his disciples as 'church' to address their socio-political issues (Mt 28:1-10).

their communication.¹⁹⁴ Eventually, after gaining experience in the WF, they conveyed their views at the forums of the church.¹⁹⁵ Some became deaconesses, active members of the parish committee; they organized their parishioners to address their socio-political factors. Obviously, counselling enabled the women as a means to provide feedback; consequently, it empowered them to address their socio-political issues.

Counselling was experienced by many practitioners as an answer to the prayer, ‘Lord, give me the grace to change what can be changed, to accept what can not be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference’. They found counselling as an instrument of caring and loving relationships, to increase a person’s or group’s love for God, for others and for oneself, and to empower one to address one’s socio-political factors.

4.1.6 Communication and socio-political factors

Communication was generally understood as an act of conveying or imparting ‘facts’, transmitting written information, conversations, or talks, contact with people and the interchange of opinions or perceptions.

A review of the **ontological aspects** of communication hinted how essential it was to the existence of humanity and the universe. Indian Christian theologians generally concurred with the existential thought that “existence precedes essence”.¹⁹⁶ In doing theology they regarded matter, energy and relationships as the basic necessities for existence. Taking this into account, scientists and theologians argued that everything was related to something, or else it did not exist. In this regard, Talbot presented the following ‘fact’: “...subatomic particles for example, electrons are able to instantaneously communicate with each other regardless of the distance separating them. It doesn't matter whether they are 10 feet or 10 billion miles apart”.¹⁹⁷

194. Mt 23: 25-28.

195. For instance, in the meetings of the general body of the parish, the members identified the Holy Communion with political involvement. She named a few women, voicing their views in different church forums and discussed socio-political problems.

196. Encyclopedia, Columbia University Press, *Existentialism*, 2004, <<http://www.answers.com/topic/existentialism>> (17 December 2005).

197. M. Talbot, *The Universe as a Hologram*, n.d., <<http://homepages.ihug.co.nz/~sai/hologram.html>> (12 January 2006).

It is evident that communication is present within all relationships and that it plays more than a 'third-party' role, as if it were something that occurs between two people or things. Relationships, whether between bees and flowers, or humans and God, were 'created', sustained, and modified by some kind of communication. **Communication connects and affects the communicator and the one who receives the communication message.**

A closer look at **the ethical aspects** of communication reveals that communication technologies create media, which cause preconceived notions in individual perceptions of reality. Different forms of communication technologies create different forms of social organisation of knowledge. McLuhan, and Carpenter, as cited by Fore, reported that:

...different media of communication bring about major shifts in human culture, along the following lines:

1. Media are extensions of the human sensory apparatus.
2. Media alter the internal sensory balance between eye, ear, and other organs.
3. The dominant forms of media influence aesthetic preferences and all forms of social, political, and economic structure.¹⁹⁸

Obviously, mass media legitimate systems and provide ways of looking at the world. They supply the context in which information is learned, attitudes are formed and decisions are made. Hence, mass communication is the enabler of social communication. The contemporary mass media, however, detect and echo values and assumptions that appear to be acceptable in the culture. Being a part of the technique, mass media is interested only in what works. They 're-project' and amplify the values and assumptions found to have persuasive acceptance. In the final analysis mass media may reflect values and attitudes, but also create them as potent values through the process of resonance and reverberation of meaning.

The researcher also intends to present below briefly on a **theological perspective of communication**: Making use of the freedom that is essential in communication theory and Christian theology, the ideological pluralism in India challenges the traditional Christian doctrines.

198. W. Fore, A Theology of Communication, n.d., <<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=268>> (19 December 2005).

- 1) In this context, it is relevant to look at Fore's statement on God, "God is not absolute, omnipotent, wholly other; God is responsive. God's love is not controlling; it is persuasive".¹⁹⁹ Fore is correct in stressing that '**God is responsive**' and '**God's love is persuasive**'.²⁰⁰
- 2) God is Trinitarian, and is a '**communicating God**'. Communication is God's medium of creation. God creates, redeems and restores all things, both visible and invisible by the Word, underlined by God's ultimate love.²⁰¹
- 3) **Human beings** are created in God's image, to be God's stewards, and use God's created order to realise "a just, peaceful, and loving community.
- 4) The **Holy Spirit** ministers to God's people through regenerating us by the true eternal creative word of God, and by leading us into the truths of life.²⁰²
- 5) **God communicates and reveals in various ways God's purposes and plans.**²⁰³
The Logos is the divine agent in all revelation both universal and particular.²⁰⁴
- 6) The act of '**incarnation**' represents God's self-giving, communicative, action toward creation. Thus, God's **communication is expressed by acts of love that liberate.**²⁰⁵ Christ signifies creativity and transformation of the world. Yet, this transformation depends for its actuality on the decisions of human beings in God's image, communicating in their freedom.

199. W. Fore, A Theology of Communication, n.d., (19 December 2005).
200. Ex 3:7-12, Lk 15; 19:10. Nevertheless, the researcher, like the traditionalists, believes that God is also absolute, omnipotent, wholly other and the creator. There is no one greater than God and no one else worthy of our praise and worship. Ps 96:4-5; Rev 4:11. God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Ps 91:1; 139:1,7ff. Unlike in terms of abstraction or philosophy, from the biblical perspective of God's personal relationship to the universe, God has the creative power to bring about God's will, to bring fullness of life. Therefore, God's power is always exercised as a revelation and in the service of God's self-giving, self-limiting, self-sacrificing love. Lk 22:24-26, Mk 9:35; Jn 13:3-15. Moreover, though God is persuasive, God is also in control. The central message of the gospel is that God is a loving saviour and a righteous judge. But the importance and meaning of these very affirmations depends upon the belief that God is the Creator who claims us and rules over us with an essential and eternal power. Jer 9:23; Jn 17:3.

201. Gen 1:1-3. Cf. Jn 1:1-3, 14; Col 1:16.

202. Jn 16:13; Acts 1:8.

203. Mt 16:17; Heb 1:1.

204. For instance, revelation in nature, history, and conscience are universal; redemptive revelation conveyed by wondrous acts and words are particular **situations**. The particular revelation is crowned by the incarnation of Christ, the living Word.

205. Phil 2:7. God's communicative act is best expressed in Christ, who ministered to all, but took up the cause of the materially poor, the mentally and physically ill, the outcasts of society, the powerless, and the oppressed.

- 7) The essence of the **God's Goodnews** communicated is that it declares God's definite bias toward those who are most in need of liberation - that is, the victims of the socio-political factors like the poor, and the defenseless.
- 8) To break down the relationship with God is '**sin**'. Sin occurs when we make God's gifts, including the channels of communication as the focus of their admiration or the reason for their existence, and become idolatrous of them.²⁰⁶
- 9) **The Bible**, the inspired word of God, is the primary medium of communication and relationship for all of God's people. **The church is the community that has the greatest potential for being God's channel of communication.**²⁰⁷

It became clear from the responses that the above presented ontological, ethical and theological aspects of 'communication' determined the practitioners' socio-political involvement, or lack thereof.

i) Environment and socio-political factors

The physical environment served as a primary resource of communication, motivating the students of training programmes to address socio-political factors.²⁰⁸ For instance, a senior student of CWTTP said the following:

We liked to sit in small groups relaxing under the trees or at the seashore. We felt free to cite illustrations from nature and society. We discussed and discovered 'truths' for ourselves. It inspired us to develop our talents and to strengthen our relationships with God, with others and with nature. It enhanced 'the personality of the programme' and enabled us to address our socio-political issues.

It is revealed that the senior students of the CWTTP preferred to study in an open environment to that of being within a walled-room. The physical surroundings nurtured them internally towards a sound mental ability for learning and a spirit of perseverance. It had inspired them to nurture and treasure warm, receptive and friendly climate within their study group. Working together in small groups had in turn enhanced their 'internal

206. When we misuse God's gifts, we act against God's intention for the world. Then our uncertainty level about "what the world is all about" increases and our relationships suffer.

207. This task is variously called "mission", "evangelism," or "education".

208. The nurturing environment included the 'physical environment', such as the beautiful open ground; it also included the 'internal environment' or the 'mental and spiritual atmosphere' of students, such as the friendly climate and a mental aptitude for learning.

environment²⁰⁹ of learning. Moreover, being created in God's image, they believed that they, nature, others and God were interdependent.²¹⁰ The respondent from CWTTP believed that these things contributed to the formation of **'the personality of the programme'**, as he put it, to react to their socio-political issues.

ii) **Group work and socio-political factors**

As indicated earlier,²¹¹ some of the training programmes demonstrated that **dialogue was to students, what fragrance has been to a flower**. The students of the CWTTP found group work as a place for meaningful dialogue. They could express views without reservation through dialogue and group action, addressing socio-political factors. It is evident that the group members had shared their views, experiences and visions related to socio-political factors. Moreover, they evaluated 'courses of action' by others in addressing such issues, and were inspired. Thus, dialogue served as a stimulus for participation in study groups, leading to active socio-political involvement.

iii) **Magazines and socio-political factors**

The secretary of a parish disclosed the following:

I began to read Desopakari regularly. The recent editions have had reports, articles and reflections on various socio-political issues of the Kanyakumari district.²¹² During Lent, I came across a well-written article, an **'Earthquake, in the light of the sufferings of Jesus'**. It challenged me to make a decisive choice for the unfortunate victims of socio-political evil. I also shared insights from the article in my parish

The members of the diocese expected Desopakari to relate to socio-political issues. It is also disclosed that some issues of Desopakari had created an access for many members of the diocese to news and reports. This encouraged others to take decisions, plan possible actions, and address socio-political issues of the village. Thus, the magazine articles and some study programmes were relevant for the socio-political context.

209. The mental and spiritual ambience of the students.

210. Gen 2:15.

211. Section 4.5.3, *'The task of the church'*.

212. The socio-political issues reflected in the magazine included illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, natural disasters like tsunami and floods, and religious conflicts.

A young ‘Adhivasi’²¹³ tutor of the SCMI cited his experience regarding **Aikya, the monthly magazine of the SCMI** as follows:

Aikya is relevant to the unfortunate sections of our land. We, the ‘Adhivasis’, have been displaced and dispossessed for a long time. Recently Aikya emphasised the risen Christ, empowering the Adhivasis in their freedom struggle. This enabled several members of our diocese to claim their rights. It energised me personally to organise my community to claim basic rights.

It is evident that the members had treated the monthly magazine of SCMI namely Aikya as a study material. Aikya enabled the members of the diocese to keep an ongoing interaction with the burning socio-political issues. It equipped them to advocate the basic rights of the most disadvantaged people in contemporary South India. It had prepared several members to act in response to the socio-political issues of the Adhivasis. Thus Aikya contributed to the relevance of the training programme of SCMI. The respondent uncovered further the belief of the organisers and writers of SCMI that Jesus, the Risen Lord was with them in God’s mission, siding with the unfortunate people and promoting their social justice. Thus, Aikya contributed to the relevance of the training.

iv) **Role-plays and socio-political factors**

A student of the VBS was delighted about a role-play they performed in their ‘VBS-2002’ on, ‘**Taking part in God’s mission**’. She said:

As I acted as Ringeltaube²¹⁴ I met Mother Brandt²¹⁵ and we shared stories of our district in God’s mission. Identifying with Ringeltaube and discussing with Mother Brandt the challenges in mission, I felt like sharing in their missionary vision. At a climax in the role-play, we stopped and started analysing and discussing the play. As a result, some dedicated themselves to involvement in socio-political issues.

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213. The government took away the land of Adhivasis, the indigenous community to set up public parks, roads and railways.
214. Ringeltaube came from the London Missionary Society to the Kanyakumari district as the first missionary in 1806. Ref. E. T. Mathew, *Literacy in Kerala (fwd)*, 09 October 1999, <<http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~param/asha/info/5127.html>> (20 June 2005).
215. Mother Brandt was a missionary from the LMS who worked among the ‘hill-tribes’ in the Tamilnadu State, within which Kanyakumari is a district. She initiated schools, hospitals and other community development programmes among the ‘hill-tribes’.

It is evident that the role-play initiated a fruitful discussion on missionary work within the diocese, as well as among the ‘hill-tribes’ in Tamilnadu.²¹⁶ Entering into the feelings and the vision of the missionaries presented in the role-play, they developed deeper commitment in addressing socio-political issues and proclaiming the Good news more authentically.

v) Cartoons and socio-political factors

An educated young student of the SS Programme demonstrated this dynamic phenomenon as follows:

The current socio-political issues²¹⁷ diminished our interest in reading. Yet we received bulky study material, filled with statistics and theories and it was very boring; consequently, we dropped out. In response, our pastor presented supplementary material, including ‘The comic book Bible’²¹⁸ to kids. This is in a dialogue style, relating Bible texts to our local and national issues. Some of our parents initially resisted it, but were orientated to our new materials. We now have resumed our study with the SS, and tried to act in response to some of our socio-political issues.

The pastor took various steps to make the study material more interesting and creative.²¹⁹ He introduced ‘The comic book Bible’ for children as supplementary study material to the SS. Parents with the traditional pietistically oriented paradigm and Christology initially resisted this, but were later persuaded to accept it. They were afraid that the shift

216. The diocese coordinated such tasks through its constitutionally set boards and committees; the diocese also set up the Diocesan Missionary Prayer Band through which missionaries have been sent from the diocese to work among the ‘hill-tribes’ in Tamilnadu. They were actively involved in addressing the socio-political factors, which affected the ‘hill-tribes’.

217. The respondent included socio-political issues, such as the abuse of alcohol and drugs, consumerism, licentious and luxurious life styles and the monopolising and alienating advertisements in the mass media.

218. It was the title of the study material, introduced to children below ten years who couldn’t read well. It had cartoons, drawing with crayons and paintings.

219. They have had a seminar on ‘Christian responsibility towards socio-political issues’. As a result, they began to write their own study material; they paid special attention to the lay out and the format; they kept it in separate boxes and formed key words that enabled them to react to socio-political issues. They introduced case studies or brief notes as ‘attention grabbers’ at the outset of every lesson to motivate their students to learn. They included pictures and maps of their life situations. The material was integrated into videocassettes, built around interviews and dramas, reflecting students’ socio-political factors.

from letters to cartoons would distort the messages of the Bible and would cause them to be unholy and ineffective. The pastor, however, explained how Jesus too had used parables and life illustrations to present the ‘truths’ of the Kingdom of God. The new material eventually inspired the parents to understand the situation of people in the Bible and to relate it to their own context. The pastor firmly believed that **God is ‘a God of order and peace’, and, therefore, all things had to be done ‘decently’ and ‘in order’**.²²⁰ This conviction guided him in training the tutors, students and parents to use the study materials towards addressing their current socio-political issues.

vi) Audio-visual and digital-devices and socio-political factors

A student of the SCMI stated the following:

In addition to blackboards and textbooks our organisers used the audio visual aids and digital devices²²¹ as instigators towards reflection and discussion. This inspired us to reflect on today’s socio-political victims.²²² As students we were inspired to seek practical ways of expressing our solidarity with them in their daily suffering and hopes. Our interest was aroused to continue our studies for the rest of our lives towards living like fruit- trees planted by streams of water.²²³

The organisers of the SCMI made use of communication equipment in the courses towards enhancing clear communication with authenticity. The programmes became more communicative to the students than before. The tutors passed on their views and experiences to students with more clarity and authenticity. This in turn challenged the students to relate promptly to their situation. It is interesting to note how the use of modern resources of communication had facilitated their group discussions and equipped students to become effective resources to one another in the group. They also became vehicles of hope and vision to others who were victims of socio-political issues.

vii) The orientation of theology in communication and socio-political factors

It was found that role-plays with a socially oriented Christology as presented above

220. 1 Cor 14:33,40.

221. The digital devices included cassette players, televisions, projectors, compact discs, camcorders and computers.

222. The poor, the unemployed and the Dalit were some of the victims of the socio-political issues.

223. Ps 1:1-3.

enabled students to relate to socio-political factors. On the other hand, the communication aids used by trainers with a pietistically oriented Christology discouraged students to relate to socio-political factors. A tutor of the UESI who staged a role-play on, 'Christ as a healer', said: "My students realised that chronic illnesses and socio-political evil are God's curses on our sins." The tutor staged a good role-play in her class, but it reflected her belief that diseases and socio-political evils were solely the result of people's sins and God's curse on them. The outcome was that the tutor lost the opportunity to address socio-political issues; the students too did not find their programme relevant to their socio-political context.

4.2 Summary

In this chapter the responses of the respondents were interpreted regarding the connection between the training and socio-political issues. Six of the most important 'pointers' regarding the responses were identified. The researcher explained the ways in which the 'pointers' influenced the relevance of the training programmes with regard to the socio-political issues.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION AND GUIDELINES

Introduction

In the previous chapter the researcher investigated the responses of the various training programmes in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese. He interpreted six of the most notable pointers of the interaction between the training programmes and socio-political factors. Subsequently, he ascertained the influence of the pointers concerning the connections between the training programmes and socio-political factors.

This chapter comprises the following topics:

- It commences with an evaluation of the literary composition of the responses and the findings of these responses.
- Furthermore, the transition of the paradigms is determined and re-examined.
- The result of this evaluation is reviewed and the evolving guidelines for the practitioners are formulated and presented

5.1 The evaluation of the narrative form of the responses

The respondents of the training programmes of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese gave an account in **narrative form**¹ of the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ stories of their lives, related to socio-political factors. The narrative language achieved pre-eminence in Christianity since the authors of the Bible used it to proclaim the Good News of God’s acts in the world, particularly through the life of Jesus.² Thus, narrative language is the very essence

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1. Ref. 3.5.7, *The Genre of the Presentation of Information*. Cf. W. Van Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationalist theology*, 1997, p. 182. Van Huyssteen adopted the phrase, ‘Story of our lives’, from the title of the popular essay, written in 1941 by H. Richard Niebhur, who was known as ‘the father of narrative theology’. Niebhur believed that by narrating the stories of our daily lives we would be able to convey to others, who we were, and what our dreams and their meanings were. Ref. section 3.3.6, ‘*The Genre of the Presentation of Information*’.
 2. *Op. cit.*, 1997, p. 191. Van Huyssteen argued: “In this sense one can rightfully claim that all forms of narrative theology grow from Christology.”

of the Christian faith.³ Accordingly, in continuity with the Christian tradition, the stories of the daily lives of the members of the diocese were their contextual responses to the Good News of Christ. They illustrated how their responses to the Good News⁴ influenced the viability of their training programmes regarding the socio-political factors. Van Huyssteen illuminated these types of responses to the Good News in narrative form:

...the diversity and mystery of human response in narrative form to the gospel: to acknowledge the biblical narrative as God's promise is to believe that the crucified Jesus lives...narrative theology can even be seen as a call for a 'new Reformation' to free Scripture once again, but this time from the papacy of the scholar.⁵

The victims of the socio-political factors felt esteemed to narrate their stories personally during the interviews. Pinnock, as presented by Holtschneider, surveyed the notion that suffering could not be assigned a meaning that was external to the sufferer. He was convinced that, “...assigning meaning to suffering is the responsibility of the suffering individual, which leads to maintaining a relationship with God in the experience of suffering”.⁶ Moreover, the practitioners used to tell the stories of their lives during their Bible-studies. They appropriated the stories from the Bible and re-signified them relating them to their own daily socio-political contexts. Buber, as perceived by Holtschneider affirmed their experience, declaring that, “By entering into the texts of the Bible, human beings today can become part of the stories and own the responses to suffering embodied by the biblical characters, for example, the protest of Job”.⁷ This implies that the stories of the members of the diocese, emerging from their daily life-situations can be interpreted as part of God's redemption process, which heals human personalities, relationships and reconciles God and the creation. Hence, the researcher concurs with Buber in perceiving the stories of the practitioners as ‘**prophetic prayers**’.⁸

3. *Op. cit.*, 1997, p. 185. The biblical narratives, too, were interpretations, already seen through the eyes of faith.

4. Their responses to the Good News included their vision of the church, theology and tasks of the church, ministerial resources, counselling and communication.

5. W. Van Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationalist theology*, 1997, pp. 184-185.

6. K. H. Holtschneider, *The shadow of the Shoah*; Journal of Religion & Society, The kripke center, volume 5, 2003, <<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2003/2003-12.html>> (15 January 2006).

7. H. Holtschneider, *The shadow of the Shoah*, paragraph 6, 2003, (15 January 2006).

8. Cf. H. Holtschneider, *The shadow of the Shoah*, paragraph 6, 2003, (15 January 2006).

During the interviews as well as throughout the training programmes the members of the diocese were encouraged to remember and share their stories regarding the impact of the programmes. In their act of remembering and articulating their stories in the light of the gospel, they were enabled to analyse the cause of their suffering and to plan strategies to resist the challenges of their lives. Chopp described these effects in a compact way:

In the very telling and retelling of the stories and memories of the tradition, narrative performs; that is, it converts, informs, and changes us. Narrative demonstrates not only the new form of theology, but also the new practical activity of theology that speaks to both human existence and Christian praxis.⁹

This is why Metz as denoted by Chopp says, "...the memory of suffering is dangerous memory because it prompts resistance and social change".¹⁰ In this regard, the stories about Jesus became "a source of hope as well as critical memory".¹¹ According to Metz, as perceived by Chopp: "...through its apocalyptic witness Christianity becomes a praxis of solidarity with those who suffer. He believes that such a transformed consciousness contributes to a changed society/world".¹² Thus in his view, theology is not just as a general religious dimension in human experience, but is the narration of the stories of those affected by the socio-political factors, which in turn, unites and empowers them to react to those factors.

Hence, narrative language declared the dynamic relationship of salvation and history. It engaged salvation in theology, making it historical. The narrative approaches of the respondents, therefore, could not be misconstrued as a groundless language game. A striking fact of humanity is that language itself is a dimension of human nature. Consequently, the temporal narratives constitute, to some extent, the substance of what it means to be human. In the light of this consideration, van Huyssteen submitted the following description of religious language and narrative: "...through narrative, past events become 'graspable' and create an awareness of a transcendental reality 'beyond'

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9. R. S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering*, 1986, <<http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1935&C=1726>> (10 December 2005).
 10. R. S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering*, 1986, (16 January 2006).
 11. K. H. Holtschneider, *The shadow of the Shoah*, paragraph 8, 2003, (15 January 2006).
 12. R. S. Chopp *The Praxis of Suffering*, 1986, (16 January 2006).

this world. It is through myth and metaphor that this ‘beyond’ is actualized in our experience and understanding”.¹³ He emphasised the inseparable nature of popular narrative forms with the day-to-day experience of the lives of the practitioners. Over and above displaying the stories of their lives, the victims of socio-political evil,¹⁴ continued their pilgrimage with God’s people in the Bible¹⁵ and in history. They walked in the footsteps of Christ, portraying God in solidarity with suffering people, assisting them towards fullness of life.

5.1.1 Guidelines based on the narrative form of the responses

- i) The practitioners of the training programmes have to be motivated to create regular opportunities for the victims of the socio-political issues to tell their stories at different levels of the programmes.
- ii) People influenced by the training programmes, are also encouraged to recount their stories on the impact of the programmes.

5.2 The evaluation of the results of the responses

The significant theological pointers generated the evaluation and the guidelines below

5.2.1 The vision of the Church

A creative vision empowers people to set goals and strive towards realising them. No wonder the spinners at the wheel and weavers at the loom dream their own dreams, and find meaning in what they do and value in what they perceive. Nevertheless, aiming for the sky and missing the ground realities leads to fractured hopes and unrealised dreams and visions; it necessitates quick fixes and illusions. An authentic vision of the church empowers its life and task. While in mission, Jesus, the Head of the Church practiced,

13. W. V. Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationalist theology*, 1997, p. 187.

14. These are people who are suffering and struggling in South India on a day-to-day basis, due to the challenging socio-political problems.

15. For instance, Deut 6:21-23 and Josh 24:1ff.

reviewed and revived His vision of God's Reign, seeking illumination and guidance from the Father.¹⁶ He in turn, taught His disciples not just to pray, but also to strive for realising their vision - that is, to accomplish God's will on earth.¹⁷ Like Jesus, the disciples and the Early Church engaged in in God's mission, and evaluated their call as apostles and witnesses, seeking God's guidance.¹⁸ Boff, as denoted by Schipani, backed their stand: "For Boff, becoming an authentic disciple involves...actual engagement in 'Kingdom praxis', and embracing Jesus' very way..."¹⁹ Hence, Schipani was convinced that, "...the overall aim of religious education is to enable people to appropriate (i.e., make their own) the gospel of the Reign of God".²⁰

The responses during the interviews showed that in realising the prophetic and dynamic vision of God's Reign, some training programmes appropriated the biblically grounded and historically rooted vision of the church as foretaste of God's Reign; others had partial or distorted visions of God's Reign. An evaluation of these findings demonstrated their engagement to 'Kingdom praxis' and their viability to the socio-political factors.

i) Pledging the vision of the church as the foretaste of God's Kingdom

Presenting the 'Nazareth Manifesto,' the pastor of a parish-based training programme explained to his parishioners that God's Kingdom and justice embraced all spheres of life, including socio-political issues. Consequently, the parishioners engaged in reviewing their vision of the church in the light of the Nazareth Manifesto. In response, they developed a deep commitment towards this vision and pledged to actuate their vision. In their pledge to follow Jesus and enter God's Reign, they identified themselves with the victims of socio-political evil. Interestingly enough, the Nazareth Manifesto of Jesus inspired them to design an experiential curriculum that assisted them to address their concurrent socio-political issues and realise the vision of the church.

Likewise, the members of the WF felt that they were challenged by God to look upon

16. Lk 2:49, 4:1-13; 6:12-13; 9:28-29.

17. Mt 6:9-10; Jn 4:1ff; Mk 10:21-22.

18. Acts 1:15-26; 6:1-6.

19. D. S. Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology*, 1988, p. 69.

20. *Op. cit.*, 1988, p. 98.

their continued scarcity of water for their village within ‘the framework of God’s Reign’.²¹ Consequently, they were empowered to strive first for God’s justice regarding the scarcity of water. Their experience of pledging together to sustain a vision of God’s Reign and justice inspired them to overcome their divisions, stand together and apply God’s justice in their lives. Eventually, they included the issue of the scarcity of water in their curriculum for reflection, devised strategies and planned to resolve their problem.

ii) A vision uniting the practitioners

The significance of the above stories is that their vision united them to address their socio-political issues. The Nazareth manifesto inspired them to design a relevant and vibrant curriculum for their parish-based training. They experienced common views, values and experiences. They prayed regularly for one another and shared their resources. This strengthened their fellowship ties and they longed for a church as a foretaste of God’s Kingdom. They and the members of the WF realised that their vision of the church as the foretaste of God’s Reign transformed them to be compassionate and prophetic to respond to their socio-political problems. The ancient Hebrews with their common vision and covenant²² approved this type of experience. Some parishioners initially followed their own way, afraid of losing their vested interests. They too soon realised the benefit of this vision and joined others in a common purpose²³ of addressing their problems.

iii) A vision beyond social expectations

The organisers of the WF trained their female members to lead others in their churches and society on an equal footing with their male-counterparts. Similarly, the youth of the CE conducted joint activities with the youth of other castes and religious faiths.²⁴ An inquiry of the motives behind their programmes reflected their gospel conviction that the Kingdom of God was not confined to their traditional religious attitudes and mindsets. The Gospel writers proclaimed that Jesus identified the action of the Kingdom with the

21. They adopted a framework to strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; also for their vision of the church. Ref. Mt 6:33.

22. Ex 19:5-6. Cf. Acts 2:42, 44-47. Some respondents referred to the Hebrews and the Early Church in this regard; others expressed the popular saying, ‘Birds of a feather flock together!’

23. Section 2.2.2, *Church in socio-political context*.

24. For instance, celebrating religious festivals and conducting workshops.

compassion of the ‘good’ Samaritan, caring for the half dead man.²⁵ The fact that the Samaritan is ‘not converted’ suggests that God’s Kingdom leads us beyond social expectations of contemporary religious and ideological attitudes or mindsets. Eigenmann’s understanding of the Kingdom of God correlates well with the conviction and the experience of the WF and the CE:

A society is as much compatible with the Kingdom of God as it is guided by the option for life in wholeness and dignity for all mankind. It is a Kingdom of life...A society is as much compatible with the Kingdom of God as in it women are neither economically, politically nor culturally disadvantaged, but enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men... Jesus testified to it.²⁶

The responses revealed that the practitioners of the WF and the CE were empowered to cross boundaries and create new visions of the inclusiveness of the rule of God. In this venture they learned, to some extent, to confront the dominant socio-political evil, for example, castes and religious conflicts. They responded constructively to the significant challenge of Anderson: “In this we stand as inheritors of the questioning tradition that is contained in the early voice of Jewish Christianity, as, together they ask, ‘who are my brothers and sisters?’”²⁷ Their option for life in its entirety corresponded with the conception of a society and world in which all have a place and where nobody is excluded. This fits in with Jesus’ vision of God’s Kingdom, being a banquet where all were invited. The issue is a responsible human society where everyone recognises that everybody has material, social, cultural and religious needs.²⁸

iv) A vision that nurtures the historical continuity of Jesus

Using the theme of a ‘pilgrimage’ as a feature of their vision of the church, the practitioners of one of the units of the VBS were motivated to live their lives according to the life of Jesus. They viewed Jesus as ‘the embodiment of God’s Kingdom²⁹ and as their

25. Mk 12:28-34; Lk 10:29-37; Mt 22:34-40.

26. U. Eigenmann, *The Social Contract and the Kingdom of God*, August 1999, <<http://ilrs.org/english/reports/eigenmann.html>> (07 July 2005).

27. W. Anderson, *Researching theology*, n.d., <<http://fou.uniting.com.au/pax.html#timely>> (03 August 2005).

28. Cf. Mt 5 and 6.

29. The practitioners of the VBS referred to Jesus as the embodiment of God’s Kingdom. M. Gandhi, regarded as ‘the father of the nation of India’, also accepted Jesus as his role model.

role model'.³⁰ They conformed their lives to the life-style and values of Jesus, who demonstrated true life. Peter also said the following in the Early Church: "To this you have been called, because Christ...leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps."³¹ When the organisers of the VBS followed Jesus as their role model the tutors and students watched them and, in turn, sought to imitate them as role models. This contributed to their formation and the development of their programmes. They realised that their programmes became a means of a 'historical extension of Jesus' lifestyle' for their society.

Moreover, taking Jesus as their role model, the members of the diocese regarded themselves as more than an organisation. Although they existed in a human society they did not see the churches as independent organisations, existing on their own strength as human organisations do. They perceived themselves as organs of a body under the control of Christ, the Head. They were obedient, responding to the direction of the risen Lord; they believed that God empowered them to react to the socio-political issues. They dedicated themselves as living sacrifices for the use of God who dwelled in them. They believed that they were sent by the risen Lord to react to their socio-political issues, as illustrated in the Bible verse, 'He went before them to Galilee'.³² They also remembered Paul's exhortation: "Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called."³³

v) A vision empowering goal-directed lives

It was interesting to note that the practitioners of the CE viewed Jesus as their role model, specifically for purposeful learning.³⁴ Their Bible-study on 'arrows in the hands of a warrior' empowered them to believe in God's intervention in the life, death and resurrection of Christ to proclaim God's Kingdom. Thus, they viewed Jesus as God's Word that was sent like an effective arrow to fulfill the will of God the Father. They were serious to follow Jesus as their moral role model and to work as his disciples for the

30. 'A role model is better than a precept' is a Latin proverb; a precept is a rule of moral conduct. Ref. Geddes & Grosset, *Webster's Universal Dictionary*, 2003, p. 375.

31. 1 Pet 2:21, (NRSV).

32. Cf. Mt 28:7.

33. Eph 4:1.

34. 'Follow in Christ's steps!' And, 'Jesus is the greatest role model in history!' are some of the common slogans in the CE and similar training programmes in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese.

extension of God's Kingdom. This transformed them and, in turn, assisted them to take a spiritual approach towards transforming their socio-political conditions. The writings of religious educators, for example, Nielsen, endorsed the practitioners of the CE in their vision of the church and their efforts towards goal-directed learning, saying, "We are goal directed, and try to find and hold on to the things that give our life a sense of significance and meaning".³⁵

The Hillsborough Community College declared that a 'goal-directed, life-long learning' is comprehensive: "...learning is a goal directed, life-long process that changes behavior. This process occurs within the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains."³⁶ Furthermore, 'goal-directed learning' discovers the key to successful studies: "To leverage the power of natural learning...we need to provide goals that students will willingly adopt."³⁷ The organisers of the CE attempted consistently to create a stimulating environment for the practitioners to take it as their life-long goal to challenge socio-political problems. Accordingly, they were inspired to adopt willingly the role model of Jesus. Jesus guided their cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains.³⁸ In a respondent's words, "We learned that it was God's vocation unfolded in Jesus to continually react to our socio-political problems, and to live like trees planted by streams of water, yielding their fruits in season".³⁹

Some conclusions, containing destructive notions of the goal-directed learning among some practitioners alarmed some people. The following two approaches in the training characterised the problem: Firstly, some practitioners regarded **Christianity as a private religion**. They over-emphasised personal holiness in their goal-directed learning, even at

35. M. E. Nielsen, Georgia Southern University, *Religion's Role in the Terrorist Attack of 11 September 2001*, n.d., < <http://www.psywww.com/PSYRELIG/fundamental.html>> (21 August 2005).

36. Hillsborough Community College, *Nursing Program Philosophy*, n.d., <<http://www.hccfl.edu/depts/healthsci/nursing/philosophy.html>> (10 June 2005).

37. Engines for education, *Goal-Directed Learning*, n.d., <<http://www.engines4ed.org/hyperbook/nodes/NODE-202-pg.html>> (03 July 2005).

38. The cognitive domain of learning deals with the mental act of perception/knowledge of a learner; psychomotor focuses on the physical actions of the learners induced by their mental condition and the affective domain directs the emotions of the learner.

