

6.1 Foundation for Communication Theology

Aim

- To establish the importance and place of communication theology in the whole theological formation.
- To discover the relationship between communication theology and other disciplines of theology.

Materials Required

- A pen and Notebook/Papers

Input

• Presentation/discussion.

Overview of Theological disciplines and their relation to Communication.

A. The main theological disciplines:

• **1. Biblical Theology:** It outlines the ways, meaning and God's communication in scripture. We study here the modes of communication as presented by the biblical authors and books. The various divisions of the Bible for theological studies are of concern here. They are the Pentateuch, Deuteronomical/Historical Books, Prophetic Literature, Wisdom Literature, The Gospels, Pauline and Johannine Literature.

• In biblical studies, we also consider the scripture of other religions and cultures that influenced both the Jewish and Christian scriptures. This resulted mostly from the intercultural communication that existed between them. This is taken up in detail in the next two lessons which deal with God's communication in the O.T. and in Jesus Christ.

• **2. Systematic Theology:** Concerns the study of the contents and forms of God's communication in and through the Church. Themes studied here are Christology, Trinity, Ecclesiology, Creation, Eschatology and Grace. Each of these theological disciplines demonstrate our understanding and response to God's revelation in Christ and how we have organised this revelation into a body of studies. We examine this closely as we take a look at the models of the Church and their impact on communication in Chapter 5.7 of this course.

• **3. Fundamental Moral Theology:** we study God's communication of human behaviour and norms for individual and social living. Of particular concern are divine law, natural law and human law. We also look at human behaviour in response to God's communication in the area of sexuality, marriage and in society at large, because Man is created social and finds fulfilment only in relation with others.

• **4. Liturgical Theology:** This is the communicative expression of prayer and worship and communion with God. Here we study the sacraments and all the sacramental actions of the minister and the faithful. We look at the communication dimension of each of the sacraments, the symbols, the signs and gestures and their meaning. Liturgy as a medium of communication is part of the subject matter of Chapter 5.7.

• **5. Pastoral Theology:** This is the study of the ways and means of communicating in the care of God's people. This involves pastoral counselling/psychology, homiletics and canon law. Pastoral theology is the core and concern of communication theology, for we learn communication theology in order to be effective in the pastoral care of those who will be under our care. Our theological formation will be a waste if at the end we cannot communicate effectively to our church members.

• **6. Catechetical Theology:** This is the process of initiating into and nourishing the Christian faith of those who accept Christ and become part of the Christian community. Of particular importance here is the study of the RCIA, which was recommended by Vatican Council II as the norm of catechesis.

• **7. Mission Theology:** This concerns the means and ways of God's communication to those who are not yet members of the Church. The Church which is seen as entrusted with a mandate of evangelization has to proclaim the good news of the kingdom. She can only do so through an effective communication medium which takes the need and situation of the people into consideration. Thus communication theology here is the mode by which the mission of the church can be carried out. We look at the various

paradigms in the missionary life of the church and the mode and emphasis of communication, as well as the message of each paradigm.

B. Basis of Communication Theology

Communication theology is based on the following:

1. Interpretation of revelation, faith and grace as means of communication
2. A vision of human beings as beings-in-communication, capable of communicating among themselves and with the transcendent.
3. A better awareness of the cultural-symbolic aspect of human life-symbolic communication, cultural manifestations as symbolic expressions
4. A perception of the new cultural industry - the power of manipulation and persuasion of the media

C. Theological formation and communication

The following are the prevailing attitudes:

- i) Isolation: There is no formal training in communications or it is seen as an extracurricular activity.
- ii) Compartmentalisation: As much as it is seen as useful and important, it is not included in theological formation, but offered as electives.
- iii) Collaboration: There is awareness and synergy, whereby individuals/departments collaborate in a common effort for communication.
- iv) Integration: Communication is seen as the 'heart of the church' and therefore an integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum for theological formation is pursued.

The new clarion call is to arrive at integration by offering further courses on communication, with practical-pastoral relevance. In the long run, a purely rationalist and academic approach in terms of theology as faith seeking understanding, should be set aside and a faith seeking meaning and relevance, built on narrative theology be practised.

Review

In this foundation we are looking at the various disciplines of theology in relation to communication.

- Biblical studies look at the communication mode in the books of the Bible as presented by God through the prophets and authors of the Bible and also the response of the people to this communication (revelation).
- Systematic theology helps us in organising God's communication (revelation) in and through the Church.
- Fundamental Moral theology is the area of living the communication of norms for human behaviour in society and in human social institutions such as marriage.
- Liturgical theology addresses the communication elements in prayer and worship as practised in the sacraments.
- Communication theology is the vehicle for carrying out pastoral theology.

Reflection

1. In which areas has communication been given a prominence in theological formation?

Relevant Skills

1. Should communication theology be given or seen as a distinct theological discipline or should it still remain integrated in other theological disciplines as presented above?
2. Discuss theology as faith seeking understanding (systematic) and faith seeking relevance (communication).

Reference

Eilers, Franz-Josef, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission: An Introduction to Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication* Bangalore Asian Trading Company, 2004.

Joseph Palakeel (ed), *Towards A Communication Theology* Bangalore, Asian Trading Corp, 2003.

