

IN ETERNAL LIFE

(Salvation of Mankind – A Study)

HG Dr Mathews Mar Severiose

Divyabodhanam Books Series 14

Statement

Dear ones,

By God's abundant grace, the first stage of Divyabodhanam program has concluded successfully. The preparation of ten books on our faith related topics itself is a good achievement.

The program that commenced only in 1984 had 49 centres associated with it. There were 130 women and 210 men who participated in this exercise. His Holiness Catholicose is distributing certificates on August 9, 1986 to those who have completed the course (10 subjects).

Now, we are coming to the second stage. Apart from accepting participants for the second batch of the preliminary stage, new courses are being formulated for those who have completed first stage.

The target for the second stage too is to deepen the knowledge of church members in their understanding of faith. This would be useful equally for parents and youth possessing basic education. This process is a basic requirement for all Sunday school teachers.

What is being looked forward to is ten thousands of members completing this course within the next few years resulting in an all-round progress in the faith centred life of our people. Let these books be instrumental in Holy Spirit to experience the love of God that is expressed with the God coming down as a human in Christ. Let there be showering of Blessings from the Almighty to all of you.

Kottayam,

July 2, 1986

Dr Paulose Mar Gregorioso, President, Divyabodhanam

From the Editor's Desk

PREFACE

“We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we know the true God. We live in union with the true God – in union with His son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and this is eternal life” (1 John 5:20). Let me light this humble lamp to the Divyabodhanam series so that we can move about in a renewed experience of life. The central point of discussion in this book is ‘redemption of mankind’. This contains the history of man who grows in eternity experiencing divine redemption right from the genesis of mankind. I have tried my best to avoid confusions while discussing topics of theology, but there may be still something left out. Based on the view points of Eastern Orthodox Churches in general, an attempt is being made here to have a quick look into the worshipping and theological traditions of Indian Orthodox Church. In a small volume like this, an in depth analysis on Christian thoughts on redemptive theology may not be possible; hence what is covered here is more in the nature of a preface to the vast and wide subject. In our growth to eternity, the creeds of Christian faith are borderlines very often and hence, their historical relevance too is discussed.

I am indebted to the teachers of our Theological Seminary , in particular, to L/L HG Dr Paulose Mar Gregoriose who has initiated me to the path of theological thought processes right from my formative years and his theological thoughts have influenced me a lot; I remember them with my most sincere thanks and gratitude. Respected Fr Dr T J Joshua and Fr CC Cherian have been inspiring me and encouraging me in this humble attempt and I am thankful to both of them as also to Fr Dr Jacob Kurian who has been going through the manuscript and offering invaluable suggestions. Let me express my thanks to Fr Jacob Matthew who has really helped in making necessary modifications to the text. I am also thankful to the teachers of the Seminary with utmost heartfelt sincerity. Let me submit this small offering to the students of Divyabodhanam programme.

Mathews Mar Severiose Metropolitan

15 – 09 – 2005

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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After being Assistant Metropolitan for Kottayam and Idukki Diocese immediately on being ordained as Episcopa in 1991, took over as Metropolitan of Kandanad Diocese in 1993. His Grace has worked as Convenor of MOC Publications and General Secretary of Priests' Association. His Grace is active with philanthropic services such as Pratyasha, Pratheeksha, Prashanthi, Good Samaritan, Prathibha Job Training Centre, Asha Bhavan, Karunalayam, Sneha Bhavan at Mysore, Balika Bhavan at Manjapra and Vadavukodu. As Syriac Malpan, Preacher and writer, His Grace is well known, apart from serving as a Professor of Theology at the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam.