39. Cf. Ps 1:3 (NRSV).

the cost of any socio-political involvement. This generated harmful attitudes, for example, self-righteousness, a superiority complex and selfishness. Another displeasing trend, revealed in the study was a growing competition among the organisers to incite their practitioners towards **obtaining prizes and awards as the goal of their training**. This caused them to be satisfied with the memorising of Bible verses and displaying their talents for the sake of recognition and rewards, rather than relating their Christian faith to their socio-political issues. It is worthwhile to listen to Schipani who alerted us of the totality and universality of the Kingdom of God, saying, “God’s rule confronts and calls into question partial and immediate interests...”⁴⁰

vi) A vision that signifies the ‘Early Church’⁴¹ as a role model

As in the early church the Holy Spirit empowered the members of a parish through Bible-studies, worship services, preaching and sacraments to become a liberating and serving presence in their village. Eventually, the promises of God’s Kingdom dissatisfied them with the socio-political problems and they took initiatives to address them. They were dedicated to prayerfully follow divine strategies, not the obvious shallow counsel of human beings. They did not devise their own strategies or set their own goals. A popular training programme, namely, ‘All Life Way Sunday School for a New Century’ affirmed their experience, declaring that, “God’s Kingdom is present wherever the will and Reign of God is established in people’s lives through Christ...”⁴² They stressed that a new community of worship and service, as shown in the Early Church,⁴³ can still be produced in people of every generation through their encounters with the risen Christ.

vii) A vision of the Kingdom of God as, ‘already, but not yet’

The empirical starting point for some practitioners in realising the vision of the church as a foretaste of God’s Kingdom, was ‘the time and place of the Kingdom’. There were considerable debates among the disciples whether Jesus regarded God’s Kingdom as a present or a future reality. Some socially-oriented training programmes used the term

40. D. S. Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology*, 1988, p. 88.

41. Acts 1 and 2.

42. All Life Way Sunday School for a New Century study resources, *Curriculum series characteristics*, n.d., <<http://www.bcpsj.org/churchdevelopment/curriculum.htm>> (15 July 2005).

43. Acts 2:36-47.

‘Kingdom of heaven’,⁴⁴ cherishing the dignity and holiness of God’s presence and the Kingdom values. They, however, over-emphasised the holiness of God to the extent that people felt that it was impossible to experience it in their earthly lives. The practitioners of the UESI portrayed it as created by God alone and taking place only after death, ‘in the clouds’. Some identified the Kingdom of heaven with the second coming of Jesus. Nevertheless, in the Fourth Gospel the Kingdom of heaven denotes eternal life given now in abundance on earth through Jesus.⁴⁵ **Giving eternal life to us today, God challenges people to address socio-political problems.** Jesus has said that His Kingdom is not of this world,⁴⁶ this means that God’s Kingdom is neither the religious transfiguration of the world, nor completely separated from the world. In His liberating work Jesus clearly showed that ‘God’s Kingdom took shape in the world and worked as leaven in flour, or that it grew robustly like a mustard seed’.⁴⁷ A tutor of the UESI neglected to introduce her students to Jesus’ attitude of compassion and solidarity with the paralysed man. Hence, she failed to enable the students to perceive the incident of Beth-za’tha⁴⁸ as a sign of God’s Kingdom, established by Jesus.

One of the great beliefs of a student of the CWTP was that “the central prayer in the ‘Our Father’ was: ‘Your Kingdom come!’”⁴⁹ He carefully hinted that God’s Kingdom must come to us, here on earth. Reinforcing this, Jesus taught us to say that we should do God’s will on earth, not in heaven where it is already being done. He meant that we should do God’s will so wholly on earth in socio-political contexts as it was done in heaven. Eigenmann put it as follows: “Earth must not be drawn up into heaven, but heaven must come down to the earth.”⁵⁰ The dominant theme of the recorded teaching of Jesus was that **God’s Reign was already manifested in the life and the deeds of Jesus**; it was now time for people to come near the Kingdom and respond to it.⁵¹ Our discussion so far revealed clearly that God’s Kingdom was a present reality wherever God is ruling.

44. They used the phrase, ‘Kingdom of heaven’ instead of the phrase, ‘Kingdom of God’.

45. Jn 3:3,5; 10:10.

46. Cf. Jn 17:14-15.

47. Lk 13:18-21.

48. Jn 5:2-15.

49. Cf. Mt 6:9-10.

50. U. Eigenmann, *The Social Contract and the Kingdom of God*, 1999 (07 July 2005).

51. Mk 1:15. Cf. A. Richardson, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 120.

If we can perceive that God was reigning, the dilemma of the Kingdom between the present and the future became unreal. The consummation of God's Reign, however, is yet to occur on the return of Christ. Thus, the practitioners' vision of the church as a foretaste of the Kingdom enabled them to embrace their future with hope and not give way to despair. It empowered them to contribute to the contemporary Kingdom of God.

viii) A vision of a personal and politically structured Kingdom of God

Some members of the diocese, particularly the practitioners of the UESI, interpreted, in a pietistic way, the disciplines of individual Christians, for example, regular fasting, prayer and worship, as sufficient preparation to enter the Kingdom of heaven after death. Consequently, they urged others to separate themselves from society and only to care for the salvation of their 'souls'. Yet, others discovered undoubtedly in Jesus' life, the Kingdom of God as a commitment to individual people. They realised that Jesus related to individuals who were sick, materially disadvantaged, socially discriminated against, possessed by demons and religiously despised. In addition, they were convinced that Jesus had criticised the unjust socio-political circumstances and structures. This is why Eigenmann described God's Kingdom as follows: "God's Kingdom is existentially personal and politically structural."⁵² He declares:

Neither a reductionist care for the individual alone, nor a concern only for theoretical structures, is according to the Kingdom of God. What rather accords with it is a critical analysis and liberating formation of the logical relationship between individual and society, between subject and structure.⁵³

ix) Some significant misconceptions of the vision of the church

The conclusions revealed that some members of the diocese rejected the vision of the church 'as a foretaste of God's Kingdom', distorting it as '**secularising theology**'.⁵⁴ On the one hand, they argued that the above socially oriented vision of the church propagated human beings as masters of their own destinies, the improvement of their earthly lives

52. U. Eigenmann, *The Social Contract and the Kingdom of God*, 1999 (07 July 2005).

53. *Op. cit.*, (07 July 2005).

54. In his view, the Kingdom of God was certainly not of this world; but God's justice and peace was valid for this world and should take shape in it.

55. For more on the 'secularisation of theology', Ref. E. L. Verdier, (ed), *Missionary issues in a world church*, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1993, p. 22.

and the gradual eradication of the importance of Christian faith and worship. In their view it glorified merely a set of abstract human values, for example, freedom, peace, justice and friendship that could be accepted by anyone of goodwill. On the other hand, the views and experiences of the practitioners of the socially oriented training programmes⁵⁵ affirmed that their vision of the church as a foretaste of God's Kingdom was not a human ideology. For them it was a gift and vision of God, emerging from their theological beliefs and gospel convictions. It did not demand of them to give up their Christian faith and worship. On the contrary, it challenged them to discover the relevance and meaning of Christian faith and worship in their socio-political context. They were convinced that practising Christian faith in everyday choices and action is the heart of what it means to be Christian disciples. They believed that through worship God empowered and sent them to renew the earth and declare by word and deed the Good News of God's Kingdom of justice and peace. The foretaste of God's Kingdom did not simply mean building a better human society. They did not believe that they were called only to enter into the Kingdom of God, or to develop it on earth. They were clear that the Kingdom, they referred to, was from God and an ideal society could never be dignified with the title, 'Kingdom of God'. In their view the church, being 'a foretaste of the Kingdom', existed for the sake of the Kingdom, of which it is a sign and an instrument. They displayed human values, for example, justice, freedom and peace only as the values of God's Kingdom that were cultivated in the socio-political contexts.

Another important observation from the findings was that the members of the diocese were **driven to extremes** regarding their vision of the church. This cast a cloud of obscurity over the truth and weakened their Christian faith. On the one hand, some practitioners gave up preaching and desired individual salvation, while involving themselves in suffering and injustice. On the other hand, some practitioners who proclaimed the gospel ignored their responsibility regarding socio-political factors. Yet, those who complained about socio-political evil safeguarded the blessings of bourgeois materialism and consumerism for them to enjoy to the full although they witnessed that

55. All the respondents were partaking in the activities of the programmes and ministries of their parishes; some of them were ordained members of the diocese who were skilled in socially-oriented Christology.

their neighbours and relatives lived in utter poverty.

The point to highlight is that the socially oriented members of the diocese dreamed and strove for biblical, vital and dynamic churches in India that were relevant to meet the needs of the people.⁵⁶ Boff appreciated this approach and stated: “The church must be characterized by complete openness to God and others, an indiscriminate love without limits, and a critical spirit which cultivates the creative imagination and challenges cultural structures in the name of love and the liberty of God’s children.”⁵⁷ Lee too reiterated their kind of experience and vision of being called ‘a foretaste of God’s Kingdom’, already revealed in Christ and to be continued. He said: “The church is a social response to the Christ-event. Its nature will always be partly founded in the Christ-event and partly in the historically and culturally conditioned appropriations of that event.”⁵⁸ This endorsed the task of equipping the members to appropriate the gospel of God’s Kingdom through the training programmes and addressing contemporary socio-political factors. Nevertheless, the **findings cautioned that the socially oriented programmes should not minimise the importance of personal salvation, holiness and not become advocates of the ‘social gospel’ and destructive secularism.**

Guidelines based on the vision of the church

An assessment of the interaction between the training programmes and socio-political factors, based on the vision of the church, generated the following essential guidelines towards improving the programmes:

1. The practitioners of the training programmes should devise and keep a relevant vision of the church that would be ‘well-rooted’, both biblically and historically.⁵⁹
2. The ‘Nazareth Manifesto’ of Jesus could be a guideline for setting up the vision, mission statement and curriculum of training programmes.
3. A common framework of striving for God’s Kingdom and its values,⁶⁰ could be

56. Cf. Hrangkhuma & S. C. H. Kim, *The Church in India: its mission tomorrow*, 1996, p. 103.

57. L. Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 1989, p. 97.

58. J. Lee, *The nature of the church; in Empirical Theology*, (ed), R. C Miller, 1992, p. 175.

59. For instance, the vision of the church as *the foretaste of God’s Kingdom*.

60. Mt 6:33; 5:1-12.

- adopted as a vision that would unite the practitioners of training programmes. The organisers should identify them with the values of God's Reign in their daily lives and with the studies of the practitioners to enable them to promote these values.
4. The vision of the church being a foretaste of God's Kingdom should be related to, and interpreted within the multi-religious context of the Kanyakumari district.
 5. The practitioners should be empowered to move beyond contemporary social expectations. They should cross the barriers of class, caste and creed, and develop a new vision of inclusiveness within God's Reign.⁶¹
 6. The practitioners should be motivated to view Jesus as the embodiment of God's Kingdom. They should be inspired to learn from the life of Jesus and other Christian role models. It would be valuable that the study material included socio-biographies of Bible characters and missionaries, presented from a critical perspective. In addition, consultants could be invited from time to time to act as role models for the practitioners.
 7. The practitioners could be encouraged to study and follow the model of the Early Church, reacting to contemporary socio-political issues.
 8. A goal-directed life and a spirit of 'life-long' learning should be established in the lives of the practitioners of the training programmes. We found it effective to present Jesus as the role model for a goal-directed course and for 'life-long' learning. Nevertheless, caution should be taken to avoid over-emphasising personal holiness and always aiming at awards, but to keep a constant interaction between the goals of the training programmes and the socio-political factors.
 9. Proper care should be taken to ensure that the vision of the programmes would sustain the commitment of the practitioners towards addressing the needs of individuals, as well as to appraise the socio-political circumstances and structures.
 10. The training programmes should equip the practitioners to keep a perspective of God as the reigning One. They should be trained to keep a perspective regarding God's Kingdom with the approach of 'already, but not yet'.

61. In this regard, relevant programmes, for example, the leadership formation of women, inter-faith dialogue, seminars, friendly games and contests with the youth of other religious faiths may be organised.

11. The practitioners should be clear that the church as the foretaste of the Kingdom should not promote a ‘secularisation of theology’ in the sense of surrendering Christian faith, worship services and studies.
12. The practitioners should safeguard themselves not to be driven to extreme visions of the church. They should find a dynamic approach as a balance between preaching individual salvation and being involved in the problems of human suffering and injustice. Denouncing socio-political evil should go together with personal authority and control over bourgeois materialism and consumerism.

5.2.2 The theology of the church

The members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese opted for two types of praxis model of contextual theological positions: Theology from below and theology from above.⁶² Their primary objective was to experience God’s Kingdom and its justice in their day-to-day personal, spiritual, pluralistic religious, and socio-political struggles. They were not only interested in understanding and interpreting God’s acts based on the Scriptures and tradition of the church. They strived to raise critical awareness of God’s Reign and change their enslaving values and relationships, in tune with the vision of the gospel.

Contextualisation of the gospel in India **in the early phase** had its major theme as the relation between Christian faith and the major religions and philosophies.⁶³ **A second stream** enabled the church to ‘encounter with the socio-political realities of their context’, fuelling constructive participation in political freedom and in the building up of the nation.⁶⁴ **In recent years** the theme ‘people’ has assumed a special significance. Their experiences and stories were cultural and social, or it may be political and economical.⁶⁵

It encounters **several challenges**; for instance, the different faiths and traditions in India

62. Section 4.1.2, *A theological position and the socio-political factors*.

63. For instance, by then the Hindu concept of *avatar* was used to interpret the Christian doctrine of incarnation, or that of ‘sat-chit-anand’, (being, consciousness, bliss), for explaining the doctrine of the Trinity.

64. In reflecting on the experience of colonialism and the freedom movements, many Asian thinkers discovered a vital link between the gospel and the aspirations of their people for a freer and better social and political order.

65. For instance, they reflected on the experiences and struggles of the Dalits, and women did their theology based on their marginalisation.

have contributed to the spiritual sensibilities and formation. Indian Christians search for a ‘Spirit-filled contextual theology’ that calls for Christ-like sensitivity and ability to transcend the barriers of creed and castes. They aim to discern the presence and the characteristic posture of the Holy Spirit who is open and able to transcend limits and work.⁶⁶ Subsequently, Indian Christian theology today focuses on ‘community building’, empowering people in their search for meaningful communities that exist in a harmonious relationship with God, nature, and between different faiths.

An evaluation of the responses from the practitioners of the various training programmes exhibited the prevailing interaction between their theological positions and praxis. It also unfolded that this interaction determined the viability of the programmes concerning the contemporary socio-political factors.

i) The practitioners’ quest for a ‘theology from below’

The findings displayed that the practitioners of the socially oriented paradigm proclaimed a liberating Christ, through their reflection and possible socio-political involvements. They focused on the historical Jesus and God’s Kingdom that is central in Jesus’ ministry. On the other hand, they noticed that others who opted for pietistically oriented Christology were inclined to reinforce their selfish ends and oppressive socio-political acts.⁶⁷ Responding to the traditional pietistically oriented Christology critically, they confronted and took initiative to transform it from its tolerance to socio-political oppression, by suggesting theology from below as an alternative to it.

In their search for a relevant theology in the context of the growing religious pluralism,⁶⁸ these practitioners cherished a far greater openness towards understanding the ‘theology

66. Jn 3:8; 16:13.

67. They discovered in their experiences that the pietistically oriented Christology cultivated extreme attitudes of self-righteousness and domination, or submissiveness and silence in them in the context of oppressive socio-political factors.

68. The respondents witnessed a steady revival in the beliefs, doctrines and mission of the other religions in South India, for example, Hinduism and Islam; (the church was gradually challenged to give up the privileged position it held in the past). Moreover, the pastors noticed a spirit of consumerism and individualism among some of their parishioners, wishing to choose from a vast inventory of religious symbols and doctrines in South India and to select those beliefs that best expressed their private sentiments.

from below', unlike the past. This implied consideration of the **radical contextuality of all thought forms**, including the theological presuppositions of the parishioners. In this regard, the story of some pastors was interesting and educative. They trained their parishioners to discern a balance between discovering the contexts/meaning of Bible texts and their own orientation. In their 'sermon guide book-2004, they introduced a brief explanation of a few theological words from the Bible, as well as concepts related to their contemporary socio-political contexts.⁶⁹ As a result, on the one hand, the victims of the socio-political factors, for example, poverty and 'meter interest', were inspired to listen to their pastors' sermons, relevant in their lives. On the other hand, the pastors became acquainted with more of their parishioners' problems and empowered towards further contextual interpretation of 'Bible messages'. Eventually, more and more parishioners joined their pastors in reacting to the socio-political issues. The contextualisation principle behind their experience was that **the church's theology and ministry needed to be made intelligible and effective in contexts where Christians were called to bear witness according to the gospel of Christ**. This, however, was successful only with the pastors who were skilled in socially oriented Christology and willing to engage in active socio-political involvement. Although their number, in proportion to the others, was not very significant, their stand was compatible with Jesus.⁷⁰ These discussions can be summed up by what Karkkainen stated: "... rather than analyzing and systematizing about Christ, the influence of Christ is to be lived again in any new context".⁷¹ He indicated that it was better to practice Christianity in our day-to-day socio-political contexts rather than just explaining it to others with words. Brown described the above experience of theology from below as 'doing theology' today: "Theology today is an open-ended process that involves an ongoing reflection, alternating between looking at its past conclusions and reviewing them in the light of the present world, still as seen from the standpoint of the oppressed."⁷²

69. It is remarked in the field-notes that this effort strengthened the spirit of 'community' and 'hope' in some parishes. To some extent their experiences may be compared with that of the 'base communities' in Latin America. Remarkably, the pastors' learnt to do exegesis and interpret Bible texts with greater comprehensiveness, coherence and relevance than in the past.

70. Lk 6:46-48; Mt 25:21; Acts 1:8.

71. V. Karkkainen, *Christology, a global introduction*, 2003, p. 216.

72. R. McAfee Brown, *Liberation Theology: Paralyzing Threat or Creative Challenge?* Mission Trends, no. 4, 1979, pp. 3-6.

ii) 'Hindutwa'⁷³. and Indian Christian Theology

Traditionally, the majority Hindu community kept tribal people, for example, Adhivasis and Dalits⁷⁴ outside the Hindu-based caste system and treated them with overt hostility and repression.⁷⁵ Being attracted by the church's emphasis on social service and equality, many of them converted to Christianity in an effort to escape their impoverished state and abusive treatment under the caste system. Hence, Christians became the target of a campaign of violence and propaganda, namely 'Hindutwa', orchestrated by Hindu nationalist groups. In this situation, some training programmes had dialogues, and worked with their Hindu neighbors.

The content of the contextual theology is intrinsically connected with liberation. It could be related to the resistant and liberating striving of the Dalits, Adhivasis, and Christians, challenged by the contemporary 'Hindutwa'. Hence, their resistant and liberation striving is a significant event within the all-embracing working of God.⁷⁶ During their study, the practitioners of CE, CWTTP and SCMI interpreted to some extent the daily experiences of the Dalits and Adhivasis, and their expressions of God, the world, human beings and the creation, through the gospel of Christ. This could be encouraged in the future, since the majority of the Christians in India came from the Dalits and Adhivasis.⁷⁷ It became clear that it was only by taking into account their experiences and aspirations that Indian Christian theology would be comprehensive and relevant. In the light of the life and teachings of Jesus, the members of the SCMI, CE and WF rejected their traditional beliefs and practices, which excluded persons on the basis of caste, race, colour and gender. They explored the Dalit and Adhivasi symbols, rites, and religious motifs that

73. The term 'Hindutva' is derived from the two terms 'Hindu Tattva', which literally mean 'Hindu Principles'. Ref. chapter 2, footnote 131.

74. Sections 2.11, 'Dalits' and 2.15, 'Adhivasis'.

75. Until recently, Christians enjoyed a relatively peaceful coexistence with their Hindu neighbors, who were in the majority, for more than 2000 years. The Hindu militant groups who hate Christians include the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and the Bajrang Dal. They functioned with the mission of creating a Hindu State, and propagated a militant form of Hindu nationalism as the sole basis for national identity in India.

76. Clarke described this aspect of the gospel as the 'inter-community dynamic of God', which is understood to be the divine guidance towards life in all its fullness. Ref. S. Clarke, *Hindutva, Religious and Ethnocultural Minorities, and Indian-Christian Theology*, n.d., <<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2449>> (12 October 2005).

77. Clarke estimated that about 72% of the Indian Christians came from tribal and Dalit backgrounds. Thus, these minority communities comprised almost three-quarters of the Christian population.

challenged discrimination and viewed them in line with the transformation of God's dynamic act of salvation, expressed in Jesus.⁷⁸

Moreover, the purpose of the coming of Jesus, as well as the purpose of the Kingdom of God brought human life to the centre of the gospel and of theology.⁷⁹ The Dalits and Adhivasis also desired life and survival in the midst of the threats to life. Their hopes that inspired them towards freedom and equality implied a life in all its fullness. It is the life provided by Jesus, the 'Life' that mediated comprehensive life to them in their relationships and through them to all creation. The gift of life in all its fullness included abundance and meaningful relationships. In addition, inclusive and cooperative living was intimately intertwined as an alternate worldview to that of homogenising, and domination, promoted by the Hindutva.

iii) The 'house church theology' and the training programmes

The practitioners of the WF, CE, SS, SCMI, UESI and the parish-based training programmes met regularly for fellowship, worship and study. They joined these groups for mutual accountability and the reinforcement of their common Christian witness in society; and to create the kind of Spirit-endowed living, fellowships led by Christ. They reminded us of the 'house churches' in the New Testament.⁸⁰ They enriched the person-to-person relationship that was at the very heart of the faith of the church.⁸¹ Thus, they could act in response to the growing destructive trends of becoming exclusive 'individual Christians', 'radio-church Christians', and even 'internet-church Christians' in the diocese. With the small number in 'church house fellowships', several parishioners made a shift from the idea of being a special person as a minister of a 'one-person ministry' to the 'priesthood of all believers'. Whenever differences of opinion and of interpretation of the Scriptures arose, the parties exercised great love and forbearance and maintained the unity of the Spirit. False sects and cults seeking to inject their erroneous poison into such

78. Clarke names this as 'the intra-community discernment of the activity of God'. Ref. S. Clarke, *Hindutva, Religious and Ethnocultural Minorities, and Indian-Christian Theology*, (12 October 2005).

79. Jn 3:16; 10:10.

80. Acts 2:46; 16:25; Rom 16:15; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Philem 2.

81. Mt. 18:20.

groups⁸² were usually recognised and removed. Some pastors empowered them with their experience and knowledge of the Word provided through the guidance of the Spirit. Some members, particularly those who stressed the pietistic oriented Christology, overemphasised the ‘priesthood of the believers’. While focusing on the vital personal relationship between the individual believer and God, they missed the strength of being a part of the community of faith. In turn, they became individualistic. Hence, the organisers of these socially oriented programmes found it fruitful to focus their understanding of their relationship with God on ‘community’, rather than on the individual.⁸³

iv) Encountering and experiencing Christ in the daily life

Some practitioners of a unit of WF reported that they encountered the risen Lord in their daily lives in their villages. They believed that Jesus approached them on a daily basis, as He did with Mary Magdalene on the farm, Cleopas on the street and with Thomas in his home.⁸⁴ They practiced to ‘feel’ God’s presence and listen to His message through their regular contextual Bible-studies, particularly exploring the Beatitudes⁸⁵ and by seeking times and places of solitude. They relied on the Holy Spirit and opened themselves up to be challenged and guided by God. Subsequently, they adopted some attitudes of Jesus and addressed socio-political factors.

Citing their stories, the respondents stated that it took time to create awareness among women in their village concerning evil consequences of dowries, child labour and domestic violence. Some in their village accepted this socio-political evil as tradition and refused to assist with the collection of money for the victims of evil. Despite their long struggle, their personal encounter with Jesus in their solitude and regular Bible-studies still empowered them to keep addressing their socio-political issues. Remarkably, they had an ongoing day-to-day experience of the living God and did not reduce their faith to

82. They could be identified by two features: They claimed to be the only ones who were right in their teachings, and they demanded complete acceptance from the members of the diocese. They tended to twist certain Scriptures and ignored others, or claimed extra revelation beyond the Bible.

83. Some units of the CE and the SCMI served as wider ecumenical, family based communities, where they could promote dialogue and engagement in God’s mission; they had a mixed group of believers and unbelievers in their regular meetings for prayer and Bible-studies.

84. Jn 20:12-17, Lk 24:13-31; Jn 19-21: 26-29.

85. Mt 5:1-12.

mere intellectual belief. They were faithful as God's people in whom God delights to dwell and communicate constantly. Affirming this type of experience, Galilea said: "The Beatitudes reveal what God is and what the Kingdom of God is; it highlights the face of Christ- his criteria, attitudes and his love... the Beatitudes are offered... not as an abstract recipe for spiritual exercises but they are Jesus' experience of the Kingdom, and of his interior life."⁸⁶ Some members of the WF named the above experience as '**gospel re-rooting**'. They viewed their contextual Bible-studies as a process of interaction between God's Reign and their way of life. They designed a relevant mission statement as a tool for 'gospel re-rooting'. They thoughtfully tried to translate the inner meaning of the message of Christ from its historical roots and background milieu for their contemporary context.⁸⁷ This effort transformed them, from within their socio-political context, renewing their life- situation at their homes and neighbourhood. Mesa, as interpreted by Loob, affirmed this type of experience, saying that, "Since the Gospel is a living testimony, it must seek its roots in the lives of those who profess it both in their social structure and in their ideals and hopes".⁸⁸

v) **A spectrum of socially oriented Christologies**

Rooted in the realities of the sub-continent of India, the practitioners of the socially oriented programmes developed different types of contextual theology, and socially oriented Christologies.⁸⁹ They devised different images of Christ to cultivate interaction between their programmes and the socio-political factors: A local unit of the SS to view utter poverty and brokenness as an the image of Jesus. They believed that **an image of Jesus, being a wounded starving beggar**, would motivate them to be in solidarity with the poor. They realised that God's power worked in them, transforming their inner lives and developing their socially oriented Christological skills. Likewise, the practitioners of a local unit of the WF presented **Jesus as a rejected, poor, illiterate and detained Dalit**

86. S. Galilea, *The Beatitudes*, 1988, p. 9.

87. They related their Bible-studies to the daily problems of poverty, illiteracy, joblessness, dowries, eve-teasing and domestic violence.

88. Pagbabalik-Loob, *Re-imagining Conversion in the Lowland Philippine Setting* (A study in Filipino Theology), n.d., <<http://articles.penuel.org/balik-loob.htm>> (August 04, 2005). Jose de Mesa developed *Gospel re-rooting, a study in Filipino Theology*.

89. 'Contextual theology' can be viewed as an umbrella term. This is to say that there are many contextual theologies and not only one; for instance, 'Dalit' theology (India), 'Minjung' theology (Korea), 'Rice-roots' theology (Japan) and Theology of 'rice' (Australia).

woman. They believed that they displayed through their role-play the ‘presence and the voice’ of Jesus in their context, saying, “...just as you did to one of the least of these... you did it to me”.⁹⁰ Nirmal, who coined the term ‘Dalit theology’, substantiated to the experience of the SS and WF, saying, “It is precisely in and through the weaker, the down-trodden, the crushed, the oppressed and the marginalized that God’s saving glory is manifested or displayed. This is because brokenness belongs to the very being of God”.⁹¹

It was clear that the practitioners of the SS and the WF recognised and confessed the brokenness and wounds of oppression to be ‘in God’. Thus, they challenged others to identify themselves with the victims of the contemporary socio-political issues. The members of the WF realised that in Jesus’ view the victims were equal to others, worthy of respect and rewards in life as a whole, including their work, their families, church and society. The respondent who enacted the image of Jesus as a Dalit was convinced that her vision was based on her belief that the crucified Christ could speak to her condition as He did to Mary Magdalene and could transform her.⁹² This provided her with great hope for the future. The members of the WF proclaimed the Good News that God initiated and directed people to address anything that destroyed life. The feminist theologian, Pickard, too, emphasised the season of important change and reviewed the traditional masculine images of God, saying, “Perhaps the masculine images of God had importance in days when physical strength was necessary for daily survival. Today, the major ‘giants’ that threaten people have to do with relationships and providing sustainable life for all, even the least and the lost.”⁹³

The practitioners of the socially oriented paradigm introduced various effective images of Christ, especially in several villages where illiteracy was excessive. Consequently, as in the New Testament, they attempted several ‘interpretations’ of Christ⁹⁴, relevant to their

90. The respondent quoted this from Mt 25:40 (NRSV) during the interview.

91. V. Karkkainen, *op. cit.*, 2003, p. 278.

92. Cf. Mt 28:1-8.

93. B. B. Pickard, *Feminine images of God in the Bible; in L. Raltz (ed), Envisioning a new heaven and a new earth*, 1998, p. 236.

94. Section 4.5.2 *The theology of the church and the socio-political factors*. Ref. section 4.5.2 for the images of Jesus as a wounded starving beggar, Jesus as a rejected and detained Dalit. For the images of Jesus as a fellow Struggler, the theology of the church and the socio-political factors.

life-situation. They outlined a spectrum of Christologies. Pelikan articulated this kind of view concerning the 'Jesus of liberation', and pronounced: "In his own time and every age that would follow, Jesus has been seen by many as liberator... He effects and models liberation in his active compassion and solidarity with the poor, the oppressed and the marginal."⁹⁵

vi) The church as a wider ecumenical movement

Some responses revealed the earnest search of practitioners, together with their neighbours of other faiths, for a new meaning of the Lordship and 'universal meaning' of Christ. For instance, the practitioners of a parish-based training programme built strong ties with their Hindu and Muslim neighbours through evangelism. In response, their neighbours joined them in their various activities during their full-moon gatherings. This gradually created their hope of building together a new community in their neighbourhoods where they could nurture the forgiveness and compassion of Jesus Christ. Eventually they started to view and serve one another as God's children, and shared their vision of God's Kingdom. They were convinced that their faith in Jesus issued them forth in the rule of God in their society. They reacted spontaneously to some of their socio-political issues, together with their neighbours in their community.⁹⁶ Consequently, according to the respondents, **these experiences generated in them a new understanding of the church, the body of Christ.**⁹⁷ They viewed their local community as the potential church, reflected together on the redemptive acts of God and applied the values of God's Kingdom, as revealed in Jesus. Lee, as referred to by Miller, sounded as backing up this new, biblically rooted understanding of the church, when he said that, "The church is a social response to the Christ-event. Its nature will always be partly founded in the Christ-event and partly in the historically and culturally conditioned appropriations of that event"⁹⁸.

As a result of their close ties, the organisers and tutors of a unit of the CE visited their

95. J. Pelikan, *Jesus through the centuries: His place in the history of culture*, 1985, pp. 206-219.

96. The socio-political issues, for example, poverty, unemployment and the abuse of alcohol challenged them.

97. Cf. 1 Cor 12:27; Jn 10:16.

98. R. C. Miller, *Empirical Theology*, 1992, p. 175.

Hindu neighbours at a Hindu festival of lights; they were involved by exploring the meaning of Christ as the light of the world. The respondents who were involved in this programme of evangelism reported that they also discovered the transforming presence and deeds of Christ in the beliefs and values of people of other religious faiths. Their Hindu neighbours, too, realised and appreciated the personal, historical and social aspects of the saving acts of Christ. In his book on, 'The Unbound Christ: Toward a Christology in India Today', a popular Indian Christian theologian, Samartha, substantiated this kind of experience of the CE, saying, "The affirmation of the lordship of the crucified and risen Christ over all life does not involve any exclusiveness. On the contrary, it is the declaration of the universality of the unbound Christ".⁹⁹ The centrality of Christ in the theological beliefs of the practitioners enabled them to view the unrepeatable 'Christ event', including His incarnation, resurrection and ascension,¹⁰⁰ which took place for the whole of humanity, illuminated and shaped the other religions from within themselves. This position is of an inclusive nature, but one cannot classify it as absorption.¹⁰¹ In their conviction, what made Christ universal is His character and the action of the Spirit in Him, extending to every human being. Moreover, the Hindu insights into 'the larger unity of all life' in the universe helped them to discover the Lordship of Christ. By their constant dialogue, they acknowledged the risen Christ as beyond them. Furthermore, they were united with their neighbours of other faiths and became more active in their socio-political involvement.

The practitioners believed that Christ, through his unique act of salvation, started a new and universal creation, just as the original creation.¹⁰² Once again, Christ, being the head of the church, created in them, through this experience, a new understanding of Church, 'the body of Christ'. They perceived their Hindu and Muslim neighbours as potential organs of the same body of Christ¹⁰³ and worked together as 'the salt of the earth' in their

99. Annotated bibliography on contextualisation, p. 42, n.d., <http://www.mislinks.org/biblio/query.php?ps=1640&search_for=&search_area=> (10 June 2005).

100. Jn 1:14ff; Lk 28:1ff; Acts 1:6-11.

101. They did not believe that their bodies became obscured in the Spirit of Christ, without any distinction of personality and imperative of responsibilities.

102. Jn 1:1-5 Cf. Col 1: 15-23; 2 Cor 5:17.

103. Paul Tillich called the same theological insight the 'latent church', Schillebeeckx the 'anonymously Christian Church', and Gregory Baum the 'church beyond the church'.

community.¹⁰⁴ Affirming the experience of the practitioners of the CE, Fore declared with conviction: "... wherever there is an apprehension of and participation in God's revelation, there exists the church. ...And that which calls itself the church often is not fulfilling the role of church".¹⁰⁵ The encompassing act of salvation extends remarkably from the incarnation of Christ to the groaning of creation, embracing the entire historical and geographical world.¹⁰⁶ This means that wherever the resistant and liberation forces direct the creation toward the fullness of life, God is present and active.

vii) A partial view of Jesus Christ and socio-political factors

Some practitioners, mostly of the UESI developed a partial view of Christ, which they conveyed through images of Christ. Some of them introduced Jesus as a **'miracle Worker' and 'Baptiser of the Holy Spirit'**. They concluded that God was only the Source of power and holiness. This revealed their partial view of Christ, not allowing them to integrate God's power and holiness with the 'attributes' of God, for example, steadfast love, faithfulness, and compassion. In turn, this developed as a dualistic view of life. Subsequently, they regarded the spiritual aspects of life as 'immortal' and 'holy'. The material aspects, for example, the physical and socio-political factors, were viewed as mortal and evil in themselves. Some practitioners presented a Jesus, as a **'meek and gentle Lamb'**, while others, as a **'glorious almighty King'**. These images of Jesus were associated with the conquerors and colonisers of the past, and those of the recent rich and powerful landlords in South India. The practitioners from the socially oriented paradigm reported that these images developed largely towards the exploitation of the victims of the socio-political factors. Thus, the power of the rich and the rulers over them was transposed to these images of Christ and entrenched; knowingly or unknowingly the images were seen to receive legitimacy and ultimate anointing from Christ.

The following three features characterised the destructive consequences of this partial view: Firstly and principally, the total teaching of the Bible would nurture a holistic view of Christ. Any **teaching less than a holistic view of biblical 'truth'** could

104. Mt 5:13.

105. W. Fore, A Theology of Communication, n.d.,
<<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=268>> (19 December 2005).

106. Rom 8:22-23; Col 1:17-20

only harm the cause of Christ. God as revealed in Christ urged us to work for justice and ‘shalom’¹⁰⁷ in society. This signified that any theology, seeking to justify, condone, or ignore major social evils afflicting so many of God's people in South India is a fundamental error.¹⁰⁸ The words of Augustine, as perceived by the General Council of the Assemblies of God are appropriate in this regard: "If you believe what you like in the gospel and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself."¹⁰⁹ Secondly, the above unhelpful images of Christ influenced some practitioners, particularly those of the UESI, to **advocate personal holiness to the extent of ignoring the realisation of God’s Reign in contemporary society** and the transformation of people and society through God’s grace. A critical appraisal of their concept of ‘holiness’, however, disclosed that they were afraid to be corrupted by socio-political evil if they would relate to socio-political factors. Consequently, their programmes became irrelevant to the victims of socio-political problems. The Bible made us aware of being called not just to be hearers of the Word but ‘doers’ of it¹¹⁰ in our local communities, as well as in the national and international politics. What God required is to do justice, love mercy, to walk humbly with our God and lead a distinctive lifestyle of ‘shalom’ and holiness.¹¹¹ Perhaps the third and the most destructive result of the practitioners having a

107. ‘Shalom’ is a Hebrew word, embracing such concepts as peace, welfare, righteousness and wholeness; cf. Jer 29:7.

108. The basic ‘teachings’ of the Bible include: God is ‘perfect in truth, justice and love’. So, the search for ‘truth, justice and love’ is a prominent aspiration of human life. God created people in God’s image. Consequently, everyone is of immense worth, dignity, value, moral responsibility and a creative potential (Ps 8:3-8). Sin is not only personal, but it also infects the structures of society (Isa 6:5; Eccl 4:1;5:8; Rev 18). God has an option for the poor, the powerless and the oppressed (Ps 146:5-10). God works in all communities, upholding justice, restraining evil (Isa 45:13; Rom 13:4,6). God liberated the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Deut 6:20-23). The Mosaic law was designed so that oppression should not occur in the new society. There was legislation for the relief of the widows, orphans and aliens (Ex 22:21-27), radical for equality and for the year of the Jubilee (Lev 25). The prophets condemned social injustice (Am 5:10-13, 26-27; Mic 1:5-7; 2:1-2). They hoped for a model just government under a king for example, David (Isa 32:1-4; Jer 30:8-9). The central theme of the Bible is the Reign of God, inaugurated in Jesus, the promised Messiah (Isa 9:6-7; Lk 4:16-19). There is an unresolved tension between what arrived in the Messiah, (Mk 1: 15; Lk 4: 21), and that which is still to come in all its fullness. While we look forward to the redemption of the whole of creation (Rom 8:19-25; Rev 21:1-4), we expect to see individuals entering the Kingdom by faith (Jn 3:3,16), in obedience to Jesus (Mt 7:21). Through our individual and corporate action as church, as salt and light, we should expect to see substantial healing and restoration in the fallen world.

109. The General Council of the Assemblies of God, *The believer and positive confession*, 2006, <http://www.ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/pp_4183_confession.cfm> (12 March 2006).

110. Lk 6:48, 49; 8:21; Jas 1:22-27.

111. Mic 6:8, Rom 12:1-2; Heb 12:14; 13:1-5.

partial view of Christ was that it **obstructed them from relating the gospel creatively to the socio-political context**. Schipani exposed this approach saying that, “A twofold ideological distortion of Easter has thus been diabolically established: The Jesus of the cross is transfigured into a symbol of the defeat and resignation of the people; the risen Christ of the glory is effectively demoted to the rank of a propaganda minister in the service of oppressive regimes and systems”.¹¹² His call for a holistic view of Christ was obvious. According to him, “Hugo Assmann contends that those portraits of Christ are actually the two complementary dimensions of a Christology of oppression”.¹¹³ He was convinced that the abuse of such representations of Christ clearly favoured the interests of the powerful. Some socially oriented practitioners substantiated to this view, with the aid of Marxist analysis. Obviously, since those images did not represent Christ, they were not authentic Christologies at all.

In this context, Schillebeeckx reminded us of God’s clear option to forgive and sustain the victims of socio-political factors, rather than claiming holiness and condemning them as ‘sinners’. He said: “The believers see the face of God in the history of human liberation... The deciding factor is...the answer to the question: ‘which side do you choose in the struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed?’...In the preferential love of people for the poor, we see God’s free-being: unconditional love”.¹¹⁴ Kroeger described such a holistic view of God’s grace further, using the concept of ‘God’s universal rainbow covenant’: “God’s rainbow covenant with Noah forms a part or preface to the entire world and describes the origin of human race.”¹¹⁵ He portrays ‘the new covenant of universal redemption’ and ‘new creation through Christ’.¹¹⁶ Receiving different callings and gifts through the Holy Spirit, all are called to serve at different levels in society, with a clear option for the victims of socio-political factors.¹¹⁷

112. D. S. Schipani, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 75.

113. *Op. cit.*, 1988, p. 75.

114. E. Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, 1993, pp. 5-10. Cf., Mt 5:1-12. Schillebeeckx argues that without Jesus’ human career, the whole Christology becomes an ideological superstructure. Without the human meaning in the life of Jesus, all the religious meaning in his life becomes implausible. Only the human meaning of a historical process provides the religious meaning of revelation.

115. J. H. Kroeger, *Living Mission*, 1994, p. 42. In his view, “It is a concrete example of God’s universal lordship and love. It is the oldest of all covenants and... speaks of God’s commitment to all humanity’s welfare and salvation”.

116. Lk 22:20; Mk 14:24. Cf. Jn 4:12;14:6.

117. 1 Cor 12:4-6; Gal 2;10.

The above important considerations made an urgent call of the practitioners of the training programmes necessary to re-interpret the images of a meek and gentle Lamb, as well as the glorious almighty King in the light of the goal of Jesus and the Kingdom of God, i.e., that all "...may have life, and have it abundantly".¹¹⁸

viii) An intermediate orientation of Christology

Our empirical research revealed yet another shocking trend and a risk regarding the theological position of some practitioners of the training programmes in the diocese. They opted for an 'intermediate orientation' an in-between stance of Christology between the socially oriented and the pietistically oriented Christologies. This was unhelpful and deceptive. A close examination of the findings revealed that the quest for personal holiness and spiritual prosperity, as promoted by the pietistically oriented Christology attracted several members of the diocese. Accordingly, they wished to hear more of the divine aspect of Christ than of his human life in his contemporary socio-political context in Palestine. To please these members who were influenced by the pietistically oriented Christology, therefore, some practitioners compromised their faith and even surrendered their preference for a socially oriented Christology. The findings confirmed that a vacillating theological position seriously affected the viability of the programme to react to the contemporary socio-political factors. Concerning this issue, Karkkainen warned: "When Christologies focus only on the human person Jesus, rather than on the divine Christ confessed by the early church, the searches become 'Jesusologies.' On the other hand if we rest our faith on '*kerygma*' alone leaving out the historical facts, the searches create 'Christs' of their own."¹¹⁹

Due to their swaying intermediate Christological orientation, the resource people of a diocesan level SS tutors' workshop, who had intended to introduce their newly written contextual study material could not succeed. They preferred to avoid comments and criticism from the tutors with a socially oriented Christology on the new study material and to please others with their pietistically oriented Christology.

118. Jn 10:10 (NRSV).

119. V. Karkkainen, *op. cit.*, 2003, pp. 11-13.

Guidelines based on the theology of the church

1. The practitioners should be instructed through the contextual view of ‘theology from below’ and guided to make a decisive lifetime decision for a socially oriented Christology. This would equip them for socio-political involvement.
2. Some practitioners were inclined to practice pietistically oriented Christology towards reinforcing their oppressive socio-political exploits. Thus, they ended up advocating individual opportunism and the development of nuclear families in society at the cost of refraining from socio-political involvement. Hence, they should be guided to comprehend the different ways where such a Christology crippled the viability of the training to tone with the socio-political factors.
3. The training programmes should cultivate different contextual images of Christ similar to those in the New Testament. This would initiate and facilitate concrete and constant interaction between the programmes and the socio-political factors. In turn, this would add to a spectrum of life-affirming Christologies.
4. It should be important to re-interpret the prevailing images of Jesus, as a Miracle worker, the ‘Baptizer’ of the Holy Spirit, a meek and gentle Lamb and the glorious almighty King, in the day-to-day socio-political contexts of the practitioners. This would enable them to address their socio-political issues. The programmes should negate all useless images of Christ.
5. It would be rewarding to prepare the practitioners towards encountering and experiencing Christ in their daily lives. They should be empowered to develop the attitude of Jesus and to rely fully on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
6. The practitioners should be equipped to comprehend the church’s theology and ministry and make them effective in every context where the members of the diocese would be called to bear Christian witnesses on a daily basis.
7. It would be important to enable the practitioners to make a clear choice for the victims of socio-political factors; this would strengthen their skills in socially oriented Christologies.
8. Partial images of Christ should be avoided. The research revealed that a partial view of God would eventually develop into a dualistic view of life and that of the attributes and action of God. It seemed fruitful to train the practitioners to profess

- and promulgate Christian faith in line with the whole teaching of the Bible. The prevailing emphasis on personal holiness should be within God's universal 'rainbow covenant'. This would enhance our holistic view of Christ and life.
9. Efforts should be made to equip the practitioners not to vacillate between the pietistic and the social notions of Christology. This would challenge the practitioners, following socially oriented Christologies, to strengthen the relevance of their training programmes to match the socio-political factors.

5.2.3 The Task of the Church

The 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation brought together evangelicals from around the world to take new initiatives in both evangelism and mission. They realised that the great commission¹²⁰ of Jesus to proclaim the gospel and the great commandment¹²¹ to love God and one's fellow human beings complemented one another. Hence, the Lausanne Congress expressed the Christian's responsibility in these terms: "We affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ."¹²² Detailing the theological basis for the task of the Church, the 'International Congress on World Evangelization' stated:

We affirm that God is both the Creator and Judge of all men. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of people from every kind of oppression... Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.¹²³

120. Mt 28:19-20.

121. Mt 22:37-38; Jn 13:34.

122. T. Houston, *Cooperation in Evangelism and the Lausanne Covenant*, January/February 1989, <<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/1989/0102/jf895.htm>> (10 July 2005).

123. The Lausanne Covenant, paragraph 5. *Christian Social Responsibility*, n.d., <http://www.urbana.org/_articles.cfm?RecordId=75> (10 July 2005)

Lausanne Covenant declared a rationale for Christian involvement in these social evils, beginning with the recognition of God as ‘both the Creator and Judge of all men’. It also acknowledged that socio-political involvement was, together with evangelism, an essential aspect of the Christian mission.¹²⁴

This section would evaluate and sketch the viability of their evangelism and mission training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese to the socio-political factors.

i) Evangelism and the initiation into God’s Kingdom

Introducing Jesus in their programme, the tutors of a unit of the VBS carefully conducted follow-up classes to guide their students in Christian faith and God’s mission. This effort of evangelism and Christian education fostered their dignity and self-confidence as followers of Jesus. Taking Jesus as their role model, they gradually started to resist socio-political evil, for example, child abuse and forced child labour by means of their discussions, writings, discourses and socio-political action. Obviously, a fundamental induction and grounding in God’s Kingdom empowered them to react to socio-political evil. Likewise, the tutors of a local unit of the CE, involved in evangelism, were taken to a ‘Diwali’, a Hindu festival day, where they visited a Hindu neighbour who was a poor Dalit. According to the organiser, some tutors initially resisted this visit and did not wish to socialise with their Hindu neighbour. Nevertheless, he initiated continuous discussions with them regarding the values of God’s Kingdom. These conversations assisted them to understand that God in Jesus did not exclude anyone as ‘profane and unclean’ and adapt such values of the Kingdom.¹²⁵ Abraham pointed out that the induction in God’s Reign is the logic outcome of evangelism: “Evangelism is intimately related to the gospel of the Reign of God that was inaugurated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth...”¹²⁶ Substantiating the experience of the VBS and the CE, Wesley, as indicated by Abraham, illustrated evangelism in terms of an entry into a house:

124. Mt 10:7-8. Jesus’ instruction to his disciples had two distinct but inseparable components. One was propositional: ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’. The other was experiential: ‘Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons’. There is a verbal as well as a visual aspect to the kingdom of God and to the kind of witness to it by the church.

125. Mk 1:40-45; Acts 10:28.

126. W. J. Abraham, *The logic of evangelism*, 2001, p 69.

The house itself is holiness; it is coming to love God with all one's heart and coming to love one's neighbour as oneself. To get into the house, however, one must go through the porch of repentance and faith. But the porch must be rebuilt big enough to contain the basic dimensions of initiation into God's Reign.¹²⁷

It might be debated, however, that the parishioners of the VBS and the practitioners of the CE, who celebrated 'Diwali', allowed the task of evangelism to encroach on Christian education and to impinge on the church's mission in the society, where evangelism did not really belong. Thus, they created confusion amongst the Christians concerning evangelism, Christian education and mission. In response to this confusion, the tutors of the VBS and the CE confirmed that evangelism, mission and Christian education were complementary in their characteristics and functions, according to their experiences.

ii) A personal commitment to Christ and socio-political factors

The findings of the research disclosed that a personal commitment to Christ led to a life directed by God's Spirit and filled with the values of God's Kingdom; this contributed to socio-political involvement. The organisers of all the training programmes, from the socially oriented paradigm as well as the pietistically oriented paradigm set it as their goal and priority for the members of the diocese to make a personal commitment to Christ. They cautioned them against the disaster of sin that separated people from God. Like Jesus and his forerunner, John the Baptist, they proclaimed repentance as the central focus of God's Kingdom.¹²⁸ They were empowered to comprehend God's love and accept the fruits of God's grace,¹²⁹ for example, forgiveness of sins, justification as children of God and the new life guided by God's Spirit.

During this process of 'initiation into God's Kingdom' the organisers of the socially oriented programmes gradually trained their students to discern the principalities and powers of the world,¹³⁰ including the structural violence that opposed God and the values

127. *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

128. Mk 1:15; Jn 3:3. Some training programmes used 'confessional books', dealing extensively with repentance; for instance, the SS and the CE used parts of the Augsburg Confession of Luther, T. G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord, Chief articles of faith*, 1959, XII. 'Repentance' 3-6.

129. 1 Jn 1:7,9; Rom 3:24; 6:1-18; 7:14-8:25; 2 Cor 5:17.

130. Eph 6: 3:9-11.

of God's Reign. They were guided to denounce evil and bear witness to Christ. In obedience to Christ they learned to address socio-political issues.¹³¹ The 'Exposition and commentary to the Lausanne Covenant' of Stott ratified the preceding task of a Christian and the church: "...the message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination. Salvation is deliverance from evil...both individual and social. Since God hates evil and injustice, we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist".¹³²

iii) God's mission in the world and socio-political factors

The practitioners of a parish-based training programme tried to make the public aware of God's redemptive presence in society, particularly in the context of their daily pain, suffering and hopes. They were convinced that God loved their society. In their regular meetings on Fridays, they reflected on God's mission in their society. They discovered that the entire purpose of the church was to be engaged in God's mission in society. To follow Christ and to be the salt of the earth meant to them to take initiative to exercise their social responsibilities, utilising the fruits and the gifts of God's Spirit.¹³³ In this regard, they established their training programme as a community event, calling it, 'Full Moon Gatherings', held in their open market and playgrounds. They realised that God came to us through the incarnation of Christ and established us in a life-affirming, life-giving and life-sustaining relationship with God. Thus, the world was an object of God's unqualified and out-going love.¹³⁴ Consequently, they developed trust relationships in their village. This approach reflected their belief that the centre of God's mission is not the church, but the world, including all people and their socio-political affairs.¹³⁵

iv) The Holy Spirit and socio-political factors

The parishioners experienced the presence and action of the Holy Spirit during their

131. Cf. World Council of Churches, *Statement: Violence, Nonviolence and the Struggle for Social Justice*, 28 August 1973 <<http://www.casi.org.nz/statements/wccviolence.html>> (17 July 2005).

132. J. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary*, 1974, <community.gospelcom.net/Brix?pageID=14323> (13 July 2005).

133. Cf. Mt 5:13-16. Cf. Gal 5:22-23; 1 Cor 12-13.

134. Jn 3:16.

135. The socio-political issues, for example, poverty, unemployment and the abuse of alcohol, challenged them.

fellowship and prayer meetings with their neighbours on Fridays. The Holy Spirit united and prepared them to address their contemporary socio-political issues. Stott's statement assisted them to study the essential features of a parish, actively involved in the evangelisation of society: "...evangelism, instead of being imposed by constraint, should arise spontaneously from a Spirit-filled church. Since the Spirit is a missionary Spirit, it follows that a Spirit-filled church becomes a missionary church, as we see clearly in the book of Acts".¹³⁶ The parishioners believed that the Holy Spirit was the 'Director and Inspirer' of God's mission. The Spirit began to revive their history, culture and religion, transforming them to become channels of abundant life to one another.¹³⁷ It is an astonishing fact that in their experiment of 'effective evangelism and mission' during their 'full-moon' gatherings, they engaged resource people of different religious faiths in addition to their pastor. Thus, they exemplified, to some extent, cooperation between those who had different views of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Remarkably, the **parishioners discovered that God's Spirit united them with their neighbours and guided them in their socio-political involvement.** They were guided by the Holy Spirit towards community-building. Rayan, as reported by Kim, affirmed this approach towards mission referring to 'the sphere of the Spirit':

"Mission is the extension in space and time of the incarnation of God's Word...Those who engage in it are co-workers of the Spirit...to the extent that they live in the Spirit" ...After all, the Spirit was with Jesus from the annunciation not just his baptism, and Pentecost and the commission of the disciples in John 20 are one and the same.¹³⁸

Some parishioners, who established a prayer cell, were eventually empowered by God's Spirit to address their socio-political issues locally and at far-off villages among the 'hill-tribes'. Kroeger, who explored the role of Holy Spirit in the task of the Church, affirmed this type of experience, saying: "Currently, the theology of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) is of particular interest to missiologists and missionaries alike."¹³⁹

136. J. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary*, 1974, (13 July 2005).

137. Cf. Acts 1:8; 13:2.

138. K. Kim, *Bread and Breath in India: The Mission Pneumatology*, n.d., <<http://www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/DRayan2.htm>> (19 December 2005).

139. J. H. Kroeger, *op. cit.*, 1994, p. 6.

v) The wider ecumenical community and socio-political factors

It was exciting to note that the experience of the ‘Diwali meeting’ enabled the practitioners of the CE to shift from being an exclusive Christian community to an inclusive and wider ecumenical community that included their Hindu neighbours. In doing evangelism, they ventured to join their Hindu neighbours in understanding and exploring with them their Hindu myth of the ‘god of light’. In turn, this inspired the Hindus to listen and learn the parishioners’ view of God as the Light of the world, revealed in Christ. This experience reminded us how Jesus had drunk from the cup of an ‘untouchable’ Samaritan woman, engaged in dialogue, and enabled her to discover Him as the Messiah.¹⁴⁰ Jesus appreciated her religious traditions and beliefs, and encouraged her to relate to God in her own way and to view His identity as, and role of ‘universal Messiah’, through her own Samaritan framework of revelation and salvation. Through this process of evangelism the practitioners of the CE searched for a meaningful community, including their Hindu neighbours, within a wider ecumenical framework.¹⁴¹ Similarly, a unit of the CE, who initiated workshops concerning inter-religious dialogue, sustained their dialogue through their fraternal, namely, the ‘Religious Friends Circle’. Consequently, they started to discover and celebrate their common life as neighbours, grew together into a community and took mutual responsibility for one another. Augmenting this type of experience, Schillebeeckx said: “...God is God, not an ingredient of our world and...cannot be shut up or limited... We cannot reduce the active saving presence of God to our awareness or our experience of this presence, which challenges us to make sense.¹⁴² He is convinced that, “The whole of secular history is itself already under the guidance of the liberating God of creation...God’s absolute saving presence as such is only an offer and a gift”.¹⁴³ Simply and broadly stated in the light of this discussion, there is a strong link between evangelism and wider ecumenism.

140. Jn 4:7-26.

141. Since the concept ‘community’ today has been viewed in both exclusive and inclusive ways, E. L. Verdier declared that the goal of dialogue is creating a ‘community of communities’, or a ‘community of heart’ and ‘mind’, or a ‘community of conversation’. Thus, the goal of dialogue became a wider ecumenical fellowship. Ref. E. L. Verdier, *A church for all peoples*, 1993, p. 96. Cf. G. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

142. E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: the human story of God*, 1993, pp. 10-11.

143. *Op. cit.*, 1993, pp. 11.

There was a remarkable observation, prominent in the experience of the above practitioners of the CE: They demonstrated specifically that a wider ecumenical fellowship empowered them towards active socio-political involvement. Gradually, they could cherish their close unity across their traditional socio-political barriers, for example, castes and creeds. Eventually, they worked hand in glove with their Hindu neighbours in addressing some of their common problems, for example, poverty, castes, and dowries. They realised that the more they were involved together in addressing their socio-political issues, the stronger their unity became. Thus, they contributed their best efforts to the welfare of their community and for the emergence of a global village. Abraham admired the way they linked evangelism, ecumenism, and social justice: “Clearly acts of mercy, justice and peace constitute acts of evangelism. It serves as the motivation for wider ecumenism.”¹⁴⁴ The experience of God’s love in action in Jesus drove the practitioners to be open to God and others, and to grow in an indiscriminate love without limits. Thus, in a pluralist and materially poor South Indian context, wider ecumenical fellowship was a divine and spontaneous act that empowered people to socio-political involvement.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, Pieris, a Sri Lankan theologian, as indicated by Karkkainen, correct when he “links Asia’s poverty and spirituality to Jesus’ ‘double baptism’ in ‘the Jordan of Asian religions and the Calvary of Asian poverty’”.¹⁴⁶

vi) **Ongoing dialogue and socio-political factors**

The practitioners of the CE cherished their ‘inter-religious dialogue’ through their workshops and the ‘Religious Friends Circle’. This nourished a spirit of ongoing dialogue in them and enhanced their commitment to search together a meaningful community life, with their Hindu and Muslim neighbours, which ultimately led them to the gospel of Christ. Likewise, the experience of the practitioners of the CR, in establishing guidelines in the ‘Sermons-2004’, echoed their strong faith that God spoke in various ways to all of God’s people.¹⁴⁷ No wonder, then, this bound them in a constant dialogue, where they could mutually understand and esteem the contrasts in their beliefs and values. Abraham said:

144. W. J. Abraham, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 210.

145. Cf. G. Robinson, *My God and My people*, 1999, p. 5. In his view, “One factor typical of the multi-religious context in Asia is that a large section of the world’s poor live in this part of the world”.

146. V. Karkkainen, *op. cit.*, 2003, p. 275.

147. Acts 17:26-27.

God has summed up and concentrated the vastness of his grace in creation and Israel in his action in Jesus of Nazareth; the whole world has a right access to such grace and thus be initiated into the Kingdom of God. The fullness of God's grace in Jesus may awaken them from sin and bring them too to eternal life and make them a part of the body of Christ.¹⁴⁸

While accepting the revelation in Christ as final and conclusive, this, nevertheless, implied that we still have to understand Christ fully regarding all new contexts and encounters. This implies an ongoing dialogue with neighbours of other faiths. It is valid what Robinson stated succinctly: "An open mind, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit is what is needed in the multi-religious context in India".¹⁴⁹

Kroeger, however, cautioned us, "Dialogue and proclamation are both legitimate and necessary. They are intimately related, but not interchangeable".¹⁵⁰ It would also be important to listen to Baldwin who cautioned that our openness to pluralism should be constructive and not destructive. He characterised constructive pluralism as "...variation required in order to introduce more valid elements into the worldview or value system of the church. In contrast we could define destructive pluralism as variation tending to introduce invalid elements into the church."¹⁵¹ The practitioners of the CE were very careful to be constructive in their approach of pluralism. They maintained the final authority of the Bible and submitted themselves as a community of faith to the Spirit of 'truth' when they explored the person and work of Christ with their Hindu neighbours, on Diwali. The combined judgment of their faith community enabled them to discern the 'truth' of Christ, who had declared, 'I am the truth'. Together they discovered more valid elements in the worldview of Christ as He, as the Way, was also opened to their Hindu neighbours, who, too, at any time, could tread on it. Moreover, they, as well as the parishioners who held 'full-moon' gatherings, recognised and accepted their Hindu neighbours as religious persons, who, too, believed, prayed and maintained a spiritual life and history. They were vigilant not to allow their 'religious formation'¹⁵² to impel them to

148. Abraham proposed here in embryonic terms a Christian theology of world religions. He established a number of premises that informed the Christian understanding of other faiths.

149. G. Robinson, *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 15.

150. J. H. Kroeger, *Living Mission*, 1994, p. 12.

151. D. D. Baldwin, *Openness for renewal without destructive pluralism: the dilemma of doctrinal dissent*, June 1989 <www.aiias.edu/ict/vol_03/03cc_061-081.pdf> (14 March 2006).

152. The religious values and styles of their lives at their homes, Sunday School Programmes and parish nurtured their religious formation. They were careful in their religious formation not to cause any ill feelings or to allow misunderstanding between them and the people of other faiths.

view their Hindu neighbours exclusively as ‘non-Christians’, as though they were ‘irreligious’ without their own religious identity and practice.

vii) ‘Action-reflection’ and socio-political factors

Some practitioners, who focused their evangelism and mission training on particular socio-political issues, found it increasingly fruitful to maintain dynamic interaction between their theological presuppositions and the task of the church. This motivated them to commit themselves to a life-long chain of ‘action and reflection’ regarding socio-political factors. According to a respondent from a parish it was only after their enduring study and responsive action related to chronic illness that they learned not to view and judge a person’s illness as a sign of ‘spiritual illness’. Some respondents felt that there was much intellectual analysis and formalised information in the church and less place to develop habit formation and concrete application. They wished the Bible-studies, prayer meetings, preaching and worship to be more leading to responsive action. Whitehead, as evinced by Miller, also cautioned us concerning the habit of reflecting on socio-political issues at the cost of related action in the church and said ironically: “When you understand all about the sun and all about the atmosphere, and all about the rotation of the earth, you may still miss the radiance of the sunset.”¹⁵³

viii) Dialogue of life and socio-political factors

A number of the practitioners of the CR testified that a review of the firm faith of past Christian missionaries and their confrontation of socio-political issues nurtured their own faith and inspired their socio-political involvement. They held a series of workshops for the deacons and lay leaders¹⁵⁴ of the diocese on ‘hymns’. Through their study programme they explored the biographies of evangelists and missionaries who had written popular socially oriented hymns. These perspectives and experiences inspired their own contemporary socio-political reflection and action. Reiterating their notable experience a respondent stated, ‘A lighted candle lights another unlit candle’. Upholding and displaying the benefits of this type of experience, Kroeger said: “The dialogue of life,

153. R. C. Miller, *Empirical Theology*, 1992, p. 283.

154. ‘Deacons’ are the members of a parish council or a local church committee in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese; lay leaders are those who serve as leaders of the ministries of the church among children, youth and women.

dialogue of action, the dialogue of theological exchange...deepens the understanding of religious heritages and spiritual values.”¹⁵⁵ He presented dialogue between the past and present role models as the most important incentive towards socio-political involvement.

ix) Self-help projects and socio-political factors

Extending their solidarity to people in pain and suffering, due to various socio-political issues, the practitioners of the socially oriented programmes organised several self-help projects; for instance, the practitioners of the WF organised self-help projects¹⁵⁶ for female victims in their village. These projects were vital and enhanced their survival. Importantly, they learned that **God’s mission began concretely with their neighbours who were in pain and suffered.** Another special point was they reviewed their self-help projects regularly in their workshops. They assisted several victims to develop self-confidence, solidarity with one another and became skilled in addressing issues affecting them, for example, poverty, discrimination against women (and men), chronic illness, unemployment, domestic violence and broken families.

x) ‘Evangelism and mission: An integral task’, and socio-political factors

Some members of the diocese, who regarded acts of compassion and addressing socio-political issues as the heart of the church’s task, engaged in intense debates with those, who stressed personal evangelism. Interestingly, both the CE and the WF viewed acts of compassion and personal evangelism as an integral unity. They believed that God sent them as public messengers to declare the gospel that God was at work in their troubled society. They established a number of self-help projects for the victims of unemployment, irrespective of their castes and creeds. Eventually they spelled out with bold humility and in clear non-technical language why they, as a church, were doing it. In turn, their Hindu and Muslim neighbours became interested and wished to know Jesus and God’s Kingdom. Thus, their evangelism was intertwined with their social service and acts of justice. Their action originated in their conviction that **Jesus led people to complete fundamental liberation.** They reminded us that the mandate in the book of Acts was that

155. K. J. Kroeger, *op. cit.*, 1994, p. 89.

156. For instance, they assisted the unemployed women to establish poultry farms, and start gardening projects and embroidery work; they also allocated money from their monthly income to initial investment for socio-political action.

of calling people to be witnesses of Christ,¹⁵⁷ as a common root of personal evangelism and socio-political involvement. They obtained a moral vision of the two great commandments, to love God and to love their neighbours as they loved themselves.

xi) Social transformation and socio-political structures

It would be worthwhile to discuss more observations concerning the experiences of the WF and the CE. They held joint workshops for the practitioners and beneficiaries of the self-help projects. They evaluated their projects and conducted their regular practice of social analysis. This enabled them to discover the causes of their unemployment and poverty. Instead of being satisfied with finding work for themselves, they investigated various ways of promoting social awareness and justice for other unemployed people in their community. They tried to expose and challenge the accumulated injustices, due to evil socio-political structures. Robinson approved this type of experience, saying, “Most of these poor are reduced to poverty due to unjust socio-economic structures both at the global and national levels”.¹⁵⁸ Their experience showed that care for the individual alone or only concern for structures was incompatible with God’s Kingdom. A critical analysis of issues and structural liberation, portraying a logical relationship between individual and society, between subject and structure, were more in line with the Kingdom.¹⁵⁹ Galilea treasured the stand of the WF and the CE, naming it, ‘evangelisation incarnate’: “A truly Christian evangelization...brings the Kingdom of God to our exploitative, unjust societies; ...it brings about a transformation of human beings in a life situation with their history, cultures, aspirations, social organisation and their whole being”.¹⁶⁰

xii) Mission strategies and socio-political factors

A number of practitioners revealed that creating a mission statement, practical goals and

157. Acts 1:8.

158. G. Robinson, *My God and my people*, 1999, p. 5.

159. Jesus’ approach to God’s Kingdom was doubtlessly His commitment to individual victims of socio-political injustice, as well as to sick people, to the materially disadvantaged, to those who were socially discriminated against, those possessed by evil spirits and those who were despised in a religious way. Nevertheless, Jesus criticised the social circumstances and their representatives, who abused the socio-political structures towards the marring of human life.

160. S. Galilea, *The Beatitudes*, 1988, pp. 2-3. In his opinion, “Evangelism must be integrally liberating. It must transform sinful persons, families and an unjust community into a just community that will qualify for incorporation into the Kingdom of God”.

strategies invigorated their socio-political involvement. The students of the CE conducted a series of seminars related to their overall goals.¹⁶¹ The CE organisers founded and interpreted their goals in a strategic way towards guiding their students into God's Kingdom, to follow lives of relevant praxis, and empowering them to address their problems of unemployment and malnutrition. Likewise, through their projects, the WF devised relevant strategies to fulfill their goals of 'serving the under-privileged and promoting justice'. They defined their programmes in noticeable forms by setting up relevant self-help projects. In their regular workshops they clarified their aims and reviewed their mission statement. They repeatedly evaluated their projects, compared their practical outcomes to their aims and redesigned their projects to realise their aims. Brown named this type of learning, 'a new way of doing theology' and said: "Theology today is an open ended process...it is an engaged process: from start to finish, those who do theology, must do it with their lives as well as with their minds."¹⁶² Kroeger declared that initiating and sustaining solidarity should be a high priority for evangelists and missionaries: "...to be in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. This involves accompanying them in the suffering arising from violence, exploitation, political and economic domination."¹⁶³ A respondent of another unit of the WF was of the opinion that this included working with marginalised people on the fringes of society, as she had done with the Dalit women in her neighbourhood. Ratifying their kind of experience, Verdiere stated: "Church...is not the totality of the Kingdom of God; it must seek to serve the Kingdom in all its phases and dimensions."¹⁶⁴

xiii) Delusions in evangelism and mission, and socio-political factors

The practitioners of the socially oriented programmes felt that **the rise of militant religious expressions was a major threat to a wider ecumenical fellowship**. In the past in South India some Christian individuals and communities did not tolerate people of

161. The overall goal of the CE is 'For Christ and for Church'.

162. R. M. Brown, *Liberation Theology: Paralyzing Threat or Creative Challenge?*, 1979, pp. 3-6: According to him theology was usually practiced in the past by experts, using texts of the past and producing scholarly volumes of systematic theology. This orientation was towards books, ideas, concepts and modes of argument rather than towards humane struggles, anguish, pain and exploitation.

163. J. H. Kroeger, *op. cit.*, 1994, p. 87.

164. E. L. Verdiere, *A church for all peoples*. 1993, p. 27.

other faiths, they flaunted campaigns and displayed disrespect for other beliefs and practices. This intolerance, however, was definitely not instigated by their belief in the uniqueness of Jesus.¹⁶⁵ Even if this were the case, the respondents said specifically that there was no reason why it might not be overcome today. They did not allow their faith in God's unique revelation in Christ to regard other religious positions as inevitably incomplete. An acute inquiry revealed the belief of the practitioners of the CE that God created everyone in His own image, and that Christ died for all people. This has had profound implications for their relationship with their neighbours and for socio-political involvement. They nurtured mutual tolerance and shared service. Koyama, as quoted by Coward, defended this type of stand: "What have crusades to do with Christ? What we need is a crucified mind, and not a crusading mind."¹⁶⁶ Gorringer prescribes that the task of the church must be of 'incarnation': "Evangelism must be carried out in a spirit of love, showing the same kind of compassion, patience, humility and boldness that was manifest in Jesus Christ's incarnation."¹⁶⁷

The experience of some practitioners of the UESI manifested another serious delusion: **They maintained a dualistic world-view** that positioned the 'soul' against the body. They believed that Christ cared for the soul and he was concerned about the body only to the extent of it being the frame-work or cell for the soul. They took only the soul seriously as the arena of God's Reign and not socio-political factors. Their traditional term, 'soul winning', indicated that their practitioners were presented with the facts of the gospel, which only necessitated them to go through a certain intellectual operation and change in mind. They missed to integrate the essential Christian experiences of salvation and sanctification to the other areas of their lives, behaviour, daily relationships, and the socio-political aspects of life. Consequently, they viewed the socio-political realities as evil and named the victims of socio-political problems, 'wicked', or 'sinners'. They regarded non-Christians as 'pagans', who lacked wisdom. Such views limited God's

165. The colonisers from abroad were intolerant with people of other religious faiths in South India, in order to force the natives to accept their European culture in the name of 'evangelisation'. Some missionaries who 'hunted' South Indians to become members of their churches were also intolerant with people of other religious faiths. Thus, it was not their belief in the uniqueness in Jesus that fuelled the intolerance to people of other religious faiths.