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Unit 1

Man and Redemption

Lesson 1

Genesis of Man, Nature and Basic status

Genesis of man # Genesis of man and unity of mankind # Basic nature of man

An attempt is being made here to explain the genesis of man, his nature and his basic status in relation to the likeness between man and God as presented in Holy Bible and as illustrated through the faith of the Church but not connected with anthropological inferences. Man is the crown of God's creations. Apart from that, he is chosen for a personal care from God. Though the revelations from God are not exclusively meant for man alone, man is mostly considered in them. The stress in Christian view point is that man is created to live in fellowship with God. But, by and large, man has been denying this privilege everywhere, which is something that has to be looked into.

Genesis of man:

Biblical tradition:

We see two narrations in the Bible regarding the creation of man in Genesis 1: 26, 27 and 2: 7; 21 – 23. Two different traditions prevailed then would have been linked together by the author with some specific purpose. In Genesis 1: 1 – 2: 3, the order in which creations took place are recorded; however, Genesis 2: 4 – 25 narrates how all the creations are orderly placed in relation to man. This indicates how man has become the crown of all creations and how his history commences.

What are the peculiarities the creation of man has when compared to creations of other living beings? Some such peculiarities are briefed below:

- a. There was a sacred divine plan only before the creation of man; we read, "And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us" (Genesis 1: 26).
- b. "So God created human beings" (Genesis 1:27). God created the sky, the earth and the water and through them, created plants and trees and living beings in land and water. Though man was created with soil from earth, God did not ask earth to make man. Man was given His nature and image not through any other created beings. In order that he is a living soul, God directly blew breath of life into his nostrils (Gen. 2:7).

- c. Man alone was created in the image of God. Fishes, animals and birds were created in their own respective images (Gen. 1:25); man alone was created in God's image (Gen. 1: 26, 17). This is the peculiarity of man among all creations.
- d. The two fold facets of man were brought out. The man who was made with soil from earth became a living being only when the breath of life was blown into his nostrils by God (Gen2:7). Thus the facets soul and body of the essence of man was revealed (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 10:28; Luke 8:55; 2 Cor. 5: 1 – 8; Philipians 1: 22 – 24; Hebrews 12:9).
- e. Man was placed honourably at the pinnacle of creations. Man considered it his responsibility and right to rule over all other creations as their steward and thereby to glorify the Creator (Gen. 1:28; Psalms 8: 4 – 9).

Darwin's theory of evolution:

Lower level living beings underwent physical changes over lengthy period of time as natural phenomena and man is proposed as the end result of such evolution; and a chimpanzee like monkey was the immediate ancestor of man as theorised by Darwin. The base of this theory is that there is a close relation of continuity between mankind and animal beings. Considering that there is continuity in this natural phenomenon, it has to be accepted that there would be an inherent power that controls this evolutionary processes.

What is the Christian view point on this theory?

This theory is exactly opposite to Biblical truths. Man is a special creation of God and that too a direct creation. God used the dust from the earth to make man (Gen. 2:7). "You were made from soil and you will become soil again" (Gen. 3:19; Eccl. 3: 19, 20). "And the flesh of living beings is not all the same kind of flesh; human beings have one kind of flesh, animals another, birds another and fish another" (1 Cor. 15: 39). "God's Spirit made me and gave me life" (Job 33:4). Man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1: 26, 27). In short, man is different from all other beings intellectually and ethically and rules over other beings (Psalms 8: 5 – 8). In other words, man has not been formulated at a high pedestal in proportion to the intellect or spirituality or ethics of other beings lower than him.

Again, there is no firm basis founded on the structured theoretical findings in the evolution theory. As such this theory survives more on imaginary propositions. Though a group of scientists are in agreement to Darwin's theory, majority are found reluctant to fall in line with this. Modern anatomical scientists hold the view that genetic traditions are the real cause to show the true similarities and not the likeness in structural or embryo stages. But the common men have a feeling that Darwin's theory is the final word on genesis of mankind as concurred by the scientific world. What the scientific community has in their mind about this theory is that this is a proposition of a scientist and nothing more. Not only that, there are scientific inferences showing dissent to what has been proposed by Darwin.