166. H. Coward, *Hindu Christian Dialogue*, 1989, p. 256.

167. T. Gorringer, *Evangelism and incarnation*, *Indian Journal of Theology* 30 (1981): 69-77.

transcendence concerning the historical means of salvation entrusted to the church. Thereby they concluded that God did not relate and redeem humanity outside the walls of the church. Consequently, they refrained from any socio-political involvement.

No wonder, then, that the practitioners with a pietistically oriented Christology introduced **evangelism as an instrument to convert ‘non-Christians’**. They intended to ‘make’ them members of the church with a pietistic approach to evangelism and mission. A critical review of this trend revealed that this approach gradually limited their view of religion. The lexicon definitions of religion described religious aims as correcting the ‘disjointedness’ of human nature. On the one hand, Oate emphasised that “Religion at its best pulls mankind together in inner peace and social concord. The word ‘religion’ itself is a transliteration of the Latin word ‘religio’ meaning to bind fast, or to fasten up...”¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, evidently, the practitioners with a pietistically oriented Christology promoted a dualistic view of life, and presented the different aspects¹⁶⁹ and relationships of human beings¹⁷⁰ at variance. The more they emphasised personal holiness, however, the more they increased their dualistic view and the more they excluded themselves from others, especially from ‘non-Christians’. They ended up with a kind of ‘disjointedness’, a displacement concerning others. Ironically, in their effort of converting and uniting others with Christ, they increased separation from ‘non-Christians’, as well as detachment from socio-political involvement.

Perhaps the greatest delusion in evangelism and mission discovered from these findings was that some practitioners of the UESI harboured **mixed feelings and a wavering commitment towards socio-political involvement**.¹⁷¹ They thought that once ‘non-Christians’ joined the church they would be ‘perfect’ in personal holiness, and that everything else would become right by itself. In practice, on the contrary, they developed unconscious notions that socio-political factors and structures were prone to wickedness and ‘predestined’ to evil. Thus, they eventually opted not to ‘have any contact’ with

168. W. E. Oates, *The Psychology of religion*, 1979, p. 24.

169. They separated body, ‘soul’ and spirit to a large extent, often placing one against the other.

170. They differentiated between the relationship with God, with others, nature and themselves; they only made the relationship with God important, even at the cost of all other relationships.

171. Jas 1:5-8. Cf. Mt 11:7-11.

socio-political factors. The booklets and posters of a unit of the UESI presented biographies of missionaries, reflecting their beliefs and written works that it would be sufficient only to accept Christ as Lord in their hearts, following the examples of the missionaries. They followed their personal choice of faith and kept their options open to seek luxury and status at any cost, or not make a choice for Christ at all. By implication, to seek luxury and status was justified, as long as they were children of missionaries today, or pious Christians, who regularly gave alms to the poor. This contradiction was confirmed by their belief that God granted wealth and posh positions as blessings to God's loved ones to enjoy, even if their neighbours suffered dire poverty.¹⁷² As a result they could not empower their students to address the trend of seeking luxury and status.

Guidelines based on the task of the church

1. A decisive personal commitment to Christ, leading to a life directed by God's Spirit and filled with the values of God's Reign contributed to active socio-political involvement.
2. The practitioners should be trained to regard the world, and not the church, as the centre of God's mission.
3. It would be beneficial to organise a training programme as a community event and a joint-effort with people of other faiths and ideologies in society whenever possible. Daily life situations for example, playgrounds and markets could be chosen as venues to conduct training programmes and to initiate subsequent socio-political involvement.
4. It would be effective to understand that God's mission would not only be the church's mission to the world, but it would be the total purpose of the church, i.e., that all might have life, and would have it abundantly.
5. Assurance should be nurtured in the practitioners that it would be the Holy Spirit who guided and led them in providing fullness of life for all and to be involved in a social and political way. This would challenge them to view socio-political involvement as a divine vocation.

172. They were convinced that poverty and pain were the fruit of sin and God's curse on sinners.

6. Promoting an understanding and undertaking of evangelism as initiation into the Kingdom of God and God's mission would empower the practitioners to address their socio-political factors.
7. It would be important to strengthen the practitioners' hope of realising a new community of forgiveness and compassion that would be initiated by Christ in society and the world at large. This would generate a new understanding of Christ and that of church, the body of Christ.
8. It would be vital to be aware of the Kingdom of God, being committed to the personal, existential level and the political, structural level. It would both call for personal conversion and solidarity with the disadvantaged. It would require action towards conditions that would serve comprehensive development of all people. A healthy interaction should be nurtured between personal faith in the Lordship of Christ in a practitioner's life, as well as an unconditional choice to identify and address socio-political factors. A holistic approach in evangelism should include both personal evangelism that should deal with Christian 'principles', as well as socio-political involvement.
9. It would be advantageous to maintain the interaction and integration of evangelism, Christian education and God's mission. This would cherish a concrete 'initiation into' and grounding of God's Kingdom in the lives of the members of the diocese, which, in turn, would empower them to act in response to socio-political evil.
10. It would be enriching to make a shift from functioning as an exclusive religious community to an inclusive ecumenical community; for instance, whenever possible, the practitioners might celebrate festivals with their neighbours with other religious faiths, dine together and organise joint workshops. It would be important in this regard, however, that the practitioners maintained a staunch conviction in their Christology and openness to a wider ecumenical fellowship.
11. It would be gratifying to nurture a spirit of dialogue in the practitioners. This would serve as a stimulus for wider ecumenism and as an effective tool to promote socio-political involvement.

12. The participants should be alert that a genuine spirit of wider ecumenical fellowship would lead to more socio-political involvement.
13. Socio-political factors could be addressed more effectively if the practitioners followed a socially oriented Christology and, yet, kept themselves open for growth while they were in a constant dialogue with their neighbours of other faiths. While accepting that the revelation of God in Christ was final and conclusive, they should be eager to search for more knowledge and understand more of the person and work of Christ together with their neighbours. It would be fruitful to encourage careful and constructive pluralism, based on the authority of the Bible, to introduce more valid elements into the world-views or value systems of the church. This would enhance Christianity.
14. It would be vital that the practitioners recognised and accepted their neighbours of other faiths as religious persons, who also believed, prayed and have had a spiritual history and life. It would be good to be vigilant and not to view them exclusively as ‘non-Christians’, as though they did not have their own religious identity and practice.
15. Presenting programmes that aimed at reviewing the firm faith of the past missionaries and leaders of the church, and their experience in addressing socio-political issues, would be fruitful. This would nurture faith and socio-political involvement.
16. It would be rewarding to maintain a dynamic interaction between the theological presuppositions and the task of the church. This would motivate the practitioners to commit themselves to a life-long succession of action and reflection related to socio-political factors.
17. It would be worthy to translate the inner meaning of the message of Christ from its historical milieu and to root it in the context of the victims of socio-political evil (‘gospel re-rooting’).
18. It would be important to enable the practitioners to own and nurture an awareness that God’s mission began with people in pain and suffering. Nevertheless, they should also be made aware that it led to the transformation of the church and society.

19. Self-help projects might be established to enable the survival of the victims of socio-political issues, and to empower them to address their socio-political issues.
20. Clear and practical goals and mission statements should be created to assist, initiate and invigorate socio-political involvement. Moreover, serious attention should be given to shape strategies of evangelism and mission in a way that they might lead to socio-political involvement.
21. The practitioners should seriously be cautioned to be aware of fundamentalism and fundamental 'militant' religious expressions as a threat to wider ecumenism.
22. The practitioners should be discouraged from viewing evangelism only as an instrument to convert non-Christians.
23. It would be imperative for the practitioners to avoid a dualistic world-view that placed the 'soul' against the body. They should be guided to understand that Christ cared not only for the 'souls', but also for the physical needs of people. They should regard both the spiritual aspects of life and the socio-political factors as the arena of God's Reign.
24. It would be unhelpful to entertain mixed feelings and ambivalent commitment in practitioners concerning socio-political factors.

5.2.4 The Ministerial Resources

God's Spirit continues to brood over God's creation to restore God's creation according to God's plan. Eventually, Jesus initiated His disciples to realise God's image in them and to share in God's plan of proclaiming God's Reign.¹⁷³ We are "jars, full of valuable treasure".¹⁷⁴ God redeems us, gathers and aligns our purposes with God's purposes. Nevertheless, we are but jars of clay, having been made from the elements of the earth. This implies that we are weak and helpless and we can do nothing unless we receive strength from God. We are like the branches of a vine that by themselves cannot bear fruit; we need to remain as parts of Christ, the true vine: we are to keep fellowship with Him, and find our life, our source and nourishment in Him.¹⁷⁵

173. Gen 1:1-2; Rev 21:5. Cf. Mt 10:1; Mt 28:19-20.

174. 2 Cor 4:7.

175. Jn 15:4-5,7; Gal 2:20.

Christ dwells and grows the fruit of God's Reign in our lives; God bestows upon His church His power and spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity.¹⁷⁶

To hammer this idea home, Paul compares Christian life and work with the dead body of Jesus on the cross. It might look like nothing but failure and loss. But it is God who raised Jesus from the dead and glorified fills our dead-looking work with God's life and power. God continues to be glorified through the resurrection of Jesus as His resurrection continues to be displayed in the lives and work of us as Jesus' followers. **Moreover, gathering and sending us in God's mission is** part of God's daily activity in the world, in the church, and in our lives. Thus God refreshes us with sufficient ministerial resources so that we may serve God's Reign with a sense of joy and hope. Wilkie Au, in his new book, entitled, *The Discerning Heart*, names these times of waiting for God's resources as 'Liminal space/time': "The gap created by the dissolution of the old and the yet-to-emerge new is what we are calling liminal space. It is a place of disequilibrium... A place where we are caught betwixt and between is where real transformation can take place."¹⁷⁷ The ministerial and spiritual resources empower us during this liminal space or transformative time.¹⁷⁸

It was revealed that the practitioners of both the socially and the pietistically oriented paradigms upheld Bible-studies, prayer meeting, daily devotional time and team ministry as important ministerial resources. This section depicts an evaluation of the findings from the responses on those resources and their viability to the socio-political factors.

i) Bible Studies

It was found that the practitioners of a unit of the CE and SS believed that they could get to know God's presence, purpose and deeds through the **meditation of nature**. They believed that God's dynamic Word of liberation continued to act in creation. For

176. Holy Spirit, apports to each member as He wills, the gifts, provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions (1 Cor 12:4-5; 2 Cor 4:7).

177. Dr. J. Tankersley, *Be strong in His power*, n.d., <http://www.lagunapreschurch.org/cgi-bin/sermons/write_htm.cgi?10656104551> (10 May 2005).

178. Lk 4:1-2,14-15; 39-46. Cf. 2 Cor 4:10-11; Eph 4:11-13.

instance, meditating on God in the ‘burning bush’,¹⁷⁹ they discovered a direct correlation between experiencing the presence of God in nature and developing a commitment to create a more just, compassionate and sustainable family setting, work place, social network, and local community. They believed that by exposing the complex social and environmental evils of their community, God called them to think globally and act locally.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, meditating on the ten plagues during the Exodus¹⁸¹, they reviewed natural calamities, for example, droughts, earthquakes and cyclones that they encountered. They realised that there were mysteries behind such events that they could not comprehend, but they acknowledged the compassionate love of God, expressed in various ways to the victims of such disasters. They also explored the role of humanity that contributed to the causes of these afflictions and they asked for clarity.

To the practitioners of the CE, the Bible was an acted word rather than a spoken word of God. They perceived God’s presence, purpose and deeds through **daily events and relationships** rather than through propositions or statements. They believed that God counselled and guided people in their daily events and relationships during and after Exodus. This is why they were involved in exploring the revelation of God as mediated through Exodus. According to them, the Israelites conveyed to all ensuing generations what they had experienced as God’s purpose and acts.¹⁸² After applying the revelation of God through the Bible texts to their life-situations, the respondents verified their findings in the light of God’s revelation in the life, death and resurrection of Christ as proclaimed in the Gospels. They viewed the ‘invisible’ image and will of God totally in Jesus. To

179. Ex 3:1-12: During the 13th century BC, Moses received the liberating command of God ‘through a burning bush’ to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.

180. They talked about different life-situations of ‘burning bush’ (meditations where they encountered God) that led them to view their contemporary socio-political factors in general (globally), and address some of them specifically (locally).

181. Ex 7:14-11:10.

182. The stories, poems, proverbs, prophecies, Gospels and other writings in the Bible validated and guided their experiences of encountering God in their daily socio-political contexts. For instance, Moses understood God’s presence and purpose of *freedom to the oppressed* in the daily socio-political struggles of the Israelites (Ref. Ex 4:12-16; Mt 18:20). Amos challenged his people at the streets and the markets to eradicate poverty and discrimination, crying out that *God wanted justice to roll down like an overflowing stream*. (Ref. Am 5:21-24, 8th century BC). Jesus at the seashore of Galilee, on the mountain, in the fields and streets enabled people to enter into a new communal life where their relationships blossomed in partnership with God, based on God’s justice and love. (Ref. Mt 4:12f; 5:1ff).

them God's revelation in Jesus was 'of God' rather than 'information about God'. Confirming the effect of their approach in Bible study, Barth, as denoted by Chapman, stated: "...the word of God assumes three forms: The word of God as preached; the written word (Scripture); the revealed Word of God in Jesus Christ. Real revelation is through Christ. In Christ the Word of God and revelation are identical".¹⁸³ The practitioners of the parish, the WF and the SCMI had **Bible-studies as an act of the community of faith**. They gathered, overcoming their barriers of castes, gender and education, and discussed their insights in Bible texts with others in their study groups. The common bond that held them together was their desire to apply their faith in Christ to personal and socio-political matters. They made no claim to be 'professional theologians', yet they believed that they were representatives of God's Kingdom on earth and faithful stewards of everything God gave them. In addition, they regarded each other as the means of the 'voice' or discernment of the Spirit of 'truth' and effective resources for the Bible-studies. They reminded us of the community who gathered in one place at Pentecost: the Galileans and the God-fearing Jews waited in prayer and Bible-study in unity as the disciples of Jesus, without any distinction and discrimination. The more they regarded each other as organs of the same body of Christ, the more they could attain inspiration from one another to understand and interpret God's message effectively.¹⁸⁴ The practitioners' regular study of Exodus guided them in their contemporary communal life with all its struggles and hopes. The Word of God served as the source of inspiration and the material for their reflection towards socio-political involvement. Nevertheless, when they discovered God's presence and mission in their socio-political context, they realised that secular events and socio-political factors were the material through which God continued to speak today. Validating their experience, Schillebeekx declared: "The secular events become the material of the 'word of God'."¹⁸⁵

One of the most difficult challenges of the practitioners of the CE was to modify their

183. G. Chapman, *No Other Foundation*, Volume III, 1993,

<<http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/gchapman/nof/NOF6B.HTM>> (10 August 2005).

184. Acts 2:1-8. Both the less educated and less intellectual 'sub-standard' community of Galileans and the devoted, educated, 'standard community' of Jews waited together in meditation and prayer. The Holy Spirit came with tongues of fire and rested upon each one of them. Cf. Acts 2:14ff; 2:42.

185. E. Schillebeekx, *op. cit.*, 1993, pp. 5-10.

view of God being an object of their knowledge, to God being a subject of their daily community experience. **Reviewing their history in the light of the history of the people of Exodus empowered them to become active ‘agents’ and mediators of history**, and to stop being passive objects on the fringes of other people’s lives. They experienced God accompanying them as their guide on their life’s journey, inspiring them individually and as a community of faith. God led them through their imagination, reason and skills to analyse the socio-political contexts behind the Bible texts. They viewed the Holy Spirit as being with them every step of their Bible-studies, illuminating what they had read, and enabling them to relate to their contexts. Notwithstanding, the Holy Spirit was not a substitute for their difficult efforts to understand texts.

The experience of the WF of **‘gospel re-rooting’** and the theme-centred studies of ‘the image of Jesus’ by a parish, the WF and the CE were found exemplary.¹⁸⁶ With the assistance of their pastors, they systematically examined the cultural, historical, literary and socio-political background of some Bible texts and discerned their original messages. Affirming this type of stand, McNutt said: “The Bible grew out of socio-political realities and cannot be fully understood apart from them”.¹⁸⁷ They related the messages jointly to their current contexts. They were careful to impede their own preconceptions, agendas, cultural differences and skills from influencing that which they understood from the Bible. Asante put this idea in a concise way: “History is dynamic. It moves people through time and space. In the re-telling of history from our voice, the journey will come alive today and will be our liberating experience.”¹⁸⁸

Some programmes of the SCMI had prepared the members of the diocese to confront their socio-political situation creatively by empowering them to combat unhelpful trends in Bible-studies.¹⁸⁹ They primarily exposed **‘fundamentalism’** concerning the Bible that

186. They had Bible studies on ‘Jesus in our village today!’ (the WF) and “Christian responsibility and unemployment” (the CE). Ref. Section 4.5.3, *The task of the church and socio-political factors*.

187. Paula McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*, n.d., <http://www.interp.com/articles/mcnutt_ancientIsrael.htm> (23 July 2005).

188. K. Asante, *African American History – a journey of liberation*, n.d., <www.asante.net/books/aahist1.html> (12 July 2005).

189. They presented ‘fundamentalism’, ‘spiritualising the biblical texts’ and ‘misusing biblical verses to ascertain God’s blessing’ as common unhelpful trends in Bible-study in the diocese.

characterised the approach of a number of diocese members.¹⁹⁰ They concurred with the tutors of the UESI regarding divine inspiration and the ‘inerrancy’ of the Bible, as well as Bible ‘truths’ concerning fundamental Christian views.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, the tutors of the UESI claimed that the Bible did not require interpretation; it was to be regarded as ‘unchanging’, regardless of cultural and historical contexts. According to them God was the author of the Bible and, consequently, the Bible words were literally divine words, not human words. Hence, the practitioners of the SCMI disagreed with them in their belief that the infallibility of the Bible was based on ‘verbal inspiration’.¹⁹² Armstrong concluded that fundamentalism replaced mythos since the time of European Enlightenment: “...what ultimately filled the mythos gap was fundamentalism. It is the rebellion of mythos against the ‘aggressive’ encroachment of logos.”¹⁹³

Whatever the reasons for the end results, the spirit of fundamentalism cultivated unhelpful consequences in the diocese; for instance, specific state of mind became the habit, namely, ‘I’ve got a verse’ mentality.¹⁹⁴ It profoundly oversimplified and it

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190. E. L. Verdiere, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism*, n.d., <www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/SFS/an0705.asp> (2 June 2005). “Fundamentalism is a reactionary movement of 20th century Evangelicalism and emerged within Protestantism, having the literally interpreted Bible as a fundamental to Christian life and teaching”.
191. Biblical inerrancy is the belief that the Bible is without error. Nevertheless, by ‘inerrancy’, the UESI means Biblical literalism (the belief that the Bible is literally true in every word), while the socially oriented programmes believe that Bible texts require interpretation to be understood correctly. The Bible ‘truths’ agreed upon by all practitioners include, the inspiration of the Bible, the divinity and the immaculate conception of Christ, the vicarious expiation of Christ’s passion, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the bodily return of Christ with the second coming.
192. Not all ‘fundamentalists’ in the diocese would necessarily describe the Bible in the way the tutors of the UESI did, although some in the diocese would. The ‘fundamentalists’ believed that the whole Scripture is ‘God-breathed’, in fact, the very words themselves are equally inspired and recorded in the writings of the ‘original’ manuscripts. According to them the Bible is free from error in all its statements and affirmations. It is without error, not only in its theology, but also in its science, geography, views of the cosmos and history.
193. K. Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, n.d., <<http://kimallen.sheepdogdesign.net/Reviews/bfg.html>> (10 July 2005). ‘Mythos’ is a mystical knowledge concerning universal ‘truth’, expressed through stories, analogies and symbols. ‘Logos’ is more logical. In Armstrong’s view, religion used to incorporate elements of both mythos and logos to form a complete social structure for people’s lives. No one was dominant over the other and each had its own realm in which it worked best. If anything, however, mythos was believed to be deeper and more meaningful than logos. During the Enlightenment (1600-1800), however, logos dominated mythos, gradually cutting into its realm until rationality became the only way to approach life. With the death of mythos religion had less meaning. People felt disoriented and dissatisfied spiritually. Fundamentalism was the reaction against enlightenment and modern ideas.
194. During crises or even during regular devotion some members of the diocese took a Bible verse at random, out of context, and claimed it as God’s will or message to them. This became a habit, as well as a mentality, which was known in the diocese as, ‘I’ve got a verse’.

distorted the process of discerning God's will according to Bible texts and their contexts. In response, the practitioners of the SCMI viewed the Bible as divinely inspired, yet, expressed in human language by human authors with limited capacities and resources. They argued that one needed to know how to read and study it.¹⁹⁵ Thus, the SCMI organised workshops, utilising some theologically trained people to develop some skills¹⁹⁶ that they believed were required for students to understand Bible texts and how to apply them in their own socio-political contexts.

i) The spiritualising in Bible-studies and socio-political factors

Various practitioners of the CR and the CWTP found it useful to select and study a number of Bible texts¹⁹⁷ and found particular messages relevant for their socio-political issues. It, however, became clear that the spiritualising or allegorising of the Bible were popular. They were inclined to take short cuts; they took a verse from the Bible and interpreted it in a spiritual or literal way without any contextual study, claiming that that is what the Bible actually said. Consequently, different people interpreted the same text in a different way and claimed the Bible as authority. The frustration of a student of the UESI over unfulfilled Bible promises¹⁹⁸ confirmed that this approach was solely guided by personal inspiration.

195. The Bible was compiled by more than 40 authors during a period of over a thousand years; it is a collection of various documents, including historical accounts, proverbs, poetry and lyrics, instruction for churches and prophecies. The original documents were written in three languages and were since translated into hundreds of languages. The English Bible itself had many versions, each providing a slightly different interpretation of the original documents. Translation from one language, (for instance, Hebrew or Greek), to another language, (for instance, English), presented problems. Some expressions did not have equivalent words in English and they had to be translated by following contextual clues. Other words had multiple meanings, and had to be translated by using contextual information. Moreover, versions of the English Bible were based on the original Hebrew and Greek texts, or on other English translations and would reflect the translator's bias concerning the meaning of particular texts. Taken from *Tools for Bible Study*, n.d., <<http://www.growingstrong.org/christ/studytools.html>> (10 August 2005).

196. Some practitioners of the SCMI learnt the socio-political background of the Israelites, particularly in the time of Jesus; they did exegetical work on selected Bible texts during workshops.

197. For instance, the Bible texts that were related to their socio-political issues, for example, poverty, bribes and the abuse of power and alcohol.

198. The respondent did not have money to continue her study, her little makeshift house had been broken into and there was no electricity. In response to her request for assistance the tutor of the UESI quoted Bible promises, (out of context), and assisted her to experience some emotional relief and security. She, however, was in despair when she saw that her socio-political situation became worse. Her sorrow and frustration were expressed in her tone of voice and in her gestures.

They were looking to find their own personal vision of Christ in the Bible and, along with it, the satisfaction of their own spontaneous religious feelings. Apparently, the practice of ‘proof-texting’¹⁹⁹ led them to the spiritualising of Bible verses and the assumptions of true meanings, due to the tendency of individual readers to add their own intention to the interpretation of the texts. The SCMI and the CWTP, however, guided the members of the diocese to take a stand by not claiming their own ideas and assumptions as biblical, but to listen to the Word of God in its own socio-political context. The quotation from Martinez also cautioned the practitioners concerning the violation of the original intention of the writer of a Bible text by way of spiritualising: “Selective allegorizing and spiritualizing of texts is not "teaching!" ... To do so is to violate the intent, objectivity and integrity of Scriptural truths as penned by their authors.”²⁰⁰ Brown made us aware of spiritualising as satanic: “Satan has a backup plan, just in case he can't convince you that a promise is not meant for you. His other tactic is to spiritualize the promises of God.”²⁰¹

Looking for Bible verses that conveyed God’s blessings was another trend in the diocese, promoted by those who adopted a pietistically oriented Christology. This motivated the members to seek money, status and power at any cost. A survey of the ‘theology of blessings’ unmasked the fact that it assisted the rich and pious members of the diocese to boast that God blessed them. Hence, they argued that poverty and suffering were the signs of God’s curses. Promoting such a theology, backed up by Bible verses, was unhelpful to address socio-political factors. The SCMI combated this trend by conducting a series of workshops. The organisation named, ‘Every voice network’, displayed the information that the Hebrew word for blessing, ‘barak’, meant at its core, ‘the awesome power of life itself’ in their study paper on, ‘What does it mean for the

199. ‘Proof-texting’ generally takes passages out of context in order to apply them to the individuals’ preconceptions, to support their point. The Pharisees were the biblical literalists who had verses to defend their teaching. For instance, the Jewish law accepted divorce, by which the Jews tested Jesus. But Jesus referred to Genesis and said, ‘How can you understand what Moses taught about divorce if you haven't understood what God created marriage to be?’ He meant that one has to apply the biblical worldview considering all the parts of the Bible together. The *proof-test* method is inadequate because it fails to take into account the historical and literal context of each biblical text, thus engaging in a superficial interpretation, which leads to misguided conclusions.

200. R. Martinez, *Spiritwatch Ministries*, n.d., <www.spiritwatch.org/biblestudy3.htm> (16 July 2005).

201. T. Brown, *Strong Faith*, n.d., <www.tbm.org/strongfaith.htm> (16 July 2005). In Brown’s opinion, “Spiritualizing gives the Bible a mystical meaning”.

church to give its blessings'.²⁰² They highlighted the fact that the word **blessing is the result of a just relationship between God and humanity**. Complementing their insights in her challenging paper on, "Where do we stand?" Russel declared that "When the Church chooses 'to bless' something it is declaring that this particular person or persons or thing is a gift/blessing from God and his/her/its/their purpose is to live in...a covenanted relationship with God (and with all creation)...".²⁰³ Richardson went so far as to point out that "In the Bible...righteousness and peace are held to be the marks of the coming Messianic blessedness...".²⁰⁴ Thus, blessing, social justice and peace are found to be inseparable relational and covenantal concepts. Moreover, the biblical concept of the 'one another'²⁰⁵ included being a blessing to one another. Abraham, however, was given one more blessing which was greater than all those that came before it, as it is recorded in the conclusion of the verse: "I will make of you...so that you will be a blessing!"²⁰⁶ From the above inquiries and comments, it is clear that God is the only great fountain of blessings who transformed people in their daily socio-political context to communicate God's blessing to one another. When a person becomes a blessing for others that is the greatest blessing of all. It follows that it is commendable to relate the training programmes to daily relationships and life-situations, and to 'transform' the practitioners to be a blessing to others, rather than to encourage them to seek blessings.

ii) The prayer, daily devotion and socio-political factors

Some critics of religion, for example, Feuerbach and Marx, argued as follows: "Religion and thus prayer is used by the rich and the strong...to keep the poor and the weak in their place. Hence the human cry to God has to be answered by social revolution or psychoanalysis; liberation depends upon human action, not divine intervention."²⁰⁷ Their

202. 'Every voice network', *What does it mean for the church to give its blessings?* 03 October 2005, <<http://www.everyvoice.net/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=2092>> (10 October 2005).

203. S. Russel, *Where do we stand?* October 2005.

<http://www.claimingtheblessing.org/Where_Do_We_Stand.htm> (11 December 2005).

204. A. Richardson, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 33.

205. For instance, pray for one another (Jas 5:16), love one another (Jn 15:12), encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11) and forgive one another (Col 3:13).

206. Gen 12:2. Cf. I Pet 3:8-9. To Peter, Christians are called to bless others; it is not conditional that one must bless in order to be blessed, but it is a thing one inherits when one blesses others.

207. A. Boesak & C. Villa-Vicencio, (eds), *When prayer makes news*, 1986, pp. 97-98. Cf. Am 5:21-24 and Acts 2:42-44.

criticism was based on the failure of contemporary Christians: Many who prayed were not praying about social issues, and those who were active in social issues were not praying. This hints the dynamic relationship that exists between prayer and the active socio-political engagements of Christians. Christianity proclaims a vital and covenantal relationship with God that leads to a loving relationship with others. Evidently, prayer connects us with God, and in prayer, God connects us to others.²⁰⁸ Besides, whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is an act of the whole person who prays.²⁰⁹ Consequently, prayer transforms our commitment to love God and serve the world. Describing this meaningful way of life, Bonhoeffer wrote from the prison, saying, “Our being Christians today is limited to two things: prayer and righteous action among men (!). All Christian thinking, speaking and organizing must be born anew out of this prayer and action”.²¹⁰ He made it abundantly clear that in the service of the Kingdom of God, prayer and action in the world belonged together. Moreover, it is interesting to note, that when Jesus needed to move forward, when it was time to move the Kingdom ahead, **He always stopped and immersed Himself in prayer.**²¹¹ Hence, the training programmes, in the diocese were called to review the role of prayer in the struggle for justice and socio-political transformation; and to evince that genuine prayer and spirituality led to active and meaningful socio-political involvement.

Jesus pronounced that entering God’s Reign, one is born again in Spirit.²¹² **Christian spirituality and devotional life is a specific way of life** of a Christian or a Christian community according to their understanding of reality as mediated through their Christian faith. This was found true from the spiritual experience of some practitioners. The practitioners of the CR found it empowering to review the biographies and reflect on the faith of some Christian missionaries. Following the role-model of Jesus, the practitioners of CE learnt to address the issues of bribe and adultery. An inquiry of their experience discloses that their understanding of life and consequent behavior was not formed from others’ values and ideals through socialisation. The psychological makeup

208. Ps 51:10; Jer 33:3.

209. Ps 103:1-2.

210. D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and papers from prison*, 1975, p. 300.

211. Lk 3:21, 6:12-13, 9:28ff, 11:1-4; 22:39ff.

212. Jn 3:5-6.

of others' personalities too did not determine their spirituality. Their spirituality and devotional life centred around Jesus, the Lord and Saviour. It was not Jesus' philosophies and utopias that fascinated them.²¹³ They found Jesus affirming the Reign of God and creating it in His daily life. Jesus by His life reassured that the meaning of history/life is not to just to discover, but to be created by human freedom, if we as individuals and communities are willing to accept and live in God's power. The fundamental dynamic of the Christian life was '**imitation of Christ**'. By imitating Christ, they did not mimic the outward behavior of Jesus. They allowed the revelation/meaning disclosed in Jesus' life not only to illumine their own but also to determine the way in which they lived. Thus, they experienced salvation from within, by participating in Jesus' life. Delineating Christian spirituality Haight states: "We are not what we say or what we believe; we are what we live and do."²¹⁴

Moreover, it was remarkable that the practitioners of CE, WF and SCMI referred to '**a spirituality of combat**' as relevant for their contemporary life-situations in Kanyakumari, especially in their struggle to act in response to their daily socio-political issues. They reviewed the values and priorities of their society and resisted and fought the unchristian values found within themselves with the help of God who worked through psychology. They also fought such values of their society, relying on God and doing social analysis. Ultimately, their Christian spirituality united them with God by being united with God's will and by living in God's truth and saving power. Interestingly the practitioners of the CWTP stated that their learning of the traditional Christian symbols and theological concepts²¹⁵ revealed to them God's relation to, and concern for human life and society. They believed that Holy Spirit integrated them into their particular personal and psychological structure. A student of the CWTP explained how they found meaning to their existence from Jesus' life in their context of religious conflicts and poverty, when others felt life/history meaningless. Incorporating the insights from Jesus'

213. Philosophers have affirmed that there is a God and immortality. Utopias arise similar to the Reign of God.

214. R. Haight, *Spirituality and Social Justice: A Christological Perspective*, Winter 1982, <<http://www.spiritualitytoday.org/spir2day/823443haight.html>> (16 July 2005).

215. For instance, God, creation, providence, sin, judgment, grace, Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God are old.

prayer²¹⁶ into their social sphere of life, they witnessed to some extent, just and peaceful social relationships.

A number of practitioners of the CE in their attempts to combine **prayer and social justice** moved beyond concerns and concepts into strategic God-directed action that was helpful to those in need of social justice. They inspired several Dalits women, the jobless and the refugees to join them in their efforts to address socio-political factors. Eventually they were involved in the medical mission of the diocese and assisted the victims of leprosy, cancer and AIDS. They also sent missionaries to work among the ‘hill-tribes’ in Tamilnadu. Their experience resembled that of the WF who had experienced a long scarcity of drinking water. Prayer led them to explore the root causes, become organised, and address the problem. It took time for others to join them, because they needed time to overcome their fear that prayer was risky and would lead to costly socio-political involvement. Their view of God’s mission emerging from their spiritual formation reminded us of Schillebeekx saying, “It is the positive, ‘abba’ relationship of Jesus to God that leads to a liberating Christology”.²¹⁷ Often when we prayed for **serenity to accept the things that could not be changed**,²¹⁸ we were likely to assume that the things that could not be changed included the socio-political factors, the way the society was organised and how our institutions worked. Niebuhr, however, had a larger picture of what should be changed. He refused to accept economic insecurity, racial tension and war as inevitable. The socially oriented prayer life of some practitioners of the CE asserted, to some extent, the experiences of Niebuhr. Complementing Niebuhr’s view, Barth, a theologian during the Nazi regime, once said, as quoted by ‘Spirituality & Health’ in an essay on ‘Spiritual Literacy in Wartime’, that “To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world”.²¹⁹ Jesus taught His disciples that prayer led to related action: When we prayed genuinely the prayer that Jesus had

216. Mt 6:9-15.

217. E. Schillebeekx, *op. cit.*, 1993, pp. 5-10.

218. Quoted from the serenity prayer of R Niebuhr: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference”.

About the serenity prayer, *Serinity Prayer History*, n.d.,

<http://www.the-serenity-prayer.com/about_serenity.php> (16 July 2005).

Cf. Lk 18:1-8 *The unjust judge and the persistent widow*.

219. Spirituality & Health, *Spiritual Literacy in Wartime*, 1996-2005,

<http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/lists/pta_newsitem.html> (01 June 2005).

taught, we would be calling on God to bring about a change in our world order, saying, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven".²²⁰ We would ask God not just to Reign in our personal lives, but also in our social, political and economic life spheres. Hence, it was essential for the practitioners to realise that, from the perspective of Christ and Christianity, prayer and social justice enhanced one another.

iii) A devoted time, a place and a team for prayer, and socio-political factors

The findings stated that the regular and dedicated practice of prayer of the socially oriented practitioners nurtured determination towards socio-political involvement. The church workers as the practitioners of the CWTPP gathered regularly every month at the retreat centre near the seashore of Muttom; this led them to cultivate a systematic practice of prayer and study. It enabled them to reflect on the creative prayers of Jesus²²¹ and some church leaders, and systematically develop constant devotional attitudes. Thus, they learned to obey God's leadership in the daily struggles of their pluralistic and multi-cultural society for peace and justice. In turn, they joined people of other religious faiths in addressing socio-political issues. Moreover, they also developed an ecumenical fellowship with the church workers of the LMS, participating in the programme of 'Christian Unity'.²²² This empowered them to resolve their prejudices, fears and doubts about one another. They made efforts to overcome the evil spirit of denominationalism. Their devotions and prayers transformed them in their ministerial formation. They believed that eternal life and God's blessings²²³ were parts of their 'Christian Union'. A devoted time, place and a team for prayer had nurtured constant awareness of God's presence. In this regard Robb made a note-worthy statement and commended this type of devotional experience as a contribution to God's Kingdom: "In God's Kingdom, prayer is social action... As we pray for social change, the Holy Spirit begins to transform us, and we find ourselves getting involved in social ministries. It's as if God returns our prayers as a kind of divine command to become the answer to our prayers."²²⁴

220. Mt 6:10.

221. The study of the Lord's Prayer enabled them to 'feel' God's presence in their society. It prepared them for socio-political involvement. Ref. chapter 4, footnote 143.

222. Chapter 4, footnote 145.

223. Ps 133:1,3.

224. Robb, J. and Wilson, L, *Prayer is Social Action*, 2000.

<http://www.urbana.org/_articles.cfm?RecordId=342> (12 September 2005).

The painful experience of some students of the UESI cautioned us that **prayer and fasting were not replacements for action**. The findings revealed that several practitioners of UESI were victims of poverty, unemployment and the castes, but through their spirituality, they behaved differently from the socially oriented practitioners. They considered **spirituality as a private matter** between them and God alone. Consequently, although they talked about socio-political issues, they only complained about them in their prayers. They did not wait in a humble way to listen to God's counsel and guidance concerning the challenges and did not come forward in obedience to confront the issues. Besides, they viewed Jesus as a pietistic Redeemer who set people free only of personal illness and unhealthy practices, for example, smoking and drinking. Consequently, a practitioner of the UESI stopped praying since she could not be free of her socio-political problems just by saying prayers without being involved in related action. She wrestled well to discover the meaning of prayer in her life situation. This echoed Isaiah, citing the wrong attitudes of the Israelites on their fast days, and reminding them of God's will: "Is not this the fast I choose to loose the bonds of injustice...?"²²⁵

Some practitioners were content to work out their agenda of God's mission²²⁶ without upholding a prayer-life. In his article on 'Prayer in action', Giuseppe clarified the issue succinctly, namely, that prayer and action were not contradictory, but complementary:

Prayer without action can grow into sterile pietism. Action without prayer may deteriorate into questionable activism. If prayer leads us into a deeper unity with the compassionate Christ, it will always blossom into concrete acts of service. And if concrete acts of service do, indeed, lead us into a deeper solidarity with the poor, the hungry, the sick, the dying, and the oppressed, these acts will always thrive with prayer. In prayer we meet Christ, and in him all human suffering. In service we meet people, and in them the suffering Christ.²²⁷

Schillebeekx also cautioned us with great concern in this regard: "Belief in God as the source of our world and the history of human liberation is not like the belief in the existence of a distant galaxy in the universe. It is a belief in God's absolute saving

225. Cf. Isa 58:6 (NRSV).

226. They considered God's mission as promoting education through the schools, healing through the hospitals and compassion through the orphanages in the diocese.

227. D. Giuseppe, *Prayer In Action*, April-May 2001, <<http://www.luigiguanello.com/prayer.html>> (14 July 2005).

presence among people in their history.”²²⁸ He called our attention to the inexpressible Good News that the almighty God was present in our socio-political contexts, empowering and leading us day by day to react to socio-political factors.

iv) The team ministry and the socio-political factors

The members of the diocese generally existed in relationships.²²⁹ In spite of the austere challenges of the socio-political factors, they tended to keep up their traditional extended family systems. Originally they had acted in groups in their childhood games and continued in their lives where they lived and worked. The practitioners of both the socially oriented programmes and pietistically oriented programmes worked in teams. The practitioners of the socially oriented programmes, however, developed strategies to make their team ministry more effective in addressing the socio-political factors.

The organiser of the SCMI and the chaplain of a college of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese worked closely in a team; eventually the CISRS too joined the team. They maintained a **clear, common and compelling goal** of empowering the members of the diocese to address their socio-political factors. This enabled them not to stagnate their team as an end in themselves but as a dynamic means to an end. Moreover, they focused on the students of the colleges in the diocese as their **common target group** of training. They realised that neither an individual nor an organisation had all the gifts and resources necessary to address socio-political factors. They found it increasingly fruitful to focus on a particular target group – that is students in the colleges of the CSI. They pooled their gifts and resources, and geared them in training these students. They exchanged their views, discoveries, experiences and visions in social analysis and socio-political involvement. The practitioners of the SS, VBS and CE realised that **competent, Christ-centred, and accepted leadership** led their teams to effective socio-political involvement. This empowered their teams to be creative, united and take prompt initiative in identifying and addressing the socio-political issues. They stressed that team ministry flourished at high rate when the leaders nurtured others’ talents and accepted the

228. E. Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 11.

229. ‘No person is an island’ and ‘A single plant does not make a garden’ are popular sayings in South India.

team members as task leaders. Several practitioners from the WF, CE, and VBS pointed out the benefit of setting clear roles of the team members.

Nevertheless, paving a common ground for teamwork however, was not always easy. There had been a tendency to take role definition in a team either to extremes or not to take it far enough. It involved temptations and challenges to build up a team spirit. There were times that their pride tempted them, as team members, to fallaciously appear better than the other team members. The team members of the SCMI, the CISRS and the chaplain, however, were aware of this. Hence, according to a respondent, they had been careful not to appear superior in their own eyes. Interestingly enough, in their teams they cultivated a spirit of letting others stand on their shoulders, rather than pretending to be the leaders of their colleagues. It might have been true that ambition and a spirit of competition were parts of 'human nature'. Nevertheless, the team members realised, to some extent, that in Christian ministries it would not be easy to determine whether one really did better than another.²³⁰

The practitioners of WF, CE, VBS, SS and the parish-based programmes had members with varying theological positions and orientations. The SCMI and some units of CE had members from different castes and creeds. They all had members who differed in their age, gender, class, and castes. They brought different perspectives of life, spiritual gifts, values, and skills enriching their teams. This, however, also led often to discord, conflict, and breakdown of communication. In response, some practitioners had **strategically built mutual trust, acceptance, understanding, respect, and courtesy. Some units of these programmes had a set of operating guidelines and held one another mutually accountable;** this had improved the level of interdependence, and trust. Team ministry is indeed like a three-legged pot. If one of the three legs is weak or taken away, then the whole thing collapses. The practitioners of a unit of the WF found that worship and Christian fellowship was a means of nurturing unity in their team. The team spirit emerged and developed through their regular and participatory services of worship. The regular corporate praises, prayers, songs, Bible meditation and reflection on the

230. Ultimately, 'the race is not given to the speedy, nor the battle to the strong'. Cf. 1 Cor 1:27.

sacraments opened their eyes to the talents and needs of others. They did not view worship only as serving God, disengaging from socio-political involvement. **Worshipping God also signified serving one another within their socio-political context.** During their services of worship they created opportunities for members to share their personal concerns, fears, failures, hopes and dreams. This equipped them to recognise and cherish their unity; in turn, they became more open to one another. Sharing their challenges and successes regularly, they were united and hopeful whenever they faced misunderstanding and ‘in-fighting’ within their team. Through their words, attitudes and especially their praying for one another during the regular services of worship, they cherished a spirit of mutual acceptance and belongingness. Obviously, this experience of the WF indicated that a group did not become a team merely by living or working together as individuals. It took caring for, sharing with, forgiving, affirming and appreciating one another.²³¹ Above all, they believed that the Holy Spirit was the unseen Enabler and Leader of their team, sustaining and strengthening their unity day by day. This formed a strong foundation for their team efforts in addressing socio-political issues.

The respondents of the CWTTP illuminated another striking dimension of team ministry. After they had developed their team spirit, they realised that sharing mutual criticism they could assist one another in establishing deeper bonds of fellowship.²³² Through their regular short residential programmes at Muttom, they developed as a strong open team. They also cultivated enduring ties with the church workers of the LMS in their local ‘Christian Union’. Some directors of the VBS, as well as the members of the WF, the CE, and the SCMI shared mutual criticism in their teamwork. These practitioners organised a regular practice of prayer for one another, which nurtured mutual respect and love. As individuals they maintained their dignity and integrity. They did not wish to provide feedback at every opportunity and everywhere. Nevertheless, they strongly experienced

231. Using the word TEAMWORK as a guideline E. Samar hints at some qualities that make up a successful team: T - talent; E - Enthusiasm; A - Accountability; M - Management ; W - Workable; O - Openness; R - Respect and K - Keeness. Ref. Edgar Samar, *Career talk – How can a person work as a part of a team*, n.d., <<http://career.3.forumer.com/index.php?showtopic=206>> (15 July 2005). In the view of E. Samar, “Also remember that all these should work together – should be there hand in hand from the conception of the team to the achievement of the final goal. No one of these can be enough and can work in isolation to be able to come up with a successful team”.

232. Cf. Prov 11: 14, 15: 22; Eccl 4: 9-12.

the need to provide and receive feedback to grow in their mutual love. **Hence, they gradually created appropriate and regular time for mutual criticism and correction.** Consequently, this endeavour empowered them in their daily socio-political involvement.

It was exciting to hear from the respondents of the VBS and the CE that mutual criticism opened their eyes to view one another in God's image with real potential. Through mutual criticism, they aimed at destroying the mask that concealed their inward goodness and potential. The practitioners of the WF found that mutual criticism was an opportunity to resolve prejudices and fears about one another; for instance, between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, as well as between neighbours. Thus, they could become more united in addressing their common socio-political issues. Some units of the WF became more active in their involvement against dowries and domestic violence, which in turn, gave them a positive outlet for feelings of powerlessness and anger. The constant practice of mutual criticism of the practitioners of the CWTP enabled them to overcome their pride and avoid the attitudes of self-justification and retaliation. It was also a fruitful way of collective reform; it assisted them to confront the spirit of denominationalism. Moreover, for the practitioners of the CE and the SCMI, the notion of mutual criticism was to be characterised by their preference to provide and receive feedback, and to be transparent, rather than being delighted to hear that they were helpful in their team.

By their honest acts of providing and receiving feedback through mutual criticism, the practitioners informed each other of their stances, and expanded each other's insights. They did not feel discouraged or forgot feedback, but patiently allowed others to 'prick' their hearts and 'stir' them towards correction and improvement. As a result, they found that their programmes were more like movements rather than traditional institutions; they gained new visions and momentum in their socio-political involvement. Interestingly enough, the respondents of the VBS discovered that **presenting a good role model could also serve as effective criticism.** Moreover, several of these practitioners believed that Christ, as the source of their inspiration and their guide, was with them.²³³ Through sharing gospel insights and praying for one another, they were convinced that Christ

233. Mt 18:20.

empowered them to stand united as a team, providing and receiving feedback.²³⁴

Another essential element regarding the strength of team ministry, as experienced by the practitioners of the socially oriented programmes, was that they did not regard their teams as ends in themselves. They maintained **a vision of reaching out to others** in their society and empowering them to address their socio-political factors. The practitioners of the CE reached out to the chronically ill in hospitals, children at orphanages and working children. This action strengthened their unity and empowered them to send missionaries also to far-flung villages among the ‘hill-tribes’. The members of the WF became stronger in their fellowship when they reached out to the widows and women who were discriminated against by men. The more they reached out to the victims of the socio-political factors, the more they received information about them and developed more relevant curricula and strategies to address the socio-political factors. Moreover, they were convinced that Christ also opted to work with twelve ordinary fishermen to reach others with God’s mission. They also kept in mind how the promised Holy Spirit equipped a community of faith in the early church, united them in teams, and sent them to various nations as a part of God’s mission.²³⁵

Guidelines based on the ministerial resources

1. It was beneficial to nurture a regular practice of meditation in God’s presence, regarding his purpose and deeds in and through nature.
2. It was important to enable the practitioners to perceive God’s presence, purpose and deeds through daily events and relationships at homes, communities and through nature and the universe, rather than to state them in propositions. They should be convinced that God counselled and guided them in their daily events and relationships.
3. The practitioners should be equipped to view Bible-studies as a community act. As a part of their Bible-studies, they should also be enabled to study closely their

234. Mt 18:18.

235. The above responses reminded us of the popular saying that impelled people in Kanyakumari district to work for unity and progress – that is, “It’s more than one flower that makes a garland!”

- history and their socio-political factors. They should be capacitated to systematically analyse the socio-political contexts behind each Bible text and to relate their insights purposefully to socio-political contexts.
4. Through regular contextual Bible-studies the practitioners must aim at becoming active agents of history and stop being objects on the life fringes of others.
 5. ‘Gospel re-rooting’ would be an effective and creative method of relating the Good News to our contemporary contexts.
 6. The practitioners should be empowered to combat the unhelpful trends in Bible-studies, for example, fundamentalism, ‘proof-texting’, spiritualising Bible texts and seeking only for Bible verses that convey God’s blessings.
 7. The members of the diocese should also examine the criticism of the role of prayer, particularly in the struggle for justice and socio-political transformation, and should demonstrate the ways in which genuine prayer and ‘spirituality’ relate to socio-political factors.
 8. It would be rewarding to maintain a regular and dedicated practice of prayer at a devoted place and time, and with a dedicated team. It was clear that reflections on the creative prayers of Jesus, church leaders and socially oriented missionaries in prayer cells would nurture effective socio-political involvement.
 9. The training programmes should set up the aims of their events to focus spiritually on the transformation of the church and society, in addition to the personal transformation of the members of the diocese.
 10. The programmes should train the practitioners to practice constant awareness of God’s presence in their lives. This would shape their identity as spiritual signposts in their socio-political contexts and guide them towards realising God’s purpose in their daily lives.
 11. The practitioners should be made aware of prayer and fasting that cannot replace action; also, that action without prayer is questionable activism.
 12. Team ministry should be fostered at different levels in the life and work of a parish. It should be promising to train team members in programmes to address their socio-political factors.

13. It should be beneficial to encourage a team to identify and keep the victims of a particular socio-political issue as their target group and to work with them.
14. It should be rewarding for a team to share their material and resource people in training. This should assist to exchange views, discoveries, experiences and visions of social analysis and action.
15. Making the services of worship more participatory should enable the practitioners to nurture unity in their teams and to realise that worship should not just be serving God, but also serving one another in socio-political contexts.
16. The various parties of teams should be prepared to regard their teams as the right places for mutual criticism and correction.
17. Presenting a good role model in a team too serves as an effective mechanism of criticism. A competent and Christ-centred effective leader exposes the evils in his /her team and guarantees the relevance of a training programme.
18. The practitioners should not regard their teams as ends in themselves. They should be armed to set a clear vision and strategy to reach out to others, especially the victims of socio-political issues and be empowered to address their problems.

5.2.5 Pastoral Counselling

God continues to create and love all of God's creation, seeing them good. Through Jesus Christ, God destroys the power of sin and restores unity, order, and purpose to a world of different creatures.²³⁶ Therefore, through the ministry of counseling, the disciples²³⁷ of Jesus imitate Christ, and develop Christ-like habits and attitudes in them. They also reach out to the lost and extend God's love to others in their community. They make known God's order for life and wellbeing, bring God's heart for the suffering as well as God's judgment on those systems which oppress and exploit the vulnerable. **They believe that healing and reconciliation originate from God, and not from a person's own power.**

236. Gen 1:1ff, Ps 8. Cf. Jn 3:16; 1Cor 5:17. Ref. Section 2.7 *The Church and socio-political factors.*

237. Christian discipleship is a concept that was born when Jesus Christ hand-selected His first followers. His disciples were those who followed Him while He was on earth, as well as those who continue to follow Him today. They strive to develop their personal relationship with Christ, through the ministerial resources like Bible study, prayer and team ministry. Section 4.5.3 *Team Ministry.*

Clinebell, as perceived by George, an Indian pastoral counsellor suggested six dimensions of holistic development. They included: “Enlivening one’s mind, revitalizing one’s body, renewing and enriching one’s intimate relationships, deepening one’s relationship with nature, growth in relation to significant institutions, and deepening and vitalizing one’s relationship with God.”²³⁸ Delineating these insights further, George, exposed the strong tie between pastoral counselling and socio-political factors:

Psychological themes and personal identity in India should consider the ‘interplay between a universal process of human development and the Indian cultural milieu’. The influences of the cultural milieu include not only the socio-political and relational realms but also religious convictions, faith traditions, and rituals and practices.²³⁹

He was convinced that counselling originating from faith enabled holistic development of people, enriching their relationships and empowering their socio-political involvement.

The findings validated the effects of informal counselling that was conducted over a long period of time in all the training programmes in the diocese, based on Christian faith and psychological understanding of persons.²⁴⁰ The responses revealed that the various components of the socially oriented programmes related to more aspects of society than just the religious domains of the practitioners. Some of them developed a ‘conceptual approach’ and practical skills in pastoral counseling. These assisted the practitioners to identify what they needed: God’s guidance particularly from the Bible, knowledge, skills, attitudes and competence. Consequently, they resolved any hindrance in these domains of learning through counselling, and in turn, addressed their socio-political factors in various degrees, while the practitioners of the UESI had been obscure in their reaction.

i) Faith-oriented ministry and socio-political factors

The practitioners empowered diocese youngsters, who were involved in juvenile

238. J. George, *Religious and Spiritual Impact in Psychic Process: Implications for Pastoral Psychotherapy*, n.d., <www.pastoralreport.com/the_archives/print_archives/2005/11/the_8th_asia_pa.html> (06 May 2005).

239. J. George, *Religious and Spiritual Impact in Psychic Process: Implications for Pastoral Psychotherapy*, (06 May 2005).

240. The responses revealed that members of the diocese, parents, cousins, uncles and aunts, teachers and visionaries, were spontaneously involved in counselling.

delinquency,²⁴¹ towards ‘regulating’ their behaviour. These youths gradually renewed their faith in God, developed self-confidence, earned other people’s trust and realised their potential in the meditation of the Bible and addressing socio-political issues. For instance, a student, who became a drug addict and who was a difficult group member in a local unit of the VBS, found **pastoral counselling** helpful to recognise and accept Jesus the Wonderful Counsellor²⁴² as his Lord and Saviour. As a result, he overcame his negative and distorted beliefs about himself. Extending fellowship and empathy, his pastor assisted him to identify unproductive beliefs and to devise strategies to overcome them. Bonhoeffer, as indicated by Pless paints concisely the nature of pastoral care: “...the care that is being extended is the care of Christ Himself. It is Christ, the Good Shepherd and Heavenly Physician who is present ...to speak His words of life.”²⁴³ The pastoral counselling instilled confidence in him and encouraged him to discuss his problems with his pastor, towards discovering meaning for his life. In his counselling, the pastor used Tillich’s language of grace as ‘unconditional acceptance’ and faith as ‘accepting that you are accepted’. This adequately conveyed the scriptural message in psychological terms and empowered him to address his socio-political issues.²⁴⁴

Through regular **meditation on the Word**, the student regained his self-confidence and positive self-esteem. He gradually renounced drugs and restored his strained relationships. Obviously, the pastor awakened his interest in hero-worship and he accepted Jesus as the ‘Hero of life’.²⁴⁵ He started to contribute to the pastor’s efforts in enabling other practitioners of the VBS to address their socio-political factors and to bear witness to Christ.²⁴⁶ White affirms this type of experience: “The premise is that some people develop negative and distorted beliefs about themselves which interfere with their

241. ‘Juvenile delinquency’ means anti-social or illegal behavior, by young people, usually under eighteen. Ref. Webster’s Universal Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2003, p. 271.

242. Isa 9:6.

243. J. T. Pless, *Healing through the liturgy: the rites of pastoral care*, n.d., <<http://www.ctsfw.edu/academics/faculty/pless/liturgyhealing.htm>> (17 March 2005).

244. P. Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, 1955, <<http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=378&C=84>> (11 August 2005).

245. The pastor had Jesus as his hero. Jesus, close to God the Father’s heart witnessed and made God known to the world. Having Jesus so dear to his heart, he too took it as his vocation to witness Jesus who compassionately counseled the youth. Ref. Jn 3: Jesus counselled *Nocodemus* and chapter-4: he counselled the *Samaritan woman*.

246. ‘Bearing witness to Christ!’ was the theme of VBS-2002.

functioning.”²⁴⁷ Lindfelt’s remark on ‘role models’ was also relevant: “Today we are looking for role models and heroes...especially important for young people as they develop skills for successful living. Jesus Christ is truly the greatest hero of all time and a perfect role model...”²⁴⁸ The practitioners of the socially oriented programmes felt being counselled and **empowered in their attempts of doing theology**. They found that their reflections on the nature and acts of God based on the Bible and their perspectives and experiences as the victims of the socio-political factors helpful in this regard. For instance, the pastor had viewed counseling as sanctification act of God; it was the knowledge of Christ that brought the spiritual strength and holiness to the above student of the VBS.²⁴⁹ The student started dreaming with faith in his heart and he faced his future, addressing the socio-political issues that seriously affected him. Moreover, the practitioners of the socially oriented paradigm found that the relational nature of God in Trinitarian theology reflected the centrality of community, and the primacy of love, and suffering presence within their daily relationships. Contrary to individualism, a Trinitarian perspective, suggested to them that it was interdependency that was the foundation of human personhood. Partaking in the Trinitarian values like grace, personhood, freedom, empathy, and hope, they were empowered to overcome their diminished capacities to relate and destructive patterns within relationships. Consequently, they restored, and created webs of interconnection among them. Thus, they asserted the fundamental interdependence of humanity; they acknowledged that at the core, humans were primarily relational beings. Signifying the importance of faith-oriented pastoral counselling, Thomas, the most noted Indian Christian theologian, as denoted by Karkkainen, said: “The validity of Christology is based less on its doctrinal orthodoxy than on its contribution to the human quest for a better quality of life and social justice.”²⁵⁰

245. M. White, *ADHD and Cognitive Therapy - What Makes Them a Good Match?* n.d., <www.adhdtreatment.com> (03 August 2005).

246. J. Lindfelt, San Diego Biblical Studies Fellowship, *My Hero, Jesus Christ*, n.d., <http://www.sdbiblicalstudies.com/teachings/my_hero.htm> (18 July 2005). In his view, “My hero knew his identity and purpose...His Heavenly Father to direct his steps. He was tempted in all things yet without sin. He fulfilled the Word of God so that you and I can enjoy life as a son of God, carrying out the Father's business. Let's walk in the footsteps of our hero Jesus Christ”.

247. Jn 3:8; 2 Cor 3:6.

248. V. Karkkainen, *op. cit.*, 2003, p. 274.

ii) **Community-oriented ministry and socio-political factors**

Some practitioners found themselves in a stage of alienation and difficult to balance their daily family life and work. They were longing and seeking for integration and harmony in life. They thirsted for stronger vertical (God), interpersonal, intrapersonal, and all other daily relationships.²⁵¹ In this circumstance, the members of a local unit of the WF strengthened their **prayer life and Bible studies**, which united them to seek and conform to God's will. Their practice of discerning and doing God's will paved the way to progress in their lives.²⁵² They were organised and could address some of their socio-political issues. Schurman validated this type of experience: "Prayer is seeking to live fully into God's grace, gifts, and will for us for each moment...we are molded, changed and transformed into the image of Christ, the person God intends us to be."²⁵³ According to the respondent from the WF, prayer had revealed to them God's will. It gradually taught them how to be Christ's hands and heart in the world.

The '**group pastoral counselling**' sessions of the WF facilitated them to resolve their strained relationships over the practice of 'eve teasing' of some youths. Eventually, they recognised that the youths had a strong need for community, meaning in life, physical and emotional security, and basic structures in relationships. They understood that their youngsters passed through stress, adapting to the changing of inter-personal relationships, particularly with people of the opposite sex. Lidz, as indicated by Prashantham, said: "Youthhood is a time of seeking; a seeking inward to find who one is; a searching outward to locate one's place in life; ...it is a time of turbulent awakening to love and beauty but also...loneliness and despair."²⁵⁴ Their group prayer, Bible study and counselling nurtured in them positive attitudes, the values of forgiveness and self-respect for themselves and for others. In turn, they supported the development of the youths towards more vitality, creativity and joy in their lives and relationships.

It was disclosed that by **combining prayer and counseling, the WF had in it a**

249. Section 4.5.5, *Counselling and Socio-political Factors*.

250. Cf. Lk 6: 46-48.

251. V. Schurman, *The Quaker Understanding of Prayer, Quaker Life*, n.d., <http://www.fum.org/QL/issues/0201/quaker_prayer.htm> (12 July 2005).

252. B. J. Prashantham, *op. cit.*, 1978, p. 49

freedom, a vocation, and a resource, which in turn facilitated their socio-political involvement. The attributed religious authority and power enabled the leaders of the WF to be strategic, and creative in their counselling. They had the freedom for intervention, and this in turn strengthened to their socio-political involvement. They could break through their routine work and say, "I thought we must talk about, and pray together over 'dowry'; you seem troubled of it". Their fellowship served as a unique resource for pastoral care and prayer that could be part of the healing process to its members. They took it as divine vocation to stand with one another in a web of moral relation and within the creative and redemptive illustrated how God works through His body, the church, to bring change to broken lives. Houstenas, as indicated by 'Counselling & Assessment Services', appreciated this type of efforts: "The greatest of human potential is the potential of each one for empowering and acknowledging the other."²⁵⁵

iii) Ministry, empowering the poor and socio-political factors

The findings revealed that some poor women were empowered through counseling to realise their potentials and address their socio-political issues. A practitioner of the WF was a poor widow, rejected and abused. She could not meet her daily needs, or educate her children. Deep in her heart she harboured grief, as well as unmet needs of love, acceptance and God's forgiveness. This depraved her skills and potential to 'blossom' again.²⁵⁶ Her relationships and responsibilities were affected. The fellow members of the WF visited her repeatedly, reassuring her of God's love and acceptance, based on their wisdom of God's Word. Consequently, she realised that God empowered her to discover the source of her pain, to overcome her grief and to gain self-confidence to address her problems. Consequently, her skills began to bloom and she contributed to the WF programme in addressing socio-political factors. She renounced her fears, doubts and restrictions; she conquered her depression, low self-esteem and anxiety. She attained a deeper sense of purpose and a greater fulfillment in life.

The above respondent sought for change in her life. She was open for counseling and

255. Counselling & Assessment Services, *Doctoral Internship in Psychology*, n.d., <http://www.umass.edu/counselling/intship/p12_14.html>, (15 July 2005).

256. She was skilled in culinary arts, embroidery and other handicrafts; she was actively involved in visiting and counselling other victims of socio-political issues in her neighbourhood.

growth. She did not wait for her circumstances and others linked to her to change first. She was **courageous and willing to take risks** to come out of her known situations to the unknown, in spite of her fears and uncertainties. Her survival and her daughter's study became critical issues for her. She almost lacked the drive to resolve her problems. The counseling nourished her motivation and drive for change. The old adage "quitters never win and winner never quit" basically says it all. It is evident that change and new life is fueled by the Holy Spirit, using the Word at the heart level²⁵⁷ not by the cleverness of the members of the WF. Through counselling God continued to strengthen her Christian faith, **commitment and patience**, which empowered her to stay the course towards viable solution in her life. This in turn made it possible for them to address eventually their socio-political factors. Being created in God's image, human potential is indeed a magnificent concept. Shakespeare was bewildered at 'potential': "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form, in moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a God!"²⁵⁸

iv) **Hope-oriented ministry and socio-political factors**

The practitioners of some of the training programmes sought immediate relief, not to be overcome by their crises.²⁵⁹ They realised that pastoral counselling was increasingly rewarding to them towards addressing their socio-political problems effectively. A senior member of the 'Board of Desopakari perceived the hidden motives in some members. He carefully maintained the trust of the others on the Board and exposed their hidden agendas 'to uphold the status quo', which made them blocking the respondents from proposing contextually relevant themes for study through Desopakari.²⁶⁰ This senior member challenged each of them to realise God's presence, pledge improving in God's ministry as it was done through Desopakari. He detected their fear of relating the

257. Heb 4:12.

258. Shakespeare Quotes, *What a piece of work is man!* n.d., <<http://www.enotes.com/shakespeare-quotes/266>> (19 July 2005).

259. A crisis can be defined as an event which places an individual in a situation that has not been planned or expected. Such unexpected events hindered some practitioners' ability to act personally and academically. Counselling could then assist them by providing an objective frame of reference within which to consider the crisis, discuss possible alternatives and promote healthy functioning.

260. Themes, for example, 'The Castes and Christian Marriage' and 'Stewardship towards admissions and appointments'.

magazine to the recent socio-political factors, which would affect their traditional focus on spiritual prosperity. Moreover, they were reluctant to study novel themes, although they dealt with their socio-political issues. These issues stalled them to listen to others. He also noticed the frustrations that the respondent experienced when others rejected his proposals of new themes for studies. This generated a spirit of hopelessness on the Board; it obstructed them to reach consensus in promoting socio-political awareness in the diocese. Through counselling the senior member mustered the board to God. The members trusted in the Spirit working in the senior member, relentlessly driving them toward more Christ likeness. God generated hope and unity among them, and this got them through a difficult time. Describing the power of hope that God creates at times of crises, Adam said: “**Hope** gives us the energy and drive to continue despite insurmountable obstacles... **Hope** is the fuel that motivates, inspires and challenges us to go the extra mile and to motivate others to stand up once again from the dust...”²⁶¹ Thus, through counseling God created a liberating perspective, hope, and a sense of belonging among them. They became servants of God, of a better common future.

An inquiry of some of the responses of the SCMI also revealed that their programmes, held in a college, were inaccessible to the youngsters, who migrated from the villages and ended up in the outskirts of the town. The socio-political issues, for example, alienation and ‘eve teasing’ in the town, shocked them. Contemporary society and some religious orders condemned youths in the slums.²⁶² When the SCMI extended their programmes and counselling support to these youths, they were empowered to realise God’s love in action, and in turn they addressed their socio-political issues. A brief pastoral counselling assisted the practitioners of the CR and SCMI to turn the corner, to encounter God, engender hope, make a minor course correction and address the socio-political factors. Hiltner too, as perceived by Stones, declares, "Even brief counseling can often do just

261. Hope means anticipation, belief, desire, expectancy, aspiring towards something, looking forward to, to be optimistic, to be assured, reassuring and confidence. Hope is usually described with ‘light’ metaphors, for example, ‘a **ray** of hope’, ‘a **glimmer** of hope’, ‘**light** at the end of a tunnel’, ‘a **beam** of sunshine through clouds’ and ‘every cloud has a **silver** lining’. Ref. A. Adam, *Hope: Islamic Perspective*, n.d., <<http://www.crescentlife.com/spirituality/hope.htm> (17 August 2005).

262. Just as it happened to the Samaritan woman at the well where Jesus reached out to her while others rejected her (Jn 4). Apparently the SCMI believes that each youth is a gifted person endowed with potential. None should ignore their talents. Cf. Mt 25.

enough to bring a slightly new perspective, hence altering the approach to the situation and giving a chance for spontaneous successful handling of it by the parishioner".²⁶³

v) Mutual ministry and socio-political factors

In a retreat, a unit of the WF had a review of their programmes on their viability to socio-political factors. The initial refusal of the practitioners of the WF to provide feedback in their retreats indicated the perplexing tendency of human beings to resist ways of improving their performance.²⁶⁴ A lack of self-esteem and maintaining customary ways of doing things caused them to obstruct feedback. As a result, they blurted out their criticisms²⁶⁵ onto their leaders with anger and bitterness, for not relating their programmes to their daily socio-political factors.²⁶⁶ In contrast, the leaders cordially volunteered to listen to them, demonstrating God's love as expressed in Jesus, by becoming flesh. Thus, extending radical identification, they discouraged the members from the habit of criticising and blaming one another.²⁶⁷ They intended to foster personal formation of their practitioners, and improve the relevance of their programme to confront their socio-political context. They created a climate of 'group counselling', and patiently trained the members by providing and receiving feedback amicably.²⁶⁸ Importantly, they recognised the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit during their sessions of counselling. The respondent stated that he sought God's wisdom and invoked the Holy Spirit to intercede in their sessions.²⁶⁹ Being open to God and God's Word, they became open and honest about their weaknesses, failures, and concerns. Moreover, the

263. H. W. Stone, *The Congregational Setting of Pastoral Counseling: A Study of Pastoral Counseling Theorists from 1949-1991*, 2001 <http://www.jpcp.org/samples/stone_55_2.html>. (11 May 2005).

264. People are usually less resistant to feedback and more resistant to criticism, but criticism is far more common.

265. Several socio-political issues, for example, poverty, 'meter interest', dowry, unemployment and castes affected them. Although they realised that their training programme failed to equip them to address such issues, they did not provide their feedback to their leaders. They were engulfed by fear for failure and by rejection if the leaders would be displeased with them.

266. The respondent interprets the attempt of the SCMI as the healing of a hurt of an organ that enables the body to function well. (Cf. 'Body of Christ'. Ref. 1 Cor 12:26; Ep 4:12).

267. Criticism is normally about the person, about general traits and characteristics, rather than about the specific behaviour of the person. Moreover, unlike feedback, criticism is not mutual; the problem is only in the recipient.

268. Feedback has an air of caring concern, respect and support. It is full of positive intentions. It is presented as a perception, not as an absolute fact. This enabled them to evaluate the unevaluated, prejudiced views and ideas that were accumulated in their minds.