Genesis of man and unity of mankind:

- a. Biblical evidences: The whole mankind originated from Adam and Eve. In particular, the union of mankind is seen in the earlier chapters of the Book of Genesis up to the great flood during the time of Noah. St Paul has stated addressing the Areopagus, "From one man, he

created all the races of mankind and made them live throughout the whole earth” (Acts 17:26). It is based on this union, St Paul establishes that the whole mankind became subjected to death just because of the sin of Adam (Rom. 5: 12 – 21; 1 Cor. 15: 21, 22). What is meant here is that each individual has in him the entire basic features of the nature of man. We realise the wholeness of man here.

- b. From Natural Sciences: The ancient Greeks who did not believe in Biblical evidences used to propagate a Spontaneous Generation theory about the genesis of mankind. As they could not substantiate this theory with relevant basics, it was not found acceptable. The history of man migrating to different locations would be indicative of an exodus from a common centre somewhere. The study about languages of mankind also point out to a common centre of origin. Modern researches on languages have arrived at inferences that a basic structure of Indo German languages are seen in Sanskrit and that Indo European languages and Semitic languages are seen linked to Egyptian languages. Further, the soul of all men possess basically the same emotional feelings and desires and their wishes and instincts have commonalities leading one to conclude that there has been a union among the whole mankind. Natural Sciences may not say with any authenticity that the genesis of mankind has been from Adam and Eve, but it has been proved there that the mankind definitely has common characteristics indicating that mankind is a common race.

Basic nature of man:

Facets of the nature of man:

In the Christian view, man has body and soul and this is called dichotomy. There is yet another Christian view that man has body, soul and spirit. This is called trichotomy. Trichotomy has originated from Greek thoughts. As such, this thought was prominent with Eastern Church fathers, particularly, the fathers from the Church of Alexandria. The psychology of St Augustine who lived in 4th century was the basis for dichotomy. This had its roots deep during the middle age theoretical studies and had no variations even with the reformation. Even the Holy Bible has thoughts of dichotomy throughout, but there are two instances affirming trichotomy beyond all doubts (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). However, as we have body and soul two distinctively separate facets, soul and spirit are not meant to be separate facets (Rom. 8:10; 1 Cor. 5:5, 7:34; 2 Cor. 7: 1; Heb. 2:3; Col. 2:5); they are two different representations of facets possessing similar characteristics. Both are seen in spiritual contexts.

The Spirit in man indicates the spiritual facet of man’s nature. This is a gift of God (Gen. 2:7). That happens to be the centre which controls all deeds of his body and life. Soul is a similar term to indicate the human talents one possesses. This is created in him along with the creation of his body. As such the term soul is used in Bible to indicate a person (Psalms 42: 1, 2; 104:1; 84:2; 146:1; Isaiah 42:1). Soul is presented as the residence of human emotions such as compassion, mercy, affection, love and joy. In short, we can say that man has a Spirit in him which stays with his soul. This matches the conceptualization that man is material and spiritual.

Body and Spirit:

The personality of a man rests with the union of his body and Spirit. Human body is the dwelling place of its Spirit also (2 Cor. 5:1 – 4: 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). Christian Church never teaches that body is

evil or the body keeps Spirit and soul imprisoned within it. Anything material or mental or spiritual are all logically compiled within man. There is an ontological union of all these facets in man. Spirituality and materialism are joined in man in perfect unison. Jesus and his apostles have been talking about this fullness of personality. Soul and Spirit are expressed through body. This fullness of a person is the foundation of the Christian view of mankind.

The superiority of body:

New Testament values the glorified nature of human body. The first and foremost aspect of this superiority is that God became man through human body (John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16). The body is superior because the absence of sin within Jesus reveals that in its essence, there is no sin in human body (Heb. 4:15). Jesus too underwent the bodily life in this world (Luke 7:33). He healed the illness of body; he accepted all reasonable bodily deeds including marriage (Matthew 19). Through his resurrection, Jesus revealed that human body would resurrect and has the possibility of wearing the divine glory (Philippians 3:20; 1 Cor. 15:53).

Origin of soul in man:

We have seen that the spiritual facets in man are expressed with the terms Spirit and soul. God gives them to man like body. Regarding the origin of soul and Spirit in man, there is no information provided by Holy Bible except the story of Adam. Theologians have different stands on this issue. But, the thought that along with the creation of body, God provides Spirit and soul also carries more weight than other view points. Soul, though is a creation of God, grows with the embryo through the body of parents. Spirit is a free gift of God to man. Thus man is incomplete without body, soul and Spirit. As such, at the time of resurrection, body, soul and Spirit unifies and man's redemption is completed.

Questions:

1. Explain the Biblical evidence about the origin of mankind.
2. What is your opinion on the evolution theory of Darwin?
3. What are the facets of human nature? Explain their origin and relevance.

Lesson 2

Image of God in Man

Participation with God # Participation and Identification # Trinitarian Image of God # Image and Likeness # Basic factors of Image of God # Relevance of Image of God in Man

“So God created human beings, making them to be like Himself. He created them male and female” (Gen. 1:27). The special feature of man differentiating him from other beings is that he is made in God's image. As such, the most reliable among Jewish texts 'Talmud' says that man is the nobility of God's creations. Irenios, the early Church father also has stated, 'the living man is the nobility of God's creations'. As the centre and the crown of all creations of God, man possesses the enviable position in the universe because of the reality that he is made in God's image.

Participation with God:

God is Spirit and therefore, we have to understand the image of God in man in a spiritual dimension. St Coorilose of Alexandria has taught about the six facets of God's image in man namely freedom, hegemony, kinship, holiness, discretionary power and incorruptibility. In short, those characteristics making up the person of man different from other living beings are meant to be image of God. We live in God and move with God (Acts 17:28); we keep relation with Him and we remain in communion with Him; these are the key teachings of Eastern traditions. St Athanasius of Alexandria has proclaimed that God became man that man would become like God; His incarnation was to make us part and parcel of His nature. This participation is not confined to the essence of God alone, but a participation of all His Goodness in fullness thereof. This indeed, is a specific right of man.

Participation and Identification:

As man is the image of God, he is part and parcel of the nature of God. This is his birthright. This participation shall not be misunderstood with the concept of identification prevailing in Hindu philosophical thoughts. According to Shankaracharya, the ultimate goal is the identification of living soul of man with the supreme spirit. However, Christian view doesn't envisage the vanishing of human personality by identification with the Spirit of God. The ultimate goal of the created man is not to transform to the divine essence of the creator God, but to attain nature of God. God always stands at a high pedestal. But His presence in man is not similar to His presence in other creations. In man, He is reflected through His image. All other beings were created by the word of God, but man was created through his special deeds and in His image. Soul was placed in man by blowing into his nostrils and thus gave him life. Thus, in His image, God, the Spirit, dwelled in man who was flesh. Though God dwells in man in such a manner, man is not the same in essence with the Omnipotent God. This in born presence of God in man is not static; this presence may increase or decrease based on how the spirit of man accepts the presence or rejects it.

Trinitarian Image of God:

"And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us" (Gen. 1:26). Greek theological teachings enlighten that this plurality of narration has been indicative of Holy Trinity based on the revelation of Christ in New Testament and thus, the image of God in man and the likeness in him is the image and likeness of Holy Trinity. Early Church fathers such as Tatian, Tertullian, and St Athanasius of Alexandria have affirmatively taught that man is created in the likeness of Father and Son, but what is really meant here is the very same image and likeness of God. As such, it would be quite logical to say that man is created in the image and likeness of Trinitarian God rather than in the image of the different persons in Holy Trinity. The divine personality reflects wholeness of fellowship. Likewise, likeness of Trinity is indicative of man's personality longing for such fellowship of wholeness. All elements of goodness in man reveal the image of the essence of God in him. To illustrate the relation of love with all sorts of variations, it would be sufficient to say that he has the image of Trinitarian God in him.