269. Cf. Rom 8:26; Mt 18:20.

assurance of God's forgiveness led them to forgive one another and share the feedback.²⁷⁰ They realised how difficult it was to recognise their acts, done with positive intentions, but which brought unintended effects. Gradually when the vulnerability in one evoked vulnerability in the other, their friendship ascended strengthening their mutual trust and empowerment. They overcame feelings of helplessness, experienced a sense of belonging to the group, and, thus, became 'a care group'. The study on relevant Biblical texts cherished their desire to receive feedback. They became confident, honest and active in practicing the Word, sharing feedback and reacting to it. They pooled their feedback and initiated joint-efforts in addressing some of their common socio-political issues, for example, poverty, dowries and unemployment. Gradually, they reached new and higher levels of effectiveness for themselves and, ultimately, for their training programmes.²⁷¹

vi) **Unhelpful trends in the ministry of counselling**

The responses revealed that the organisers of the UESI, in general, **sought emotional security** for their students through counselling, rather than to empower them to take risks in addressing the socio-political factors. They determined a time and place for regular fellowship, worship, prayer and counselling for their students. Just like the practitioners of the socially oriented paradigm, the young students of the UESI also expressed a strong need 'to bear one another's burdens' in the sense of enabling one another to address their common problems. Yet, they had been trained to be satisfied with the emotional security that they could enjoy within their fellowship and their programmes.²⁷² Moreover, their **dualistic view of life**²⁷³ prevented them from socio-political engagement of any kind. A closer inquiry of the findings unfolded that the 'spiritual problems' that the organisers of the UESI talked about, for example, losing meaning and hope in life, in fact, had been connected to social and political problems, for instance, 'eve teasing', sexual assault and domestic violence. Thus, the superficial approach in counseling promoted by the UESI, based on their dualistic view of life failed to empower their practitioners to address

270. Mt 6:12; Jas 5:16.

271. 2 Tim 3:16-17; Eph 4:22-24.

272. In this regard some respondents felt that the UESI was better than some socially oriented programmes in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese.

273. That is, dividing realities or socio-political factors into 'spiritual' and 'material', and addressing only the spiritual matters; for instance, encouraging the members to attend prayer meetings, fasting, and worship services, but leaving their daily socio-political problems unattended.

socio-political problems. Furthermore, moving with the relationship, the leaders of the WF **experienced problems of ego and impatience**, wanting to solve the problem for the other. Nevertheless, they overcame this and listened attentively, patiently to others, by developing a tactic of studying or telling a story of Christian faith, and together they evaluated their attitudes. Thus, they could resolve the difficulties together in the light of the guiding Word and caring love of God.

Due to the heavy emphasis placed upon listening and empathy, some practitioners were viewed to some extent as ‘passive’, while engaged in their counseling ministry. On the other hand, they made bold prophetic statements and took bold actions against castes, religious conflicts, dowries, and other socio-political issues. According to the practitioners, this **caused a risk of developing a split personality in them** that is passive in pastoral counseling, active in social change. This confused other parishioners and weakened their socio-political involvement.

Guidelines based on pastoral counselling

1. The practitioners at different levels should be provided with the necessary conceptual knowledge, practical skills and expertise in pastoral counseling and ‘co-counselling’,²⁷⁴ in turn, they will reinforce one another in their common task of addressing socio-political issues.
2. Carefully planned pastoral counselling should be extended to the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese, particularly to the youth involved in juvenile delinquency. This would assist them to direct their behaviour and realise their potential, and to meditate with the Bible and to address socio-political issues.
3. The practitioners should be empowered to uphold the practice of prayer and counselling on a regular basis in the local units of the training programmes. This would restore the strained relationships among the elders, the youth and the neighbours in the village.

274. ‘Co-Counselling’ is a peer process involving two people who share time in a session to heal past and present hurts, to celebrate growth, and make intentional change”. Ref. Marks, J. CCCI-USA, *Co-counselling. Introduction*, n.d., <cci-usa.org/CCI-USA_what.htm> (16 August 2005).

4. It would be increasingly rewarding to recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit and to follow His guidance during the sessions of counselling.
5. Special sessions of counselling should be conducted for practitioners who were frustrated and who regressed, so that they might reaffirm their faith in God, develop and use their potential and talents to address socio-political factors.
6. Pastoral counselling should be conducted aiming at immediate relief that might empower the practitioners to increase their hope and overcome their crises that they encountered in addressing their socio-political problems.
7. The practitioners of the various training programmes should be trained in ‘group-counselling’ at the level of the local units. This would nurture the local groups to be open to God, and spontaneous in providing and receiving feedback. In turn, this would unite and direct them in concrete socio-political involvement.
8. The practitioners should avoid the temptation of focusing only on the spiritual security of the practitioners rather than empowering one another to address the socio-political factors more effectively.

5.2.6 Communication

Communication can be viewed as a relationship that involves persons and things.²⁷⁵ It is a necessity for community life and the integrity of the creation. Building on this view, Fore defined communication as: “... the process in which relationships are established, maintained, modified, or terminated through the increase or reduction of meaning.”²⁷⁶ This perspective denotes that the purpose of communication is to discover and interpret what the existence and the world is all about. He argues that the aim of communication, for Christians, is to help people interpret their existence in the light of what God has done for them as manifest in Jesus Christ.

Communication bound the trainers and the trainees in CSI Kanyakumari diocese into lasting relationships and thus influenced the training programmes. The way the trainers

275. Section 4.5.6, *Communication and socio-political factors*

276. W. Fore, *A Theology of Communication*, n.d.,
 < <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=268>> (15 October 2005).

presented their messages involved the bridging of emotional, spiritual and cultural distances between them and the trainees. Effective communication influenced the practitioners' minds, will and emotion. It required relevant perspectives and theology of communication, and regular practice. It was important for the trainers to make sure that the trainers communicated their messages in ways which made sense to their trainees in their day-to-day life-situations that might have been different from theirs.

The practitioners' perspectives and theology of communication were evaluated and presented below, in the light of the different channels and aids of communication that they utilised to address socio-political factors.²⁷⁷

i) The environment of the study and the socio-political factors

The investigation of some of the responses uncovered the fact that the environment of the study served as one of the primary resources of effective communication in the diocese. It determined the response of the practitioners of the training programmes to the socio-political factors.²⁷⁸ Considerable speculation occurred in the contemporary Kanyakumari district regarding the relationship of the learners with their physical environments,²⁷⁹ particularly regarding the views of psychological models, sociology and architecture.²⁸⁰

In his research of 'A Conceptual Model for Understanding the Physical attributes of

277. Sections 4.5.3, *The task of the church and socio-political factors* and 5.2.2 C, *The task of the church* for a reading on how the training programmes focused on the communication of evangelism and its relevance to socio-political factors.

278. Often we admire the beauty of roses, but overlook their dependence upon the lowly ingredients of the beauty, the manure. Likewise, it was important to appreciate and take care of the aids of communication that made communication effective, which in turn empowered the practitioners for active socio-political involvement.

279. The nurturing environment of training included the *physical environment*, for example, the beautiful open ground and walled rooms, as well as the *internal environment* or the *mental and spiritual climate*, for example, a friendly climate and mental aptitude for learning.

280. Those who speculated about the relationship of learners with their physical environments, from psychological frameworks, discussed environmental characteristics. For instance, air and sound that determined conditions for, or even controlled human behaviour. Those who advocated sociological models focused on the importance of environment in terms of how it facilitated human interaction and learning; for instance, the seating arrangements and postures, and the type of questions posed, mattered to them. Others emphasised architectural arrangements and their influence on the practitioners' aptitude for learning; for instance, in their view, both interior and exterior features of building designs allowed, encouraged, prohibited, or inhibited various behaviours, or the development of the practitioners.

Learning Environments’, Fulton introduced his ‘SPATIAL’²⁸¹ model of balancing the physical environment and learning activities of students. The researcher used some of his insights to evaluate the interaction between the physical environment of learning and the practitioners’ contribution to address socio-political factors.

By using the phrase, ‘the personality of the programme’, the practitioners of the CWTP explained how their relationship to their environments of learning, beginning with the physical environments, could contribute considerably to their active socio-political involvement. They were convinced that **the physical environment was a contributing factor to their participation, satisfaction and achievement of their training.**²⁸² For instance, being in the open-air, relaxing under trees, or at the seashore inspired them to feel relaxed and to express their views. Such an environment could bring them closer to their daily life-situations in a spontaneous way. It motivated them to relate their learning with their socio-political issues in a natural way. In turn, this increased their participation, satisfaction and achievement in their training. Moreover, they also learned to be alert and bear in mind the potential enhancement of or detracting from learning that any change of the physical environment could cause. Above all, they believed that God of the universe instantly and unfailingly communicates with any creature, anywhere, anytime, any place.²⁸³ Consequently, they kept the physical environment continuously and increasingly exciting, facilitating the practitioners to relate with and react to the socio-political factors.

By the phrase, ‘personality of the programme’, they also indicated the ‘transcendental and immanent’ attributes related to the physical environment. Fulton viewed the physical environments that transcended a practitioner’s control, as objective realities of the

281. A. Fulton, *Conceptual Model for Understanding the Physical attributes of Learning Environments*, July 2001, <<http://www-distance.syr.edu/ndacelech2.html>> (18 August 2005). In his ‘SPATIAL’ model, Fulton hypothesised that, (1) individual perceptions of space affected learner satisfaction, participation and achievement; (2) certain aspects of a space, as perceived by learners, were subjective or beyond the visible physical attributes; and (3) authority and layout are external realities that could be changed.

282. ‘Satisfaction’ is an intrinsic measure of how pleased, or fulfilled a learner is with an activity. ‘Participation’ is a measure of how engaged a learner is with an activity. For example, both physical presence and a ‘time-on-task’ can be measures of participation. ‘Achievement’ is a measure of progress towards one or more learning goals.

283. Ps 19:1-4; 139:1; 147:9; Mt 6:26-29. Cf. Computers can now store over a billion bits of information on a square inch. How much more effective is God in communicating with creation?

surroundings.²⁸⁴ Though these attributes normally existed independently, the practitioners of the CWTP reported that they had observed them on their own scale and controlled them.²⁸⁵ Some of these realities were adapted by their immanent perceptions of the environment. Furthermore, they were sensitive to their ‘relationship of authority regarding their physical environment, and the layout’ of their learning environment; they were free to manage their own physical environments, exercising their authority and they determined their own layout of the ‘environment for training’.²⁸⁶ In the case of the SCMI, the practitioners at the level of local units used their authority to alter the external environments of learning, aiming at using efficient digital devices. Thus, the physical environments and the related facilities provided a ‘learner-friendly’ climate for study groups, which naturally led them to relate and react to the socio-political factors.

ii) **Face-to-face communication and the socio-political factors**

The face-to-face communication in the training programmes of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese demonstrated distinctly the holistic view of communication as a relationship. Working in teams for long, the practitioners had actively engaged in face-to-face mode of communication, and developed their ‘internal environment’ of learning.²⁸⁷ It served as the fuel of their group work to nurture mutual trust, respect, support and caring relationships. Such an internal environment assisted them to practice self-reflection and support commitment towards positive social change. Freire confirmed this type of experience as empowering the practitioners as adults to join hands to think critically and address their daily life issues: “Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education.”²⁸⁸ Exploring the role of dialogue, transforming one’s socio-political context, one discovered that ‘words’, which

284. For example, the temperature, light, air, space and noise levels in the place where the practitioners held their studies.

285. For instance, shifting their group work from a four-walled room to a devoted shady place.

286. ‘Layout’ of the learning environment causes the many structural attributes of a place; for instance, the ventilation, air conditioning, type of lights, furniture and audio-visual equipment are part of the layout. The semi-circular or circular seating arrangement of the practitioners of the CWTP facilitated face-to-face sightlines among learners and enhanced participation during discussion.

287. The internal environment includes the students’ mental and spiritual climate of learning.

288. P. Friere, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, n.d.,

<<http://www.marxists.org/subject/education/freire/pedagogy/ch03.htm>> (July 12, 2005).

made dialogue possible, were more than just instruments. He viewed reflection and action, (praxis), as two dimensions of words: “Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world.”²⁸⁹ This implied that human existence could not be silent. By speaking, naming and discussing people transformed society. Accordingly, the practitioners of the socially oriented paradigm were cautious, to some extent, not to limit dialogue to the act of one person, ‘depositing’ ideas ‘into’ another, or not to see it as a simple exchange of ideas to be ‘consumed’ by other people participating in the discussion. They went further and regarded communication as an encounter between people, irrespective of castes and creeds, to relate to and transform their common socio-political factors. Commending group work and dialogue, Buber said: “Connection between participants allows for each party to potentially change the other, or be changed by the other.”²⁹⁰ He was convinced that face-to-face dialogue contributed to constructive change in a community. Freire stressed the role of dialogue in creating hope in people, which regulated communication and promoted socio-political change: “Hope is rooted in men’s incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search – a search which can be carried out only in communion with others. Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it.”²⁹¹ The practitioners nurtured their hope and sustained face-to-face communication with one another in their groups. Thus, they were guided to critical thinking that empowered them to perceive reality as a process of socio-political transformation.

Together as local units, comprising small working groups, the practitioners of the CE and the WF emphasised the importance of having a **shared agreement and purpose** of addressing socio-political factors. In addition, they found it vital for the group members to **share their expectations and responsibilities**, towards fulfilling their goals and strategies. They felt that the **smaller the group the more they felt comfortable in**

289. They are in ‘radical’ interaction - if one is sacrificed, even in part, the other immediately suffers.

Ref. P. Friere, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 21 January 2006, <http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Paulo_Freire> (12 February 2005).

290. A relationship that produces dialogue is referred to by M. Buber as an ‘I-thou relationship’. <http://www.colorado.edu/communication/metadiscourses/Papers/App_Papers/Scholz.htm> (16 July 2005).

291. P. Friere, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 21 January 2006, (12 February 2005). P. Freire said, “No one can say a true word alone – nor can she say it for another, in a prescriptive act, which robs others of their words. Hence dialogue requires an intense faith in humankind, founding itself upon love, humility and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust is the logical consequence... leads the dialoguers into even closer partnership in the naming”.

sharing their feelings, fears and visions. Nevertheless, it was revealed in the present study that ‘closed groups’²⁹² were more effective in addressing the socio-political issues because they developed long-term and intimate relationships. They expressed great commitment to their goals and delegated tasks. It was also revealed that **the leader’s role, style, personality and experience** also influenced the effectiveness of the group. The socially oriented programmes opted for an enabling, democratic type of leader. ‘**Tuning to the views**’²⁹³ promoted the active participation of the practitioners and revitalised their socio-political involvement. Their responses revealed that coming to a meeting unprepared, remaining silent for long stretches, constantly being critical instead of supportive, and negative body language²⁹⁴ coupled with some of the common interruptions, challenged them to ‘tune them to the views’. Moreover, the awareness that ‘communication is a two-way street’²⁹⁵ was also helpful in avoiding and overcoming misunderstanding in groups. Accordingly, the SCMI and the CE held planned training towards active listening and detection of bad habits of listening.²⁹⁶ These facilitated effective communication and, subsequently, diligent socio-political involvement.

Meeting regularly in groups, the ordinary members of the diocese mutually shared their testimony, witness, evangelism, and their views of life, the world, faith, and God. **Their experience reflected the very nature of Christian communication:** Although not a private religion, Christianity is intensely personal. In relating to Christ personally, God transforms people from within and perfects them in their relationships, thus making them

292. In an *open group* new members and guests kept entering at any time. On the other hand, a ‘closed group’ was limited for a designated period to those who committed themselves to the goals of the group from the beginning.

293. ‘Tuning to the views’ implied identifying and removing interruptions in order to make communication clearer and more effective.

294. For instance, sitting at a distance from others, slouching back, crossing arms, staring at the ceiling or out the window and sticking one’s feet up on a chair. These attitudes turned them away from the rest of the group and were seen as insults to the others. Cf. J. Prashantham, *op. cit.*, 1978, p. 2. Explaining communication as a two-way street, he described what it involved: “Thus we have four important essential elements in communication: expression, listening, responding and reacting.”

295. Pseudo (false) listening, silent arguing (as another person speaks, preparing objections), premature replying, misplaced focus (misunderstanding and nitpicking on minor details to object to), defensive listening: (hear the speaker arguing, even when s/he is elaborating on one’s idea), and forcing meaning, (reading more into the speakers’ words).

296. M. Cook, *Writing for the Web*, 2005, <<http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/writing.php>> (22 July 2005).

a part of a new creation.²⁹⁷ Consequently, they testified to what God had done in history, and in them.²⁹⁸

Highlighting the close link between group work as a community and the possible effective communication within it, Fore stated:

Community is where our human existence takes place. Community is established and maintained by the relationships created by our communications. We establish our relative individuality within this community. The more we participate in community, the more we become true individuals, and the more we become individuals, the more richly we participate in community.²⁹⁹

Being in a new millennium when technology moves to its height, the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese **felt the need to re-establish their identity as a community reflecting the triune God** by opting for face-to-face dialogue. They experienced Christianity as a religion of communication. They viewed the Trinitarian God primarily as a God of communication. They noticed an ongoing dialogue between the persons in the Trinitarian communion of God - sharing, interacting, participating, and thus cherishing unity in diversity.³⁰⁰ They understood God being with, in and before them, and that God's deeds were to their benefit. They realised God's self-giving communication toward God's creation. They regarded the summit of these experiences as in Christ. The communication process in the training equipped them to cherish the dynamic elements of salvation, for example, the sense of identity and an awareness of who they were. This was achieved by means of interacting with, and contributing to one another.

The growing secular freedom treats everything as a dispensable commodity - marriage, friends, jobs, churches, religions, God - since everything has value only insofar as they have utility for the individuals. The 'individual fulfillment' threatens the sense of

297. Phil 1:6; 2 Cor 5:16-17. Ref. Section 4.3.3, *The task of the church*.

298. 1 Jn 1:1-4. cf., Acts 26:12ff; Rom. 5:8. In groups, the practitioners revealed 'the internal history' of their lives, that was their personal stories and the experience was present in their memory. External history is that of their community, in such a way that others in turn, asked what meaning life held for them and their community and internal memory.

299. W. Fore, *A Theology of communication*, (15 October 2005).

300. 'Word' and 'Action' are identical in the triune God. Ref. Gen 1:26; Isa 6:8; Jn 1:1-5,14; Mt 3: 16-17; 28:18-20. The Word of the Spirit destroys the confusion in the language. Ref. Acts 2.

community. Today, the contract model of human relationship replaces the covenant model of relationship. This analysis underscores **the urgency of redefining and rebuilding community life, where God is present,**³⁰¹ **whose essence is relatedness, wholeness and harmony.** God's will is revealed and communicated within a community. Evidently, communication cannot be validated unless it is affirmed in and through the life of persons in community. The account of the tower of Babel shows us that the communication is broken by pride and the search for power. On the other hand, at Pentecost, the birth-place of the mission of the church, we see a positive integral relationship between communication and culture. Being filled with the Holy Spirit and in communion with God and one another, the people were empowered to speak and hear God's message in their own languages. Thus, communicating the Word effectively begot an exemplary community.³⁰² Luckily, the church remains a place in society where people still meet on a regular basis in face-to-face relationships.

iii) **Mass communication and the socio-political factors**

Mass communication facilitated social communication and maintained largely the culture in Kanyakumari. The training programmes utilised some of the mass media that were popular in Kanyakumari district.³⁰³ A respondent of the CR explained how they kept their copies of the **monthly magazine**, Desopakari, as study material and reconsidered the contents intermittently. When articles were relevant to their life situations in the Kanyakumari district and if they were presented well in Despakari, according to him, they challenged readers to take decisions, plan possible action and take initiative to address some of their socio-political issues. Cook substantiated this type of experience, saying: "We need to grab attention fast!"³⁰⁴ A respondent of the SCMI highlighted this approach, saying that it was essential for magazines to keep open options for the victims of socio-political factors. He recited how their monthly magazine, Aikya, equipped them to promote the basic rights of the Adhivasi, a disadvantaged group in South India. The

301. Mt 18:20 Cf. Acts 1:4; 2:1-2, 42-47.

302. Gen 11:1-9 Cf. Acts 2:1-11.

303. Magazines, newspapers, cinema films, radio, television, books, CDs, videocassettes, dramas and role-plays are some of the popular mass media in Kanyakumari district. By 'media', the general public referred to the news media, which is a section of the mass media.

304. M. Cook, *Writing for the Web*, 2005, <<http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/writing.php>> (22 July 2005).

focus on the gospel and option for the poor in Aikya empowered the members to address their problems. The essence of **God's Goodnews** communicated is that God brings abundant life to all through Jesus Christ.³⁰⁵ Christians hence have an advocacy role, to proclaim the good news and to work toward the fulfillment of its promise in the media of our times. Further, **God makes all things new**, and creativity is an essential element of God's creation.³⁰⁶ This calls us for sustaining freedom for people to bring in creative ideas and values, essential to growth and to human potential. As Felder says, "Communication for social change has an up-front emphasis on equity and participation, and recognises the need to amplify the voices of the poor".³⁰⁷ The ethical aspects of communication in the context of modern technologies challenged some practitioners of the CR, SCMI, CE and WF to use the mass media to some extent to proclaim and amplify the values, attitudes and worldviews of God's Kingdom. They believed that this would challenge and change the socio-political factors, transforming them to become compatible with God's will and purpose. Thus, even though the CSI Kanyakumari diocese is considerably less than perfect in its call as the church, some training programmes empowered the members of the diocese to raise the right questions, take sides with the poor, and represent a significant challenge to existing power structures.

Non-verbal skills for example, role-plays, arts and cartoons with a contextual orientation in Christology empowered some members to address their socio-political issues. The practitioners of the socially oriented programmes presented their challenging and inspiring life-situations in their **role-plays**, based on their needs and interests. A respondent from the CE recounted that they first organised their students in groups and asked them to recall and write down the situations that concerned them or made them happy about their socio-political issues. In turn, they staged their role-plays in groups. In one of the plays they portrayed the roles of the first Christian missionary who arrived in the Kanyakumari district, as well as another missionary, who worked among the

305. Section 2.7, *The Church and Socio-political Factors*. Christ came to set us free, that is, to set every person free from personal sin, from corporate bondage, and from all kinds of oppression - spiritual, mental, social, physical, economic, political.

306. Ps 51:10; 104:30; Isa 40:31, Ezek 36:25-27, 2 Cor 5:17; Rev 21:1,5.

307. D. Gray-Felder, *Communication for social change*, n.d.,
<<http://www.healthcomms.org/comms/social/ld-nov03.html>> (25 August 2005).

down-trodden 'hill-tribes' in the State of 'Tamilnadu', where the diocese continued to send missionaries. In the play they let these two missionaries meet and share their experiences and visions for God's mission in and beyond Kanyakumari. When the play finished, they spent some time on 'reflection'. Then they arranged a follow-up meeting to obtain the students' opinions about the role-play; their comments were welcomed, towards discussing what happened in the role-play and what they learned. With the closure of the group discussions, some practitioners dedicated themselves towards involvement in socio-political issues. An evaluation questionnaire was used to assess their role-plays and to make them more effective. Highlighting the efficiency of non-verbal communication, Shinn said: "Visual art...can sometimes convey attitudes or evoke sympathetic appreciation more effectively than words."³⁰⁸

Unpretentious and plain cartoons also created significant impacts, especially when presented as 'interactive' exercises. They focused on improving communication and teamwork, which, in turn, facilitated effective socio-political involvement. The practitioners of the SS explained how **plain art, for example, cartoons, paintings, flannel graphs, and pictures**, supported the study material of their programmes to address socio-political factors. The children's 'Comic Book Bible', introduced as supplementary study material in addition to their textbooks, served as effective non-verbal material, particularly for children who were 'picture literate'. The organisers valued their 'visual aptitude' as much as their 'verbal aptitude'. The illustrative painted cartoons and drawings with crayons could convey things that words could not put across. They aroused children's imagination spontaneously concerning their life-situations, as well as that of the Bible texts. Moreover, the tutors were provided with handbooks with large pictures and a variety of teaching aids to enter into the children's world in imaginative ways and to facilitate them to reflect on their burning socio-political issues. Their pastor, however, advised the tutors not to ruin the impact of art books upon the children by way of their prejudices, or by prescribing to the children what to see, unless

308. R. L. Shinn, *The educational mission of the church*, 1962, p. 99. Shinn reported: "The university labs and testing services have recently discovered...: Children are likely to be less conventional and literalistic than adults. They respond to colors and designs before they understand many words and concepts. The art that evokes response from children isn't the clearly outlined, real pictures of bunnies and flowers. It's the arts that require some imagination and participation of the child."

the children really needed assistance. Cluny's statement complements this type of experience:

...cartoons communicate powerful ideas often in a humorous, enlightening manner, by incorporating the events of the period into an easily understandable format most people could relate to even with limited reading abilities. Symbols, caricature, drawings and exaggerations used by the cartoonist point out themes and problems of any given time period.³⁰⁹

Nevertheless, as mass media were powerful forces in the society, the practitioners realised that the importance of exercising stewardship in the use of them for good also increased with the magnitude of their power.

Moreover, **the provision of quiet time for reflection** was especially important for communication purposes for the practitioners. Some practitioners of the SS, the CE and the WF frequently set aside time for silence and tranquility during and after programmes. They needed time to develop, articulate and express their ideas and concepts. Time was provided for ideas to germinate creatively and also for reflection on novel ideas. Obviously, they did not regard quiet time as 'passive time', since it was done intentional; for instance, the silence or pauses during role-plays, music and small group work were guided towards creative thinking and active engagement in working out the viability of the programme regarding the socio-political factors. The respondent from the WF believed that God spoke to them in stillness and revealed the will and counsel of God in addressing their problems.³¹⁰ They were convinced that God uses various channels of communication – persons, creation, silence, conscience, and many other channels.³¹¹ In their experience, when communication media led people to relate to the Spirit of truth who revealed the meaning of what was conveyed, communication became revelatory.

The new technological era rapidly increases the means of mass communication. From the beginning, the religious leaders and teachers have been at the fore front of information

309. C. Cluny, *Political cartoons*, n.d., <<http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=560>> (21 July 2005).

310. Ps 46:10; 1 Cor 2:10-11.

311. Heb 1:1; Ex 3:1-6; 33:11; 1 Kings 19:12; Acts 18:26; Ps 19; Rom 2:15.

technology.³¹² Yet for the first time in the twentieth century the Church seems to have fallen behind in "communication technology".³¹³ Nevertheless, some training programmes in the diocese related to the **cyber culture** and introduced '**digital devices**'³¹⁴ to improve communication. Some organisers of the SCMI used modern audio-visual aids, which enabled them to convey their socio-political views and experience, with clarity and authenticity. As several youngsters started to watch television and video games, the SCMI introduced creative pictures and stories and used their skills they had developed, which enabled them to 'see' the story or event. In turn, this challenged and inspired the students to relate creatively to their contemporary socio-political issues. Their experiences affirmed the guideline of Shinn: "The thoughtful use of digital devices in careful coordination with other methods can bring remarkable vividness into the educational process."³¹⁵ According to him, audio-visual and digital-devices were, in fact, 'modern words' with an ancient ancestry. The churches often transmitted their messages through artistic and dramatic expressions in past centuries when most people could not read. Hence, some respondents expected the churches to be pioneers in introducing digital devices in local education. Dulles is right, as commended by Fore, in insisting that the church, "...cannot wall itself up in a cultural ghetto at a time when humanity as a whole is passing into the electronic age".³¹⁶ The training programmes generally aimed at transforming the practitioners to become more effective and creative co-workers of the 'creative God'. Creative communication methods/aids, therefore, served as a means to the end of leading the practitioners, made in the image of the creative God, to know and follow their Creator fully.

312. For instance, the Hindu priests like the Egyptians wrote about their religious knowledge and practice around 1500 BCE; the Hebrews passed on their history and theology on stories and poems around a campfire. Jesus took the good news to the poor and ordinary people at the hillsides, farms, beaches and fishing boats. Early church communicated the gospel by letters; towards the Dark Age (450-1000 CE) the monastic movement in the Church developed libraries, schools and laid the foundations for universities and schools; the Bible was the first book printed that received wide circulation, which eventually led to the Reformation of the Church.

313. Radio, movies, television and digital communication systems have been developed mostly outside the Church, and often, in spite of the Church. The printing of religious books goes on in every country of the world, but the Church, with some singular exceptions, has made little use of "communication technology" in this century.

314. For instance, some used a number of filmstrips, (some with recorded dramatic musical scripts), to illustrate the history of liberation from Egypt and other liberation stories of the Bible, as well as that of socio-political issues that the students had 'acted out' in response.

315. R. L. Shinn, *The educational mission of the church*, 1962, pp. 72-73.

316. W. Fore, *A Theology of communication*, (15 October 2005).

Computers were introduced in Kanyakumari district, in the last few decades. It was gradually becoming an everyday tool that connected and affected the lives of the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese. Nevertheless, the organisers of the diocesan training programmes needed to adapt to this new realm of experience. Some practitioners from the SCMI reported that computers and internets created access for them to resources and guidelines from others at regional, national and international levels in addressing socio-political factors. Practitioners realised the function and influence of computers in their lives and felt the urgent necessity to respond to it.³¹⁷

Although non-Christian views of life predominated in the mass media in India, the practitioners of CR, SCMI and UESI believed that proclaiming the gospel of Christ still remained the joy and duty of the churches. In this regard it was striking to ascertain from the findings that **the introduction of non-verbal communication aids**, for example, paintings, dramas, music and cartoons, in the training programmes **grabbed the attention of many people in the Kanyakumari district, irrespective of castes and creeds**. The practitioners of the UESI argued that Christians should responsibly speak out and act according to our convictions and in opposition to views we perceived or believed to be false. They opted not to relate to non-Christians at all. Living in a pluralistic society, however, the practitioners of the CR, CE, and SCMI declared that it was impossible to expect that the church's views alone should prevail in mass media. In their view, the church should only insist that the gospel be heard and taken seriously; it should also trust that the gospel would find adherents as it has done throughout the past two millennia. They were cautious that gospel should not be proclaimed in a dictatorial and pretentious way but in God's love. In the final analysis, as Fore says, "The apprehension of God is a constantly recurring and renewed experience. Hence, the distinction between reaching non- Christians versus nurturing Christians is always inexact and elusive. This connotes that wherever there is an apprehension of and participation in God's revelation,

317. Religion today has a prominent place on the Internet and within cyber culture in general. It uses the technical means including World Wide Web sites, electronic mail discussion groups, newsgroups, and Internet chat lines. The type of religious communication can vary from the official Web sites of established religions and faiths to those of local religious groups (launched within a global network); from active, virtual worship and meetings, to information resources about, rather than for, religious practice.

there exists the church”.³¹⁸ This means that God of communication, the church community and its communication exist in places not normally considered to be the church. Fore also challenges the church as the existing institution to fulfill its role to be a pure channel of communication about God as possible. As Shinn says, “The right...digital devices, used at the appropriate time in skillful ways, may lead groups to powerful understanding”.³¹⁹

The practitioners believed that God is the Creator of ‘all things visible and invisible’. This implied that human beings were not creators, but a part of creation. They were bound together along with all the other parts of creation, in mutual relationships. Everything in creation, including humanity as well as the techniques of social communication, the telephone, radio, television, films, printed matter, and etcetera were interrelated. Without these technologies, humanity would simply be unable to act in response to the complex social structures. Moreover, since all elements of social communication are first of all God’s creation, those who use them should respect them; **stewardship** was thus felt a necessary corollary of creation. People in the Kanyakumari district depended upon mass media for information relevant to their daily lives. Hence, the importance of exercising stewardship in their use for God’s Kingdom increased. In this context, the practitioners viewed that communication skills were indeed God’s gifts and that they were called to use all our gifts for the sake of the gospel and to accomplish God’s will on earth. It however, transpired that some members of the diocese abused some communication skills, aiming at position, power, money, fame and other vested interests. Instead of producing the fruit of God’s spirit and Reign, for example peace and justice, their abuse of God’s gifts caused divisions and discrimination in the church and society. Another related manifestation of sin in the mass media was their manipulation of people as objects and turning them into hollow consumers of the media rather than to treat them as participants of God’s Kingdom. This is why Daly maintained communication as a priority: “Nothing matters more than communication to our world, to our relationships, to our families, and to our personal and professional career.”³²⁰

318. W. Fore, *A Theology of communication*, (15 October 2005)

319. R. L. Shinn, *The educational mission of the church*, 1962, pp. 72-73.

320. A. Daly, *Communication Matters*, n.d.,
<www.rollins.edu/communication/wschmidt/john_daly.htm> (21 July 2005).

The responses revealed that **a relevant orientation in Christology** is important in communication. The research confirmed that the socially oriented Christology enhanced the communication aids in empowering the practitioners largely to address their socio-political factors effectively. Nevertheless, the practitioners of the UESI too used almost all the communication aids in their training programmes; their pietistically oriented Christology discouraged them from addressing the socio-political factors.

iv) Distortions and challenges of communication

Distortion in communication occurred in one form or another in the above presented perspectives and channels /modes of communication as practiced by the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese. Some practitioners of the CE, CR, WF, and SCMI were aware of the ethical aspects of communication. They illustrated how mass media amplified lifestyles and values that interest the mass, without considering the moral aspects and Christian values.³²¹ They were angry about how a few rich people and multi-national corporations in cooperation with the government spent money on advertisements, increasingly selling new commodities. Nevertheless, **the practitioners did not review this unjust situation seriously to comment or correct them.** They could have done it through their own communication media, for example their magazines, books and audio/video cassettes. Some practitioners of the CE and SS voiced that the abuse of communication by a few rich and powerful people was a form of people's alienation from God and neighbor. Yet, they were concerned that **Christians did not speak with a single voice on the policies of communication** through the mass media. Moreover, the members of the diocese generally felt that their convictions in the media were rejected owing to the resurgence of Hinduism in India. Nevertheless, some practitioners of the SCMI, WF and the CE described that the mass media had paid attention to some of their reaction to the contemporary socio-political issues. Those **initiatives endured at the level of local units. They were not coordinated at wider levels in the diocese.** In preparing efficient church leaders, 'The Centre for Interdisciplinary Communications Studies' stipulates these as the focus of training: "The media must... be able to move their viewers to influence communication policies for the welfare of society, they must

321. Section 4.5.6 *Communication and socio-political factors.*

be a “leaven, that spreads the hope of the gospel”.³²²

Some respondents expressed concerns on how the editors and board members of their training programmes were **inclined to exclude some opinions and enforce others**. They rejected this agenda as ‘sin’. They pronounced this as a way of abusing God's gift of communication and the mass media for their own vested interests. They argued that it was incompatible with the will of the Trinitarian God of communication to silence a person or community, based on any barrier and deny access to the means of communication.

The practitioners of some units of the WF were worried that the **members of the diocese were shaped as passive recipients and objects** on the receiving end of messages and advertisements in the mass media, as aimed by those in power. They, however, talked about this in their parishes and presented participatory methods of conducting Bible studies and services of worship in their training programmes.

The practitioners displayed the following as **some situations that were destructive to effective communication within the Christian community in Kanyakumari**:

1. When the training programmes claimed they were the ultimate possessor of God and truth, loyalty to God was replaced by loyalty to the church. Then the source (church) was substituted for the message (God).
2. The respondents, particularly of the SCMI disclosed the destructive trends in Bible study that substituted the authority of God by the authority of the Bible.³²³
3. When Christology and Theology are separated and placed one against the other, it hindered the proclamation of the gospel as well as the dialogue among people of different religious faiths. At the heart of the New Testament is the conviction that Jesus is Lord and the only Saviour. This does not mean that there is not a lot of truth in other faiths. Nor does this mean that we should be unfriendly to our non-Christian neighbors but quite to the contrary. The church as servant of God is

322. The Centre for Interdisciplinary Communications Studies, *I. C. The Philosophy of the CICS programme*, 19 September 2005, <http://www.unigre.it/pug/cics/C_infoB1.htm> (16 October 2005).

323. Section 4.5.4, *Ministerial Resources*.

called to cheerfully fulfill its task of evangelism and mission, knowing that God is just and true in all God's ways.³²⁴

4. Communication was distorted and even broken down when the practitioners and the church cut itself off from its own culture and tradition. This occurred also when the culture and tradition were treated as something objective and final from the past, rather than as living memory in which the community of faith actively takes part and to which they add their own life-stories.
5. The elements of rationalisation, estheticism, capitalism, sexism and castes in the training programmes displayed potentials for distortion to destroy the human values in communication.³²⁵

Guidelines based on communication

1. The physical study environment should be a high priority. This would serve as a primary resource of communication that motivated participation, satisfaction, and achievement of the practitioners in training. In turn, they would react promptly to address the socio-political factors.
2. It would be beneficial to encourage the practitioners to have authority over their physical environment, as well as to the layout of their learning environment. This would empower them to regulate the viability of their programmes to confront socio-political factors.
9. Small group work would be effective to aim at addressing socio-political factors. Nurturing mutual care and support in these groups would promote motivation for an internal environment of learning.
10. The practitioners should be equipped in 'tuning to the views', to exclude interruptions. This would accelerate active participation in group-work, and invigorate socio-political involvement.

324. Cf. Rev 15:3.

325. 'Rationalisation' is a defense mechanism used to justify one's behaviour or situation; it becomes problematic when used inappropriately. 'Estheticism' is love for nature and arts; it tends to dominate others and cut off true communication with others. 'Capitalism' tries to depersonalise people creating in them a spirit of consumerism, always wanting more. 'Sexism' and 'castes' tend to subordinate and divide people on the basis of their sex and caste respectively.

11. It should be important to create awareness that communication is ‘a two-way process’ and the practitioners should develop this skill.
12. It should be beneficial to provide regular training in active listening and in avoiding bad habits of listening. This would facilitate effective communication and diligent socio-political involvement.
13. A spirit of constant dialogue should be cherished among the members of teams who worked together as local units. This would keep them vibrant in addressing socio-political factors.
14. The practitioners should reach agreement and a common purpose of identifying and addressing vital socio-political issues.
15. The smaller the groups the more comfortable the participants would feel to share their feelings, fears and visions. In turn, this would lead to active socio-political involvement.
16. Closed groups would be more effective than open groups in addressing socio-political issues, as they would develop long-term intimate relationships.
17. It would be rewarding to opt for democratic types of leaders who would guide the goals and dynamism of the groups towards addressing socio-political issues.
18. Training programmes should introduce and promote magazines and journals and they should relate promptly and regularly to socio-political factors.
19. When necessary, effective role-plays with a socially oriented Christology should be conducted towards empowering the members to address socio-political factors.
20. More plain cartoons and other arts, for example, paintings and pictures, should be used where possible, reflecting the daily life-situations of people. They could create a significant impact, especially when presented as ‘interactive’ exercises with the study materials.
21. Quiet, reflective time should be provided for the practitioners to promote effective communication towards active socio-political involvement.
22. Modern audio-visual and digital devices should be introduced and promoted, at least as adjunct material. This would facilitate socio-political involvement.
23. The resources, means and strategies of communication alone would not suffice to train the members of the church in addressing their socio-political factors. If the

- training programmes paid sufficient attention to the interest, commitment and contextual theological orientation of the practitioners, it would enhance effective communication.
24. The coordination of communication facilities in training programmes, in addition to the establishing of sufficient funds and infrastructures, and the promoting of trust relationships and regular follow-ups, would certainly be an investment for more effective socio-political involvement.

5.3 The transition of paradigms and guidelines

The study included the precision, articulation and explication of the two dominant and divergent paradigms among the practitioners of the training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese. Transitions occurred in the concepts and convictions of these dominant paradigms. By way of mutual influence transitions also occurred between these paradigms. The respondents displayed such transitions during the semi-structured interviews, which were subsequently recorded and evaluated. As a result, the following additional guidelines were devised to improve the viability of the existing training programmes to address socio-political factors.

i) The initial shift from the pietistic paradigm to divergent paradigms

According to some respondents, the pietistic confessional approach in Christology functioned largely as the dominant paradigm in all the training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese during the initial stages of its formation.³²⁶ Generally, the members of the diocese maintained a pietistic approach in their theological theories and praxis while acting in response to the socio-political issues.

It was further disclosed, on the one hand, that the training programme of the UESI continued to operate within the confines of a pietistically oriented paradigm.³²⁷ On the other hand, the other programmes chosen for the present study, namely the SS, the CE,

326. CSI Kanyaumari diocese was formed on June 01, 1959. According to some respondents, the initial stages of the pietistic paradigm might have continued for several years since June 1959.

327. The UESI is hence described as a 'pietistically oriented programme'.

the CR, the WF, the parish-based training, the CWTTP and the SCMI made an initial shift from its traditional pietistic approach; they worked within a socially oriented paradigm.³²⁸ Sociologically, they maintained two different sets of convictions, values and techniques that were familiar in their communities. They promoted their different convictions, values and techniques throughout their training programmes and later the practitioners continued to reinforce them in their professional practice. They also established and promoted their convictions, values and techniques through their study material, magazines and periodicals. The result was that the training programmes in the diocese pursued their programmes in two divergent and competing paradigms.

The competing paradigms did **not speak with the same scientific language and did not observe the same data. They did not ask the same questions and did not solve the same problems**; for instance, on the one hand, the practitioners of the UESI regarded the position and role of women as secondary to that of men. They believed that women were created out of the rib of Adam and that they were only a ‘reflection’ of men.³²⁹ On the other hand, the socially oriented paradigm promoted in the main, the equality of men and women. While the practitioners of the UESI viewed dowries as God’s blessing, others related to them as socio-political evil. **Moreover, the paradigms identified problems in different ways, depending on their target groups, goals and theological theories**; for instance, on the one hand, the UESI identified the problem of those abusing alcohol as an issue of not having accepted Jesus as the Lord. On the other hand, the practitioners of the WF handled the issue of alcoholism from the viewpoint of how women were socio-politically and psychologically affected, due to those who abused alcohol. Furthermore, though the training programmes of different paradigms encountered common socio-political issues, **they did not always assign the same priority and significance to the problems**. For instance, on the one hand, the practitioners of the UESI generally believed that only social workers should handle problems for example, scarcity of water and the abuse of alcohol and drugs. Their own priority was spiritual matters. On the other hand,

328. This paradigm is described as a ‘socially oriented paradigm’. This *paradigm* formed a characteristic bond between the practitioners of each of these two scientific communities.

329. They used 1 Cor 11:7-8 out of context to establish their view of women: Women were to obey their husbands. They should not become leaders and should not talk in the church. They used 1 Cor 14:34-35 out of context to establish their view of the role of women at home and in the churches.

the socially oriented practitioners believed that Christ was present in their social calling to work for societal and political transformation. They, therefore, were convinced that the churches were called as the body of Christ to address the socio-political issues.

ii) Paradigms and the viability of the programmes

The findings displayed the approach that the convictions and values of the paradigms determined the practitioners' views and experiences of the interaction between the training programmes and socio-political factors. Thus, it was the practitioners' basic convictions that inevitably described their practice. Van Huyssteen phrased the process in a scientific way: "In normal science the scientist is confronted...with puzzles that have to be solved in terms of the paradigm."³³⁰ This presumed that a scientific thought was determined by group values and convictions. Van Huyssteen was of the opinion that a paradigm governed the approach to subject matter in the first instance, and it was not the subject matter, but rather a group of practitioners who determined the approach to a subject. Thus, the viability of the training programmes to address the socio-political factors was accounted for in the thesis by examining the characteristics of the convictions of paradigms. The study also examined what the practitioners, as the scientific group of a paradigm valued, tolerated and what they scorned.³³¹

Conceptual transformation and the transition of paradigms

It was discovered that the socio-political issues did not require of the practitioners of both paradigms to abolish their commitment to their paradigms. Nevertheless, they were asked to expose their ultimate commitment, to the point of open criticism and to make themselves vulnerable to the challenges of contemporary socio-political factors. In response, most of the practitioners of the UESI isolated themselves in dogmatic positions, claiming their pietistically oriented Christology. Consequently, they irrevocably forfeited the privilege of critical debates with proponents of diverse views and the interaction with socio-political issues. As a result, their convictions, values and techniques were dubious and unhelpful and they gradually faltered. Some practitioners of the UESI were frustrated

330. W. Van Huyssteen, *Theology and the justification of faith*, 1989, p. 52.

331. According to W. Van Huyssteen, this is, to some extent, in tune with Kuhn's sociological founding of the growth of scientific thought. Ref. W. Van Huyssteen, *op. cit.*, 1989, pp. 52-53.

that their vision of the church, views of the task of the church and their convictions of theology did not relate to socio-political factors.

On the one hand, they experienced intense vagueness and the waning usefulness of pietistic confessional theology. Having experienced a series of shocks, the confidence of these practitioners in the UESI started to fail.³³² On the other hand, their motives for personal and communal development necessitated them to react to socio-political issues. This led them to experience an often-unforeseen transformation of their convictions, values, and techniques. Consequently, some practitioners of the UESI began to make radical shifts towards the socially oriented paradigm.³³³ This brought about drastic changes in their theological, historical and socio-political perspectives. The philosophers of science labeled the transformation a ‘scientific revolution’.³³⁴ This transformation was not caused by a linear, rational accumulation of knowledge, but rather by a series of ‘shocks’ where the practitioners shifted to a new paradigm through ‘conceptual conversion’ or ‘a gestalt switch’.³³⁵

iii) The puzzle-solving process and the transition of paradigms as not irrational

The practitioners of the training programmes chose different internal mottos and criteria related to their aims. They were closely linked with rational arguments and sound reasons, relevant to the context in Kanyakumari. According to Wikipedia, “...the word ‘rationality’ has been used to describe numerous religious and philosophical theories, ...rationality is a much broader term than logic, as it includes ‘uncertain but sensible’ arguments based on probability, expectation, personal experience and the like”.³³⁶

The practitioners of the training programmes considered criticism and alternative possibilities, and unanimously established mottos for their programmes; for instance, the

332. Sections 4.1, ‘The lady from a revival meeting’; 4.2, ‘The student who was asked to keep on praying without action’; 4.3, ‘The student frustrated by the UESI, presenting biographies of missionaries, but contributing to the widening gap between rich and poor in South India’.

333. Some were prepared to take such ‘a creative leap’ to a totally new view of reality and of their problems.

334. W. Van Huyssteen, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 53.

335. *Op. cit.*, 1989, p. 55. Kuhn, as denoted by van Huyssteen, described them as *flashes of intuition*.

336. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, *Rationality*, 13 January 2006, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationality>> (14 January 2006).

UESI created, 'Leading the college students to the cross of Calvary' as their motto; for the SS, 'Leading children to Christ.' The WF declared, "Arise and shine!" as their motto, while the CE stated their motto as, "For Christ and for Church". The emphasis of the puzzle-solving method on sociological, psychological, historical and other factors in the scientific revolution, therefore, is by no means a lapse into irrationalism. It means, rather, opting for a much 'wider concept of rationality'. When the practitioners analysed their concepts from the sociological, psychological and historical perspectives, they became acquainted with the defects and merits of their concepts and internal criteria, and transformed them to become more relevant to address their socio-political contexts.³³⁷

iv) The socially oriented paradigm moving into a period of consolidation

It was disclosed that the practitioners of the socially oriented paradigm in general gradually made a creative leap to contextually oriented theological theories. They gradually began to act in response to the socio-political factors since the formation of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese.³³⁸ Such a process of conversion is approved by theological scientists for example, van Huyssteen who stated:

The development of scientific thought is vitally affected by external historical, socio-political and psychological factors... It is a scientific revolution that contains a form of conversion - a creative leap normally associated only with religion - a commitment to particular theological theories.³³⁹

The practitioners of the socially oriented programs were already in a revolutionary phase in their history of training. This was generally characterised by their abandoning of the long trusted pietistic Christology in their vision of the church, their views of theology and the tasks of the church.³⁴⁰ Their commitment to address socio-political factors brought them, to some extent, to a pattern of vacillating between normal and revolutionary

337. W. van Huyssteen, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 59.

338. There are, however, some practitioners and units of socially oriented programmes who still need to experience *conceptual 'conversion'*. They even now need to make a *creative leap* to contextual oriented theological theories and praxis.

339. W. Van Huyssteen, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 55.

340. Ref. section 4.5.1. *The vision of the church and socio-political factors*. 4.5.2. *The theology of the church and socio-political factors*, and 4.5.3. *The task of the church and socio-political factors*.

practice. Subsequently, they entered into a period of consolidation of their views. They largely accepted, however, the new socially oriented paradigm as a framework for their study, reflection and action (praxis). This empowered them to motivate their students to relate to and react to socio-political factors.

The practitioners of the CR, the parishes, the SS, the WF, the CWTTP and the SCMI continued to relinquish the pietistic confessional theology and resisted the related theories; for instance, the members of a parish viewed chronic illness as ‘God’s curse’ and the victims as ‘sinners’. Such unhelpful theories of life were cultivated by the theology of ‘blessing’ and ‘holiness’, promoted by the pietistically oriented Christology. The parishioners, however, abandoned such negative attitudes after the training of a series of workshops concerning ‘God and chronic-illness’.³⁴¹ Similarly, after being frustrated by the pietistic approach of the Bible-study for sometime, the SCMI organised a series of workshops on, ‘Toward a new creation: Combating unhelpful trends in Bible-studies’.³⁴² Consequently, the practitioners of the parish and the SCMI adopted a new contextual approach to theology, empowering them to address socio-political factors.

v) Experience and success nurtured the transition

While relating to socio-political factors, the practitioners of the socially oriented paradigm relied on their experimental experience and promise of success. For instance, the socially oriented studies motivated the members of a unit of the WF to counsel widows and Dalits. Being empowered, eventually they joined the WF. This enabled the members of the WF to realise that their vision of the Church and theology was promising. In response, they pursued their socially oriented vision and theology of the church. They gradually became more active in addressing their socio-political factors.³⁴³ Van Huyssteen affirmed the effective success of a new paradigm: “The success of a paradigm is at the start largely a promise of success discoverable in selected and still incomplete examples.”³⁴⁴ In this conceptual transformation of the practitioners’ convictions, the new socially oriented paradigm proved more adequate than the old one; hence, these

341. Section.4.5.3 *The socially oriented programmes and the task of the Church.*

342. Section.4.5.4 *The socially oriented programmes and studies.*

343. Section 4.5.5 *The socially oriented programmes and counselling.*

344. W. Van Huyssteen, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 54.

convictions continued to play a stable role.³⁴⁵

Some philosophers of science established the socio-historical founding of this shift in paradigm: “As in political revolutions, so in paradigm choice - there is no standard higher than the assent of the relevant community”.³⁴⁶ The study revealed that the socially oriented programmes did not only enable their practitioners to act in response to address socio-political factors, but also caused a special kind of change and reconstruction of the convictions of the training programmes.³⁴⁷ As a result, they made a shift in professional commitment that led them to the transformation of concepts, ideas, methods and theories of the training programmes. Such a switch contributed, to some extent, to a qualitative transformation of the socially oriented training programmes, as well as to the attitude to address the socio-political issues of the practitioners.

vi) **Factors facilitating the transition of paradigms**

The practitioners had **a number of reasons to choose one of the two competing paradigms**: On the one hand, the practitioners of the UESI reported that they were disappointed in **some members with a socially oriented theology who were involved in socio-political factors, but who ignored their spiritual formation**. In their view, this created a negative image of the socially oriented programmes and discouraged others from opting for the socially oriented programmes. Moreover, the **psychological reasons**, for example, fear of the unknown, taking risks and losing popularity, too, discouraged the pietistically oriented practitioners to address socio-political factors. On the other hand, the practitioners who suffered on a daily basis, due to the challenges of the socio-political issues, found their daily lives seriously affected and their relationships in their neighbourhood strained. Striving to react to socio-political issues, they found that the socially oriented training programmes empowered them. In addition, **the value systems of the different paradigms might also have played a role in making their choice**. On

345. Cf. *Op. cit.*, 1989, p. 54.

346. *Op. cit.*, 1989, p. 54. ‘Assent’ in the context of the training of the members of the CSI means the relevance of the community of practitioners of a programme to address socio-political contexts.

347. The constitutions, mission statements and leadership of the socially oriented training programmes formally made a shift from a pietistically oriented theology to a contextual theology since the formation of the diocese. For a discussion of the concept of scientific revolutions, Ref. W. Van Huyssteen, *op. cit.*, 1989, pp. 53-57.

the one hand, the practitioners of the UESI treasured values for example, personal salvation, holiness and fellowship with other ‘saved’ believers. On the other hand, the socially oriented programmes were interested in values, for example, holistic perspectives and the daily relationships of people and the transformation of church and society, which could naturally empower their practitioners in addressing socio-political factors.

vii) The scientific status of the paradigms and the ongoing transition

So far our evaluation of the transition of paradigms disclosed that the socially oriented and the pietistically oriented paradigms programmes could not contain common standards of measurement. They maintained diverging convictions, values and approaches. Moreover, the practitioners of these divergent paradigms continued to experience a process of conceptual transformation. **This transition of paradigms, therefore, was ultimately by no means proof of the falsehood of the UESI and of the correctness of the socially oriented programmes. The scientific status of the paradigms was characterised by their ability to solve puzzles and not by their falsity.** It was found that the practitioners of the competing paradigms interacted with one another from different perspectives in their daily lives. Moreover, they came together during the Sunday worship services and on special days. Further, they worked together in the ministries of the church: members of the diocese who were practitioners of UESI also took part in the training programmes of the SS, the CE, the CR and the WF. They found one another as different branches of the same vine or different members of the same body of Christ.³⁴⁸ This facilitated the ongoing conceptual conversion and shifting of paradigms in response to the challenges of socio-political factors. **There were sound reasons³⁴⁹ for the practitioners to switch from one paradigm to another and they were enabling reasons; they could never be compelling reasons.**³⁵⁰

348. Cf. Jn 15:5; 1 Cor 12:27.

349. For example, the variation in values, vision and commitment to react to the challenges of the socio-political factors.

350. This is because of the priorities and other reasons of the competing paradigms as described earlier; for instance, in the paradigm of the UESI ‘soul-winning’ and spiritual prosperity were the priority, while the other paradigm kept socio-political transformation as priority. Nevertheless, the practitioners were aware that holding to certain convictions did not make any paradigm of greater worth in God's eyes and relevant to the socio-political context. It was only in perceiving those convictions as God's tools and working with God on daily basis in their life-situations that a practitioner or a paradigm progressed on the path to fullness of life. Cf. Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 3:6

Guidelines Based on the Transition of Paradigms

1. The practitioners of all training programmes must nurture a clear option and determination to act promptly in response to socio-political factors.
2. The practitioners must be enabled to recognise that the training programmes in the diocese work in two divergent and competing paradigms namely the pietistically oriented programme and the socially oriented programmes. They must also be trained to distinguish the differences between the programmes of those two paradigms, particularly in their convictions, values and techniques.
3. The conceptual transformation emerging within the practitioners of UESI must be recognized and promoted. For instance, the role of UESI in their prayer cells and retreats must be appreciated. They had talked about the day by day events of their families and society and pray, believing that God would bring the necessary changes solutions. They must however, be encouraged to be more thoughtful on working with the Risen Christ as his disciples in their concurrent society, and act promptly in response to their daily socio-political issues.
4. The programmes and the practitioners must be encouraged to be more open to critical debates with the proponents of divergent views and interact with the socio-political issues. They must analyse their concepts and convictions from the sociological, psychological and historical perspectives. This will enable them to get to know the defects and merits of their concepts and internal criteria from different perspectives, and improve them to be more relevant to their contexts.
5. The practitioners must be inspired to accept and keep the new socially oriented paradigm as a framework for their study (reflection) and action (praxis).
6. Members of the diocese must be enabled to sustain the socially oriented theology and spiritual formation simultaneously while involving in socio-political factors.
7. The practitioners must be offered counselling that can empower them to overcome their fears of the unknown, taking risks and losing popularity. This will free them to actively respond to the socio-political factors.
8. The pietistically oriented values like personal salvation, holiness and fellowship with 'other saved-believers alone' must be discouraged. Instead, the socially

- oriented values like the holistic perspectives, daily relationships of a person, and transformation of the church and society must be cherished.
9. The training programmes of the diocese must be coordinated at different levels. This will facilitate the interaction between the programmes of different paradigms. This will also contribute to planned and coordinated efforts in relating the programmes to the socio-political factors.
 10. The practitioners of the various paradigms must cherish genuine respect towards one another, and be willing to cooperate wherever possible.
 11. It is recommended to set up a common forum for the practitioners all training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese. This may assist them to exchange their views, experiences and approaches, work together and strengthen their connection between the various components of the programmes and the socio-political context. This will promote the active socio-political involvement of the members of the diocese, as well as facilitate the continued conceptual conversion in the training programmes of the various paradigms in the Church of South India.

5.4 Summary

The **narrative form of the responses was evaluated** in this chapter. In addition, **the findings from the significant pointers** in the interaction between socio-political factors and the training programmes **were evaluated**, in view of the socio-political viability of the training programmes of the different paradigms. Moreover, **the transition of the paradigms was determined**. The results of this **evaluation were reviewed, some guidelines were devised** and reported. It is hoped that these guidelines will help the practitioners of the training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese to develop their programs to be more relevant to their socio-political contexts.

CHAPTER VI

GUIDELINES EMANATING FROM AN OVERALL REVIEW

Introduction

The identification and presentation of the guidelines of this chapter emanated from an overall review of the study. The ‘guidelines’ for the training programmes to address the socio-political issues are embedded in a framework, containing a number of issues from which the guidelines emanated, for example, the contents of socio-political contexts, the goals, the curricula, the role players, the ministerial resources, the study material, feedback in training and the involvement of the students. The major source of these guidelines was an assessment of the promoted theories¹ regarding the relationships between the training programmes and the socio-political factors, as well as the discussions with the respondents during the semi-structured interviews, using the set questionnaire.²

The guidelines presented in this chapter, would contribute the creation of training programmes to address social-political factors and justify this involvement theologically and ecclesiastically. Consulting other members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese on these guidelines before practicing them was rewarding.

6.1 The socio-political contexts of the programmes and the guidelines

The study has revealed that the following socio-political factors have prompted the origin and development of the training programmes in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese:

- i) **Social issues:** Problems with paternalistic dominance and castes, keeping women powerless, ‘eve-teasing’, violence of men against women (and women against men), the abuse of alcohol, luxurious and licentious life styles, crime, uprooting caused by migration, ‘education for money’, unnecessary court-cases, the

1. Section 2.8, *An exposition of the promoted theories.*

2. Appendix 1, *Questions for semi-structured interviews.*

- disparity between urban and rural parishes, the exclusivity of religions and the monopolising and alienating trends of the mass media.
- ii) **Political issues:** A great deal of dependence on ‘leaders’, political violence, terrorism, the powerlessness of women, workers, unemployed youngsters and children, and the political parties’ loss of credibility.
 - iii) **Economic issues:** Unemployment and poverty, impossible dowries, bribes, corruption, competition with multinational companies and negative consequences of globalisation.
 - iv) **Ecological and miscellaneous factors:** Droughts, displacement of people, dispossession of possessions and property, and chronic diseases.

The above list might serve as a guideline for the practitioners of the training programmes to develop, confirm, amend and update their own lists of socio-political factors in the various contemporaneous contexts of the Kanyakumari district. These socio-political factors, however, might change in the future within the different contexts of the district.

6.2 The major components of the programmes and the guidelines

The research has indicated the following major components that have been used in the constructing of the contemporary training programmes: The organisers, the objectives, the curricula, the resources, the study material, feedback, accessibility to the courses and the participation of students.

There might be more components³ of the training programmes with relevant roles. It would be beneficial to identify and include them in the above list.

6.3 The victims of the socio-political issues and the guidelines

The research established that the following categories of victims of socio-political evil in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese appropriated contextual theology and responded more

3. For instance, public relations, promotion work, partnerships with churches and other training programmes, communication structures between all parties of programmes, and accreditation.

rapidly than other groups: The poor, the illiterates, the unemployed, suffering women, youngsters and children, the chronically ill, the victims of the caste system, victims of race discrimination and victims of discrimination because of creeds.

Keeping lists of victims of the socio-political factors and reviewing them regularly would empower practitioners in the training programmes to make the right choices concerning the target groups. These lists might inspire and guide them towards an appropriate theological orientation and the shaping of the major components of the programmes.

6.4 The main role players and the guidelines

The following were the major parties, involved in the development of the programmes:

- i) the organisers of the programmes,
- ii) the tutors,
- iii) The promoters - those who would be involved in the public relation work of the training programmes
- iv) the ordained members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese,
- v) the lay, (non-professional), leaders of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese,
- vi) the lay (non-professional) members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese, and
- vii) other members of the society.⁴

Other parties⁵, based on their competence, location, development and vision, might still be involved in the development of the training programmes. It would be fruitful to identify and include them in the list. This list might serve as a guideline to the practitioners of the programmes to support each other.

6.5 The ministerial resources and the guidelines

The present research revealed that the following ministerial resources created participant

4. For instance, former students, workers, employees, community workers and so on.

5. For instance, consultants, authors of study material, evaluators of the programmes and so on.

awareness regarding the challenges and chances of their life-situations and empowered them to address their socio-political issues: The participants' studies, prayer-lives, daily devotions, retreats, team ministries, the Church Workers Fraternal and the 'Religious Friends Circles', (a fraternal of friends from different religions) were important.

The practitioners are enabled to devise a list of the ministerial resources that enhances the contents and clarifies the target groups of the training programmes. The research indicated that these resources augmented the programmes to become more relevant.

6.6 Religious action and the guidelines

The research disclosed that the following religious and educational action enhanced the training programmes to address the socio-political issues and, consequently, transformed the programmes to become more contextually relevant: Pastoral counselling, 'personal formation', worship services and preaching, evangelism, openness to dialogue, communication aids and systems, effective administration, proper physical study environments and 'internal' study environments (focus and concentration).

More religious and educational action could be added to the above list, quickening the training programmes to become more relevant to address the socio-political factors.

6.7 The organisers and guidelines

The research indicated that the organisers and staff of the training programmes responded constructively to the socio-political factors, adhering to the following approaches:

- i) They developed skills of social analysis and were well informed about their socio-political contexts; in turn, they encouraged students to follow their examples.⁶
- ii) They lived and worked with students at grass root levels;⁷ this assisted them to

6. For instance, the regular instruction and practical assignments offered by such organisers will challenge students to relate to their socio-political issues.

7. For instance, the tutors can avail themselves at their homes to students longer than that at classes. Students can clarify their doubts, and learn Christian values and faith from their tutors' lives.

- understand and comprehend their socio-political background and built relationships with the students.
- iii) They wrote articles and booklets regarding their reflections of the socio-political issues.
 - iv) They were supported and sustained in their social organisations, cooperatives and human rights committees.
 - v) They responded to the interests, problems, gifts and talents of students.
 - vi) For instance, the regular instruction and practical assignments presented by such organisers would challenge students to relate to their socio-political issues.
 - vii) For instance, the tutors could also make themselves available to students at their homes. Students would clarify their doubts, and learn Christian values and faith from their tutors' lives.
 - viii) They were receptive to questions and answers of students, encouraging genuine expression and accepting their feelings.
 - ix) They maintained a dynamic process where all practitioners studied, designed and evaluated future action in unison.
 - x) They organised and updated a library for the staff and the students, containing recent publications concerning social analysis and recent socio-political issues in the Kanyakumari district and India.
 - xi) They familiarised themselves with the student group dynamics and improved their facilitation skills
 - xii) They evaluated the beliefs, values and life-styles of staff members⁸ to be recruited, especially regarding their socio-political backgrounds;⁹ this affected the relevance of the programmes to respond to the socio-political factors.
 - xiii) The CSI Kanyakumari diocese, having strong net-works at diocesan, district and parish levels, would be rewarded to establish offices and appoint staff for the training programmes on a permanent basis.¹⁰
 - xiv) Staff development workshops empowered participants' socio-political attitudes,

8. The term 'staff' included the course designers, tutors, authors of study material, promoters of the programmes, supporting staff, etcetera.

9. The background included the gender, educational qualifications, wealth and position of the staff.

10. This would create more opportunities for tutors and resource people of the programmes to upgrade their skills in obtaining knowledge how to identify and address the socio-political factors.

values and life styles; they also studied the socio-political and psychological backgrounds of their students. Moreover, these workshops and handbooks improved students' skills in communication.

- xv) Differing approaches in training and socio-political involvement necessitated a nurturing spirit of dialogue and partnership among these organisers, assisting them to address the socio-political factors more effectively; this was important as some trained their members towards immediate relief and charity for the victims of socio-political issues; others created awareness of the socio-political factors and enhanced students' skills in socially oriented Christology; yet others equipped members to organise their neighbours to promote social justice.

6.8 The aims of the programmes and the guidelines

It would be valuable to attend to the following details in setting up the aims of the training programmes:

- i) The aim would be to promote a socially oriented Christology.
- ii) The aim would clarify and indicate precisely what the students would want to achieve during curricula, concerning their socio-political context.
- iii) The aims should be designed in a measurable and recognisable way.
- iv) It would be rewarding to take sufficient time to design the socio-politically oriented aims of programmes, and to clarify and render them recognisable to all the practitioners.
- v) The resources and methods of study programmes should facilitate the socio-political-oriented goals.¹¹
- vi) The follow-up programmes should be done promptly and strategically to achieve the socio-politically oriented targets.
- vii) The socio-politically oriented aims should be reviewed during the training periods and the results compared with the goals at the end of the courses.
- viii) The aims should enable the spiritual formation of students, while relating them adequately to their socio-political contexts.

11. The socio-politically oriented aim should be relevant concerning socio-political factors.

- ix) Regular follow up programmes should be created; this would assist students to adapt to new values in their lives and to relate to the changing socio-political realities.
- x) The goals of the training programmes should move beyond emotional security¹² to become more effective, and should influence the daily relationships of the students.¹³
- xi) It should be taken into account that the Church in India is a ‘minority community’, living in a context of multi-religious faiths and in economic poverty.

6.9 The curricula and the guidelines

The following aspects of the training programmes should be attended to while designing curricula, towards making them more effective to address socio-political contexts:

- i) Experts with professional training in analysing socio-political factors should be consulted.
- ii) Curricula should have a basic commitment to address socio-political issues.
- iii) Curricula should empower students to develop their critical thinking.
- iv) Problem-solving skills of students should be enhanced.
- v) Curricula should present different subject choices for students.
- vi) Curricula should include the socio-biographies and experience of students.
- vii) Students should be regarded as adults and agents, determining their own studies and ‘learning’.
- viii) Curricula should include viewpoints of resource people from different socio-political walks of life.
- ix) Effective and motivating tools of social analysis should be provided for students.
- x) The beliefs and philosophies behind the curriculum should be clarified to all parties of the programmes.

12. For instance, ‘alleviating the anxieties and worries’, by conducting fellowships of singing together, presenting advice and praying, but without becoming volunteers to address the socio-political issues.

13. For instance, the aims, ‘to realise God’s reign in our village’, ‘to create an egalitarian community’ and ‘to eradicate poverty’ drew the members of the church closer to the socio-political factors.

- xi) Active participation of all parties in designing their curricula should be encouraged; it should create transparency and minimise hidden agendas.¹⁴
- xii) Possible hidden curricula, inherent in the administrative structures, should be made transparent and be related to the socio-political factors.
- xiii) ‘Open elements’ in the curricula should be accommodated to recognise and develop the calling, talents and visions of students.
- xiv) Mechanisms should be devised to sustain the interaction between the worship services, preaching and the socio-political factors.
- xv) Separate and specific topics and units in the curricula should be included to address current socio-political issues.
- xvi) It would be rewarding to recognise and include the student descriptions of their motivation, experience and their sense of curriculum effectiveness.
- xvii) It should be effective if parents would show more interest in the training of their children. They might report to the organisers about the socio-political issues that challenged the daily lives of their children and they might provide feedback concerning their training.

6.10 The resources and the guidelines

The following guidelines were created towards improving the resources of the training programmes to address socio-political problems:

- i) The practitioners should refer to study material apart from the Bible, and, when necessary, listen to other people who are not Christians.¹⁵
- ii) It should be asserted that the leaders in the diocese were vested with accredited and constitutional power; this implied that they needed to opt decisively for, and be skilled in, socially oriented Christology.
- iii) It would be beneficial if the practitioners were aware that the members of the CSI

14. Necessary issues to be reviewed, but which were not listed and brought forward for open discussion towards the necessary action; for instance, the organisers’ hidden interest to attract the masses, raising sufficient funds and gaining fame.

- Kanyakumari diocese were generally inclined to the oral tradition.
- iv) It would be effective for training programmes to invite the resource people who knew the circumstances of the students' lives well.
 - v) Where there would be no electricity and, consequently, no television, the practitioners should seek alternative and affordable, but practical resources, making their programmes more relevant to address their socio-political contexts.
 - vi) It was disclosed that some members of the diocese viewed and studied people as individuals and nuclear families, rather than as a part of larger communities.¹⁶ They were encouraged to consider the socio-political issues within communities and socio-political structures, rather than as mere individual affairs. It would be valuable if they were equipped to analyse the causes of these issues and to become organised as a community to address them.
 - vii) A proper system of stewardship and accountability of resources should be set up. It would be beneficial to be aware of the fact that the daily relevance and effects of the resources varied from one local unit and parish¹⁷ to another in the Kanyakumari district.
 - vii) The resources should be used to equip members and they should realise the importance and benefits of their inter-dependency.
 - ix) The programmes should equip the practitioners to balance their material needs and their community life values, for instance, a sense of solidarity, sharing and serving.
 - x) It should be beneficial to be continuously involved in the suffering of people who were affected by socio-political evil. Nevertheless, when the authors of the programmes based their training fully on textbooks and lectures, their attempts would become frustrating to relate their resources to the socio-political issues.

15. For instance, when discussing the Good News of Jesus and the Kingdom of God with Hindus it would be helpful to read and refer to the Bagavad Gita and other holy books of Hindus; while inviting and including communists or socialists to studies, it would be helpful to discuss reading material related to communism or socialism. Hindus could also be invited as resource people concerning their holy books or related teachings.

16. The larger community referred to the community of believers, or church, or other friendly associations, or institutions where the church members studied or worked.

17. The training programmes of the UESI and the SCMI, functioning at colleges in the diocese, are known as local units; the congregants of villages or cities who come together for worship, study and mission at particular places are called parishes.

- xi) It was disclosed that the church committees at the parish, district and diocese levels have constitutional rights to decide on the policies and vision of the training programmes. Consequently, they should encourage the practitioners towards socio-political involvement.
- xii) The parish councils or committees might appoint and delegate advisory boards in every parish to facilitate the parishioners towards promoting arts and talents, social analysis and action, missionary work and support to the needy. They could work together with the practitioners in analysing their societies and responding to the socio-political issues.

6.11 The study material and the guidelines

The following guidelines were constructed to improve the study material to influence students, addressing socio-political factors:

- i) The material should pay special attention to the reading levels of students.
- ii) The teachers should enhance the students' human welfare and they should talk with the students about their interests.
- iii) The lay out and appearance of the study material should be contextual and captivating.
- iv) Teachers' guides and teaching aids should be creative and relevant to address the socio-political issues of the students.
- v) Relevant adjunct material should be integrated with the study material, focusing on the contemporary socio-political factors.
- vi) Assignments should be provided to students towards social action and reflection.¹⁸
- vii) Theological and other specialised terms should be used in the study material if needed, but they should be explained, their socio-political backgrounds should be provided and they should be illustrated.
- viii) The organisers and authors of the programmes should be aware of the fact that

18. For instance, undertaking a 'listening survey' at different places in the society, or conducting dialogue or interviews with Muslims, Hindus and people of other faiths and ideologies, and so on.

- members of the diocese suffer physical, mental and financial anxiety due to the burdens of socio-political evil. This would enable them to refer the students precisely and creatively to relevant study material.
- ix) Sufficient workshops for the authors of the study material should be conducted promptly, informing them about the updated contemporary socio-political factors affecting the members of the church and society.
 - x) After the presentation of socio-political issues guidelines for study material should be written regarding practical projects for students to attempt.¹⁹ This would enable students to conceptualise what they could do about their local, national and global issues. Thus, this would maintain a steady interaction between their studies and their socio-political factors.
 - xi) Students found it practical and helpful if their study material contained possibilities to fill in the blank spots in the material with their own views on topics and their solutions to problems. This should enhance students' imagination and enable them to relate their studies to their socio-political factors.
 - xii) The organisers should be careful with the format and the language of the study material. The language and design should be communicative and challenging.
 - xiii) Decisive and definite priorities should be provided in the study material to present the plight of the disadvantaged groups in Kanyakumari district and advocate their rights. Thus, the students who were victims of socio-political factors would also be empowered.
 - xiv) Study mechanisms²⁰ might be devised to update the study material with the changing socio-political issues.
 - xv) It would be helpful to examine the study material to find out whether it reflected fundamentalism and male-domination, or not, and to be watchful to avoid these deviations.
 - xvi) The research endorsed the fact that it would be effective to supply students with extra study material and follow-up information between retreats and workshops.

25. For instance, they could be asked to collect and read news from daily newspapers. They could also be encouraged to conduct debates on themes related to their studies, to organise street dramas, compose poems on a life events and to write stories relating to the studies and their socio-political contexts.

20. For instance, an academic committee and a writers' forum.

- xvii) They would then read and reflect at home about the current socio-political issues. This would make them curious to develop their skills in responding to the socio-political factors.
- xviii) Co-operation and partnership of training programmes with non-governmental organisations and social action groups would be commended.²¹ This would cheer the practitioners to use all available study material for social analysis and action.

6.12 Feedback and the guidelines

The following details regarding feedback would improve the relevance of the programmes in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese to address the socio-political issues:

- i) Feedback should be pooled from all participants, consultants, and graduates on a regular basis. They might receive and respond to the feedback on the complete programme, or on various components, for instance, the aims, curricula and resources.
- ii) It would be rewarding to receive a ‘summarising feedback’ after the learning process. At the close of every session or semester, the organisers, tutors, other leaders and students might summarise or pool their impressions towards examining whether the socio-political issues were related and well reflected in their programmes.
- iii) Some students found it fruitful to receive ‘responsive feedback’ during the learning process. It was valuable to have a specific time and mechanism²² with set agendas to arrange the receiving of and responding to feedback.
- iv) It was beneficial to record the feedback related to socio-political factors, albeit it reported in a casual way in the committee meetings, and also to analyse and act in response. Moreover, it was recommended that the members of the committees kept an active commitment towards the transformation of church and society.
- v) The victims of socio-political factors suppressed feedback due to their ‘culture of

21. For instance, The Centre for the Study of Religion and Society, and Palmyrah Workers’ Development Society.

22. For instance, a committee, forum, or a personnel team.

silence²³ and paternalistic dominance. Hence, the benefits of reacting to feedback should be explained to them; openness and transparency should be promoted. A regular practice of providing and receiving feedback should be encouraged.

- vi) It was beneficial to receive and act in response to feedback of others in the local society who were influenced by the training programmes; for instance, from people of other religious faiths and the local non-governmental organisations.

6.13 The accessibility of the programmes and the guidelines

The following training experience guidelines were derived towards improving the accessibility of the training programmes:

- i) The programmes should be geographically accessible to all practitioners.
- ii) The programmes should be affordable for the students.
The programmes should also be accessible, solving subtle problems of inaccessibility; for example, the practitioners should be assisted to overcome the barriers of caste, creed, and gender.
- iii) The programme should be appropriate to the academic level of students.
- iv) The programmes should take the culture and language of students into account.
- v) It would be fruitful to introduce effective styles of meetings for the students.²⁴
- vi) Some members of the diocese did not live near the church buildings. Hence, it

23. This has been a custom in the Kanyakumari district where people kept quiet even if they had fervent criticism.

24. For example, seated in circles and working in small groups.

was suggested that ‘annexes or out-stations’ of the training programmes should be established in the far-flung places where they lived. This was convenient for them to meet, reflect on and address their socio-political issues.

- vii) A number of aspects of the training programmes, for instance, the Christology of the organisers, the curricula and study material contributed considerably to the accessibility of the programmes.
- viii) The leaders should regard the training programmes as a priority.

- ix) The churches should be regarded as communities within larger communities.²⁵ This would assist members to be aware of the fact that they were called out of their society to address socio-political evil.
- viii) It would be useful to organise orientation programmes for the tutors to evaluate various ways of relating the different aspects of the training programmes to their socio-political issues.
- ix) Students should be empowered to appreciate and use their talents and skills to reflect on and act in response to the socio-political issues.
- x) Using a framework of continuing education, students could be motivated to life-long learning; they could familiarise themselves with the socio-political issues and respond to them.
- xi) It would be important for students to discover and appreciate themselves as resources of learning.
- xii) Students were tempted to be reserved and not to provide feedback, or selective in relating themselves to their socio-political issues. It would be rewarding, therefore, to make the creators of the training programmes aware of these attitudes and to introduce new strategies to motivate the students accordingly.
- xiii) It would be effective for training authors to organise workshops for students and tutors on fundamentalism and its evil consequences in the Kanyakumari district.

6.14 Summary

In this chapter guidelines were identified and delineated with a review of the study on the whole. The promoted theories, the set-questionnaire for the semis-structured interviews and the possible 'pointers' of the responses were scrutinised in this regard. These guideline were elaborated on and detailed guidelines were provided, based on the experience of the training, towards the involvement of the students in socio-political analysis and addressing evil.

25. Here the larger community refers to the society where a training programme is located.

CHAPTER VII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Introduction

The last chapter provides a summary of the thesis and a conclusion. It also portrays possible applications of the research, as well as proposals for future research concerning the topic.

7.1 A summary of the research

7.1.1 **The topic** of the present research, “Socio-political factors and the training of the members of the Church of South India”, was addressed from different angles assessed in depth. A comprehensive study has been made of the relationship between the two notions, the training and the socio-political dimensions, and the different types of relationship between them.

7.1.2 **The scope** of the research has included the diocese of Kanyakumari of the CSI, where the researcher is a member. Geographically Kanyakumari is located on the Southern tip of India.

7.1.3 The thesis examined the viability and feasibility of the training programmes of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese to address socio-political issues. The following **programmes** were researched: The Church Workers Theological Training Programme (CWTTP), the Sunday School Programme (SS), the Vacation School Programme (VBS), Retreats and workshops held at parishes (Parish Programme), the Women’s Fellowship Programme (WF), the Christian Endeavour Programme (CE) and the department of Communication and Revival (CR), as well as that of the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI) and the Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI).

7.1.4 The following were some of the **prerequisites** that guided the research:

Some practitioners of the training programmes were convinced that a number of the contemporary training programmes in the diocese were not addressing the socio-political factors. Others were fervently aware of the need for guidelines to direct their initiatives and to transform their programmes to become more relevant to address their socio-political contexts. Moreover, the researcher was concerned about the programmes failing to equip individual members, as well as the whole community in the CSI to address socio-political evil; consequently, the destructive socio-political factors of the 'secular' society might seriously influence the life and work of the CSI to its detriment.

7.1.5 The researcher conducted **a qualitative-oriented research**; it encouraged him to describe the details of the area of study spontaneously. Moreover, it enabled him to take care of the delicate meanings of the respondents in the research. It assisted him to ascertain whether the respondents were serious in their responses. Although it was difficult to do this in a 'scientific' way, notes of the respondents' body language, tone of voice and their behaviour were recorded during interviews. The researcher could discern to what extent the practitioners of the training programmes were aware of socio-political factors, and in what ways they reacted to the socio-political factors in their daily lives.

7.1.6 **Semi-structured interviews** were held as the primary method of gathering information. This method of questioning enabled the respondents to describe, reflect on and discuss their own perspectives and experience regarding the various socio-political factors that affected the training programmes and the viability of the programmes to react to them. This method also allowed the researcher to use his personal reflection and apply his insights as the key instruments for the exploring and interpretation of these responses.

7.1.7 **The initial stage of the research** included preliminary interviews, reading related literature and the researcher's substantiation of his initial insights and intuition. Thus, the researcher identified promoted theories of the relationship between the socio-political factors and their training programmes that existed among the practitioners. These theories assisted him to establish questions as a method to be used during the semi-structured interviews to collect the data concerning the research problem.

7.1.8 As **the second stage of the research**, semi-structured interviews were conducted, repeating some attempts of the preliminary interviews; but more attention was given to the day to day experiences and convictions of the members of the diocese that were involved in the training programmes. The ‘samples’ for the interviews were selected with the assistance of the organisers of the programmes by accumulating a group of respondents. It was important to balance the representation of the various training programmes, namely the SS, the VBS, the CE, the WF, the CWTTP, the SCMI, the UESI and the parish-based programmes. The respondents were selected from the organisers, staff and students who had ‘working and learning experiences’ with their programme for at least two years. Some graduates of the training programmes and community workers were also chosen as respondents, based on their involvement in the training.

7.1.9 **A pilot study** was conducted with a few of the respondents. The pilot group assisted the researcher to confirm the fact that the semi-structured interview schedule was able to represent the respondents’ opinions regarding the relevance of the training programmes to address the socio-political issues. The pilot study also assisted him to correct, reject or substitute the questions in the questionnaire and to establish the validity and reliability of the interview schedule before proceeding to the whole sample of respondents. This process also made the author more confident in the continuing procedures and methods towards the completion of his study.

7.1.10 **Interviews were held with the chosen respondents by using the semi-structured questionnaire.** In turn, it was hoped that this would assist the designers and promoters of the training to devise ‘guidelines’ towards ‘reforming’ their programmes to become more relevant and effective. During the interviews the researcher combined an informal conversational approach with a semi structured interview schedule.

7.1.11 **The respondents conveyed their life stories** and reflections related to the socio-political factors mainly in a narrative form. This information was organised, systematically coordinating the interview transcripts and the field notes. The collected

data were explored to determine the connections between socio-political factors and the training programmes. After scrutinising the responses from all the respondents, specific **conclusions were arrived at** and they were formulated as findings, recorded separately with **six different theological ‘pointers’** – the church’s vision, theology, task, ministerial resources, pastoral counselling and the communication. These ‘pointers’ mirrored the orientation of the church’s Christology, and a few religious resources and activities of the programmes that might have influenced the interaction between the training programmes and the socio-political factors. They were indicators pointing to the direction of the movement where theological views intersected with the socio-political challenges.

7.1.12 **An overall appraisal** of the findings revealed that the training programmes in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese conducted their programmes in two divergent and competing paradigms: On the one hand, the training programmes of the SS, the CE, the CR, the WF, the CWTTP and the parish-based ones, as well as the SCMI programme constructed a ‘socially oriented paradigm’. On the other hand, the training programmes of the UESI constructed a ‘pietistically oriented paradigm’.

7.1.13 The findings regarding the suitability of the training programmes to address the socio-political issues were **evaluated** by taking the two diverse paradigms into account. The transition and development of the paradigms were also assessed. The research used **the puzzle-solving method** with the ‘pointers’, rather than the critical-rationalistic problem-solving approach to explore and evaluate the findings. This assisted the researcher to acknowledge his presuppositions and avoid absolute statements, as well as to shun the so-called objective factual categorising of the findings.

7.1.14 With these insights **guidelines were devised towards shaping the training programmes** to become more relevant to address the socio-political contexts. These guidelines would hopefully inspire others to design more relevant training programmes to address their respective contemporary socio-political issues in South India.

7.2 Concluding remarks

The researcher believes that it would be vital to state the following while completing the research and the study.

7.2.1 Significant employment of the research

i) Many new training programmes flourished in the CSI Kanyakumari diocese and some of them disappeared rather promptly. An exploration of these disappearing programmes revealed that the programmes unrelated to the current socio-political issues in South India were unable to withstand trials and hardships. Some people seeking vested interests, who were indifferent to community development and social transformation, also established new training programmes. Hence, there appeared a clear need for guidelines regarding effective programmes, relevant to address the socio-political contexts.

ii) The researcher has hoped that the ‘Guidelines’ would blossom. Hopefully, these ‘Guidelines’ would point out the limitations as well as the possibilities to the practitioners to make their programmes vibrant and more viable to address socio-political evil.

iii) The research highlighted the widening gap between the training programmes of the UESI with an approach of fundamentalism, and the SCMI and the CE with a holistic perspective of people and supporting social transformation. This called for attempts of another strategic study and research as a follow-up of this exploration that might indicate possible promise and progress that the existing conservative and pietistically oriented training programmes could make in the near future.

iv) The researcher has hoped that the research would serve as a humble source of inspiration for the diocese to review and revive their existing training programmes and transform them into more responsive instruments to address their socio-political issues.

v) It is further hoped that these guidelines would challenge and guide other people,

especially those who would be involved in the training programmes of the diocese to construct and promote alternative and more creative approaches in training, relevant to address the socio-political contexts.

vi) Christians in the Kanyakumari district are a minority group and it is high time that all those involved in training members of the diocese work together. The research would be a small incentive to support the emerging co-operation and partnership of the organisers and promoters of the training programmes to share their experience and vision. Besides, chances might be created for the programmes to work together to strengthen the connections between the various parts of the programmes and the socio-political contexts.

vii) The CSI Kanyakumari diocese exists in a multi-faith context and the research would be an attempt to encourage the organisers and promoters of the training programmes to join hands with other faiths and non governmental organisations in working together towards social transformation in India today.

7.2.2 Future research work in the area of the study

Further research work, for example, with the following projects could be undertaken concerning socio-political factors and the training programmes:

i) Follow up studies could be done for all the different components of the training programmes and their connections to socio-political factors in the diocese and beyond.

ii) A follow up study could be conducted concerning one or more of the most crucial issues in CSI Kanyakumari district today to ascertain how the components of the programmes relate to it.

iii) The researcher hoped that it would be a fruitful study to detect which socio-political factors would have been integrated suitably into particular training programmes. Research could still explore differences in the priorities of the training programmes to

relate to specific socio-political issues.

iv) It would be recommended that further research could be undertaken to discover how the different categories of members of the diocese and other members of society comprehend the South Indian socio-political factors today. Moreover, the relevance of the programmes for their lives and their effects on the participants could be explored.

v) Study could be done regarding whether or not, how and why the different categories of members of the diocese and the society differed if they integrated their socio-political factors into their training programmes. This would assist scholars to determine the relationship between the categories of trainees and the socio-political factors.

vi) Follow up studies could be attempted concerning the relationship between training programmes and socio-political factors in a changed context, for example, in another diocese in the Church of South India, or in North India, or even in the northern hemisphere, or even in different church denominations, for example, in the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church, or the Evangelical Church of India.

vii) Many socio-political issues seriously affect the sub-continent of India, and social transformation would be the cry of the day in different places. Jointly, therefore, the church and non-governmental organisations could attempt follow up studies of socio-political factors and training programmes in India today towards clear training guidelines.

viii) As India is a pluralistic society, follow-up studies concerning the training of different churches could be conducted, as well as together with the training programmes of other religious faiths, focusing on socio-political factors and contexts today.

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APPENDIX-1

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

i) The overall questions

The following questions were asked to the various parties who constituted the training programmes in CSI Kanyakumari diocese:

1. What are the major aspects of your training programme?
2. What are the socio-political factors and the issues in Kanyakumari today?
3. How important is it to relate the different aspects of your programme to the sociopolitical factors? (Note: Cite illustrations from your experience for questions 4 -7).
4. Briefly describe your view of theology (Is it pietistic, contextual or intermediate?). Why is that particular view so important to your training?
5. What is your outlook of church?
6. What is your perspective of society?
7. What is your view of God's mission?

ii) Questions specific to each aspect of the training programme

1. Organisers and sociopolitical issues.

- 1.1 Kindly cite a situation where you tried to address your sociopolitical factors.
- 1.2 List and describe briefly some of your reflections on sociopolitical issues (eg. poems, articles and books).
- 1.3 How far did you consider the sociopolitical backgrounds of your staffs when you recruited them?
- 1.4 Kindly cite an event where you attempted to address your sociopolitical factors, together with your tutors, writers of study materials, and students.
- 1.5 Mention two of the recent staff development programmes that you had; explain how far were they helpful to you in addressing your sociopolitical issues.
- 1.6 Name and describe a few social or human rights organisations, or cooperatives

- where you /your staff participated regularly.
- 1.7 What is 'social analysis'? Did you get involve in it? If yes, say why and how often. If no, say why not.
 - 1.8 Do you, and your staff prefer to live with your students in your society? If yes, explain why; if no, explain why not?

2. Objective of the training programme, and the sociopolitical issues.

- 2.1 What is the objective of your training programme?
- 2.2 How far do you find your objective relevant to your sociopolitical context?
- 2.3 What resources and methods do you implement in your training programme so as to attain your objective?
- 2.4 What follow-ups do you make to accomplish your objective?
- 2.5 Which areas of development/learning in your student (For instance, imagination, feelings, commitments, values, or knowledge, skills and attitudes of students) do you aim to influence, by the objective of your programme?
- 2.6 To whom, and in what ways, do you introduce/explain the objective of your programme?
- 2.7 In what ways the different parties of your programme helped you in designing your objective?
- 2.8 In what ways the different parties of your programme help you in realising your objective?
- 2.9. Is your objective related to people of other religious faiths? If yes, say, why is that important? If not, why not?

3. Curriculum and sociopolitical factors

- 3.1 In what ways, and how often do you include social analysis and social actions in your curriculum?
- 3.2 What place did you give for the socio-biographies and experience of students in your curriculum?
- 3.3 What were the sociopolitical backgrounds of the consultants who assisted you in designing your curriculum?

- 3.4 What orientation/refresher courses do you offer your tutors, focusing on socially oriented Christology?
- 3.5 What opportunities do you provide in your curriculum for students to relate and balance their reflections with relevant sociopolitical actions?
- 3.6 Who are the parties (For example, tutors, writers, students etc) that participated in developing your curriculum?
- 3.7 What place do you give for students' gifts, talents, callings, characteristics and dreams/visions in your curriculum?
- 3.8 How do children/youth/ adults learn? How do you meet their needs for learning?
- 3.9 What opportunities did you provide in your curriculum for students to develop critical thinking?
- 3.10 What opportunities did you provide in your curriculum to promote the problem solving skills of students?
- 3.11 In what ways did you accommodate open elements like wide choice of electives for students, in your curriculum?
- 3.12 Describe the features/qualities of the assignments that you offered to your students.
- 3.13 What are the essential foci of your curriculum? What are the hidden foci?
- 3.14 What mechanisms/provisions do you have in your curriculum to sustain the balance between action and reflection?
- 3.15 Is accreditation important for training programmes? If yes, what requirements related to the sociopolitical factors were met while designing the curriculum?
(Sample materials related to the above said questions were examined, to ascertain what degrees are they related to the sociopolitical contexts).

4. Resources and sociopolitical factors.

- 4.1 What external /physical environment do you recommend to your students?
- 4.2 What internal /mental environment do you recommend to your students?
- 4.3 How far could you include the resource of dialogue in your training programmes?
In what ways could you relate the resource of dialogue to sociopolitical factors?

- 4.4 How far could you utilise the mass media in your programme, relating such programmes to socio-political factors? (Comment on the possibilities, affordability and limitations of those media).
- 4.5 Does it make any difference if your resource people know the life situations of your students? If yes, say, how? If no, say why not?
- 4.6 What programmes of upgrading training could you offer your organisers, course designers, writers, tutors and other resource people in the areas of knowledge, attitudes and skills and in relating them to sociopolitical factors?
- 4.7 How do you view the sociopolitical factors/contexts within the biblical texts? Do you approach them as matters of a community and sociopolitical structures, or do you view them as affairs of individuals or do you see them as both the affairs of individuals and the community? Give your reasons.
- 4.8 Do you expect your resource people to set role models for your students? If yes, say how. If no, why not?
- 4.9 Do you find it as contributory resource to encourage your students to have living experience with the victims of the current sociopolitical issues and get involve in their sufferings and hopes? If yes, explain how. If no, kindly explain why not.
- 4.10 How far could you work with the committees of your local parish, for instance, to organise the social analysis and arrange the relevant resources?
- 4.11 How far could you accommodate the views and experiences of people of other faiths, when relating your programme and its resources to sociopolitical issues?

5. Study materials and sociopolitical factors

- 5.1 Describe briefly on how your study materials suit the reading levels of students, especially to relate to their sociopolitical factors.
- 5.2 How do you react to the challenge of the members of CSI Kanyakumari diocese who lost interest and ability in reading, day after day?
- 5.3 Describe briefly on how your study materials build human interest and talk with the students. (The lay out and appearance will be examined to see if they are contextual and catchy).
- 5.4 In what ways are your teachers' guides and teaching aids creative and relevant to

- the sociopolitical contexts?
- 5.5 What adjunct materials are integrated with your study materials, and how far are they relevant to the sociopolitical context where your programme is based?
 - 5.6 Explain the essential foci of your assignments. In what ways do they lead students to social actions and reflections on sociopolitical factors?
 - 5.7 To what extent could you use simple cartoons, diagrams and pictures from news papers in the study materials, highlighting the sociopolitical issues affecting the students?
 - 5.8 How often could you organise workshops for the writers of your study materials, enabling them to be updated with the sociopolitical factors?
 - 5.9 What proportion of your materials present case studies and life illustrations that engage students in lively discussions on the causes and consequences of their alarming sociopolitical issues?
 - 5.10 To what extent do you give priorities in your study materials to present the plight of the disadvantaged groups in Kanyakumari district and advocate their rights?
 - 5.11 What possibilities do you keep in your study materials for your students to articulate and fill blanks with their own views on each topics of study, find answers to riddles and color illustrative pictures relating to sociopolitical factors?
 - 5.12 What practically possible responses do you encourage your students to attempt, right after presenting the sociopolitical issues?
 - 5.13 How far do include the socio-biographies of biblical characters of both good and bad examples in your study materials? Are they helpful? If yes, how? If no, why not?
 - 5.14 Do you find it beneficial to review the translations and interpretations of the Bible used, and evaluate the views expressed in the study materials? If yes, say how? If no, why not?
 - 5.15 Is it conducive to examine if the study materials reflect a spirit of fundamentalism and ‘male-domination’ and be watchful to avoid them? If yes, explain how. If no, give your reasons.
 - 5.16 What mechanisms (for instance, an Academic Committee and Writers’ Forum) have you set up to sustain the study materials updated with the changing sociopolitical issues?

- 5.17 Do you supply students with study materials in between retreats and workshops? If yes, say why you do so. If no, say why not.
- 5.18 In what areas of your work, and how could you work in co-operation and partnership with Non Governmental Organisations and Social Action Groups?
- 5.19 To what extent do you find it utilitarian to have the pastors who were trained in exegetical approach in Bible study to work hand in glove with the lay leaders who are familiar with sociopolitical factors and social analysis?
- 5.20 How do you balance the economic position of your programme, and the production of study materials, in the light of the sociopolitical factors?

6. The accessibility of the programmes and sociopolitical factors

- 6.1 Is your training programme geographically accessible? If yes, explain how. If not, say why not.
- 6.2 What arrangements do you make for the parishioners/students who live in far-flung areas to get access to your programmes?
- 6.3 To what extent is your programme economically accessible?
- 6.4 To what extent does your programme cater the subtle factors of accessibility (For instance, helping to overcome the barriers of caste, creed, race and gender)?
- 6.5 To what degrees do you consider the academic levels of your students?
- 6.6 To what extent do you consider the culture and language of students in order to make your programme more accessible to them?
- 6.7 What importance do you give to assignments and field works to students?
- 6.8 What study methods and styles of meetings of students do you try in your training programme?
- 6.9 Do you believe that it is helpful, if the CSI Kanyakumari diocese officially recognise your training programme as a ministry of priority? If yes, mention your reasons. If not, say why not.
- 6.10 How beneficial is it to organise a programme of orientation for your tutors on various ways of relating the different aspects of their training programmes to their sociopolitical issues?
- 6.11 What efforts are you making to decentralise your programmes?

6.12 Was recruiting members of the diocese with common interest as your target-group helpful to relate to socio-political factors? If yes, say how. If no, explain why not.

7. The feedbacks and the sociopolitical factors.

7.1 Which constituent parties of your programme participate in giving feedbacks and acting in response to them?

7.2 At which stage of the learning process/course do you collect and react to your feedback?

7.3 How far the feedbacks relate to the problems of the various participants of a programme, and create motivations in students to improve their training?

7.4 How and how often do you receive responsive feedbacks during the learning process?

7.5 How do you collect and react to the summative feedbacks, at the end of each course of study?

7.6 How helpful is it to ask consultants/committees to receive and act in response to feedbacks?

7.7 How beneficial it is to ask others in the community to give feedback on the impact of your programme on them their sociopolitical contexts, and react to them?

7.8 How profitable it is for the organisers, tutors and students of the training programmes sit together as well as separately, at the close of every session/semester of learning, to receive feedbacks from one another?

7.9 Is it helpful to focus your feedbacks on objectives and hypotheses that are set in your programme? If yes, say how. If, no, why not?

7.10 Is it utilitarian to set up a specific time and mechanism with set agenda to organise the receiving and responding of feedbacks during the course of training? If yes, say how. If no kindly give your reasons.

7.11 How do you go about the casual feedbacks in your committee meetings?

7.12 Describe some of the changes that you introduced in your training programme to relate to socio-political factors?

7.13 How often do you orientate your staff and students on the benefits of feedbacks?

- 7.14 How sensitive are your organisers to feedbacks, how alert are they to discover their implications to sociopolitical factors and prepared to be reactive to them?
- 7.15 To what extent do you nurture the values of honesty and nourishment in the various parties of your programme?
- 7.16 How far do you receive and act in response to feedback related to impact of your programme on people of other religious faiths and the community workers?
- 7.17 Describe briefly on the measures you take to carry on a regular and systematic practice of relating the different aspects of training (for instance, aims, the curriculum, resources) to the current sociopolitical issues.

8. Students, training programmes and the sociopolitical factors

- 8.1 How do you accommodate the needs, interests, problems and gifts/talents of students in your training?
- 8.2 In what ways do you enable your students to relate to their sociopolitical issues.
- 8.3 Explain how far you could be open to questions and answers of staff/students, encourage their genuine expressions and accept their feelings, especially in addressing their sociopolitical factors.
- 8.4 What measures do you take to address the emotional, physical and vocational problems of students?
- 8.5 What efforts do you take to develop students' skills and the habits of learning?
- 8.6 In what ways do you help your students to utilise their background and experiences in their training?
- 8.7 To what extent can the families and friends of students support students in relating their training to their daily sociopolitical factors?
- 8.8 Do you expect your students to be aware that the existing 'culture of silence' and the 'paternalistic dominance of a family system' in South India today affect the training of the members of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese? If yes, why? If not, say why not.
- 8.9 In your opinion, do the students relate the study to their sociopolitical factors, largely based on their sociopolitical backgrounds like age, gender, caste and creed? If yes, give your reasons. If not, explain why not.

- 8.10 How beneficial is it to co-ordinate your programme at different levels?
- 8.11 How often do you offer seminars and workshops to your students around themes related to their contemporary sociopolitical issues?
- 8.12 What are the different approaches you undertake to inspire and encourage your students to appreciate and utilise their talents and skills to reflect and act in response to the sociopolitical issues?
- 8.13 In what ways, do you lead students to get involve in life- long training?
- 8.14 Do you enable students to discover and appreciate themselves as resources of learning? If yes, describe how you do this. If no, say why not.
- 8.15 How far do you encourage your students for role-plays and group discussions?
- 8.16 How do you motivate students to participate in the designing of your curriculum?
- 8.17 In what ways do you motivate your students and guide them in their study?
- 8.18 What practical work/assignments do you arrange for your students to relate to students' sociopolitical contexts?
- 8.19 In what ways do you encourage your students to do social analysis, and follow up their findings from it with planned acts that address contemporary sociopolitical issues?

APPENDIX-2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CSI KANYAKUMARI DIOCESE

The researcher consulted chiefly the primary sources like the Reports of Boards and the minutes of the committees, preserved in the diocesan office to get to know the following significant historical backgrounds of the development of the CSI Kanyakumari diocese and some of the training programmes. He relied mainly on this information; there were no published books yet on this area of study. The magazine of the diocese, 'Desopakari' was also made use of, wherever needed.

i) The original religious beliefs in Kanyakumari:

The inhabitants in Kanyakumari originally practiced Dravidian (that is, non-Brahmin) religions and worshipped inferior deities, spirits, burial grounds, big buildings and gigantic trees that caused accidents and misfortunes. After the growth of the Church in India, people gradually developed faith in one God and began to be critique of the socio-political factors and issues.

ii) The historical foundations of the CSI:

Long before the dawn of the 20th century the seed for the union was sown by the theology of unity in the hearts and minds of many missionaries. The emerging Indian nationalism too exerted its profound influence upon Indian Christians. Moreover, there were historic causes that effected the gradual formation of the CSI; for instance, the spread of western education, the growth of self-reliance, economic status, and the growing strong urge for a united Indian Christian Community, unhampered by denominational differences.

iii) The three principles of self-reliance:

Since the formation, CSI promoted the threefold principle of self-support, self-government and self-propagation. To some degrees, these principles continue to challenge the CSI to respond to the socio-political factors.

iv) Some areas of development of church and socio-political challenges:

The South Travancore diocese had Tamil and Malayalam speaking people. Its bi-lingual composition created administrative difficulties. Worship books, official magazines, and resolutions and minutes had to be printed in both the languages. Although the diocesan office was located in the Malayalam speaking area, most of the responsibilities were held by the Tamil speaking people.

The 126th anniversary of the Medical Mission was celebrated in 1963. In 1964, a tuberculosis hospital was opened in Alancode, and the Inter National Cancer Centre and Research Institute, at Neyyoor. The first school for the deaf and dumb was established in 1965. The WF of the diocese made initial efforts to open a blind school in Irenepuram in 1969. Responding to the socio-political issues affecting the hill-tribe people in the mountainous areas within the State of Chennai, the Diocesan Missionary Prayer Band was started. Further, a college for women was opened in 1973.

In response to the religious conflicts, the CSI Kanyakumari diocese set up a Board of Mission. In 1974 five Children's Homes and a few social welfare projects centres were also started. Moreover, a weaving centre, embroidery and a printing press to train the deaf were also added. Day care centres were started in various villages. Some houses for the homeless were built. The Human Welfare Centre started in 1989 to train the youth for entrance examination and for competitive examinations leading to vocations. There grows concern to the poor in the diocese in the recent years. The mission and Evangelism of the diocese is done by the Home Missionary Society and the Diocesan Missionary Prayer Band. They plant and grow churches grow to a standard, and hand them over to the dioceses. So far, 58 churches have been thus added to the diocese.

v) City-centred development:

The CSI Kanyakumari diocese produces many graduates every year. But there is less job opportunities. Some run schools as a profit-making business; they offer teachers low salaries with heavy workload. So, teachers leave the district seeking better salaries. Moreover, since schools are opened day after day, there are very few pupils in schools.

The number of staffs is gradually reduced and at times schools are even closed down. Moreover, many factories are based in big cities outside Kanyakumari district. Again, the existing cottage industries could not compete with the Multi-national Corporations aided by the policies of the government. People lose buying power, lose interest in production and become jobless. Besides, in cities, slum settlement is a vicious circle causing crises: a lack of formal land markets means makeshift housing without security of tenure, which in turn makes it difficult for the State to tax or draw revenue from such land; this in turn hampers the delivery of basic services such as water, road maintenance and education. The precarious nature of the settlements further means that inhabitants are easy victims for various forms of extortion and that they have little incentive to invest in their lodgings. Nor can they use their lodgings as collateral to finance of small businesses or other ventures.