Image and Likeness:

Image and likeness need not be expressed as two separate facets. They are basically synonyms of the same subject. Eastern theologians have taught that Image of God is man's capability to live in

God in all virtues whereas likeness is the realisation of this capability. As such, they say that he acquires the image of God by birth, but he attains the likeness by his good deeds in his spiritual life. Origen and Irenaeus held this view. One may feel here that the image of God is an essence that is static. The absence of such dynamic character can be changed only by linking it with likeness of God. This makes one infer that till such time man's growth in the likeness of God commences, he would have only the image of God in him which would be remaining static. But we do not see such a difference in the explanations of Cappadocian fathers and Syrian fathers.

There are Biblical illustrations showing that the terms image of God and likeness of God have been used to express the same truth in different contexts (Gen. 1:26; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; James 3:9). Where both these terms are used, man is affirmed as the image of God in its wholeness.

Basic factors of Image of God:

Divine knowledge:

No one can understand God in His essence, but He can be comprehended through the reflection of His glory. For this, the image of God we have in us is helpful. Once that image is within us in its state of purity, divine knowledge becomes possible. We are led to divine knowledge through purity and not through theology. Once reflection of God is live in us we have purity of life. We understand God through this reflection caused by the image of God we possess.

One unified nature of mankind:

The organized nature of mankind is in fact the impact of its characteristic that the very same image of God is involved in all. This image of God doesn't have a gender difference because this is not seen as the eternal nature of man. Bible teaches that marital relations are not there in heaven (Matthew: 22: 23 – 32). Man is one. There are no different men. But in that one man and in that single mankind, there are different individuals. It is here, we see the relevance of the unified nature of mankind. Whatever God has assigned for man and acted for man are not for men of a certain era or a certain location. Whatever God has done is being enjoyed by that one man community. He possesses the image of God. Here, an individual doesn't have any significance. Man in his eternity, stands as a creation of God in the image of God. This eternal unified nature of man is enlightened by the truth that man possesses the image of Trinitarian God.

Life in the experience of freedom:

A significant nature of the image of God in man is the experience of living in freedom. The eternal experiences of this life of freedom involve absence of sexuality, incorruptibility and immortality. It also involves a spiritually instinctive nature. What is meant by the term freedom here is just not the absence of emotional feelings. On the other hand, what has to be understood is that all the facets of the image of God in man are sustained with no association with evil. This certainly has various levels which are physical, mental and internal. The freedom, God the creator possesses, is exactly this. That freedom of God is part and parcel of the wholeness of His might and goodness; being Spirit, this freedom in Him is invincible and eternal. The created angels also have this freedom; but their freedom is not of a wholesome nature because they are spiritual creations and hence they are unaware of any sort of earthly enjoyments. At the same time, this freedom in man is different and is noble among all creations. This freedom in man sustains the equilibrium when certain forces pull

men back to worldly desires while they strive to progress ahead to a world of spirituality. This is a lively scenario maintaining equilibrium, and not just a static situation staying away from any emotional feelings. Thus, man who is an intercessor between heaven and earth is unique and noble among all creations with this freedom.

Relevance of Image of God in Man:

- Man has to rule over creations. As God is Sovereign, so is man who is in the image of God. As such, in God's dominance over creations man too participates. But this sovereignty is not to exploit other creations as man chooses; instead, it is for proper stewardship abiding commands of ethics.
- Man has possibilities for all sorts of virtues. As such, the image of God in man can also be said to be 'the possibilities of all sorts of virtues'.
- God is love. Since man is the image of God, he reveals his love matching the divine love as his basic virtue. Wisdom, might and righteousness are all filled in him matching the image of God in him as droplets of goodness.
- In difference with animals, man doesn't have any natural weapons or protecting gears; this is not a shortfall. Instead, because of this, he is bound to expand his mental faculties to make it necessary for him to gain control over animals and all creations. Man has been successful to use his intellect to gain supremacy over his environments and make his own weapons or other equipments including his clothing, foot wears and so on.
- Man is one who stands and walks straight. This is indicative of a virtue of God's image in him. This shows his supreme authority over other creations. Likewise, his hands are free that he can make use of them to put into practice his knowledge. But animals have to use their hands to support their heads which are bent down. The use of hands by man is an indication of his positive character.
- Man has a mind; he has logic. This logic is one characteristic of the image of God he possesses. As God has mind and logic, likewise, man has artistic talents in him. But mind is not something that can be contained in brain or heart. That involves the whole person. A healthy body and an active mind express the purity of image of God.
- The mind of man acts through his senses. But we cannot ascertain its location; we cannot comprehend its nature. This indicates the incomprehensibility and invisibility. But as far as man is concerned, his body and soul have the same point of origin and they are mutually complementing.
- The ancient philosophic inference that man is a microcosm of this universe need not be ignored, but the fact that he has the image of God in him is a truth that has to be seen relevant; if so, he is not bound within this universe, but he is related to the universe. It is here we see the glory of man.

Questions:

1. What do you understand by the image of God in man?
2. What are the basic factors of the image of God in man?
3. Explain the significance of the image of God in man.

Lesson 3

Sin

Genesis of Sin # Sin, a reality # Adamic Sin # Scenario with the fall

Basically, sin is 'distancing from God'. As man has been distancing from God out of his free will, sin can also be said to be disobedience. This is not a facet of the nature of man. As one created in the image of God, man is expected to live in communion with God. Further, man is also the intercessor for creations and is the fulcrum connecting all creations with God. However, man chose to misuse this position and worked out ways and means to establish his will at the cost of the will of God; this paved way for trends of disharmony to come up in earth. Schism cropped up between man and God, man and man as also between man and universe. What we are discussing in this lesson are the historical developments behind such divisive trends.

Genesis of Sin:

God, the fullness of all virtues created man in His image and therefore the nature of man is not sinful. The purpose of God was to see that man grew in the nature of God firmly rooted in freedom, the basic facet of the image of God. Thus, the cause behind the genesis of sin is the misuse of this freedom by man placing himself as the centre of everything in place of God.

"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned"(Rom. 5:12). What is the meaning of this undeniable biblical witnessing? Adam, the first man ate the fruit which God had forbidden him not to eat and thus, sin was formed. The tree at the centre of Eden that was the tree of goodness and evil was not evil in itself; neither were the fruits from it because they were creations of God. Even, Eve did not eat the fruit thinking that it was evil. But it was forbidden by God. "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it" (Gen. 3: 6). This action is sin. In other words, we can see sin as something that is quite often hidden within goodness. Thus man misused his freedom against the command of God misrepresenting goodness; this is the first sin.

Sin is the misuse of free will; this is prompted neither by bodily desires nor by emotional excitements. Therefore, origin of sin is the freedom in man. His true nature is sinless. The Son of God has possessed this nature when he has become flesh and made his dwelling among us. He has been a man in its fullness, but has been sinless. As such the body and soul of man are not evil. There is just a possibility that they would be corrupted by misuse. In short, sin would not have originated, had there was no free will for man. But without free will, he would not have possessed the image of God.; he would not have been in communion with God based on love.

Sin, a reality:

It is a general principle accepted by most of the religions that only goodness has real existence at the end and that evil has no lasting value. But religions in this world those are not concerned about sin as a reality are very few. We have seen that sin is our accepting those virtues we feel good instead of what are truly good. Such wrong choice made by free will of man results in an existence for sin albeit temporarily. This can be said to be an illness of free will. Jesus Christ has taught us that sin that makes a man corrupt exists within him. As we are more concentrated in our thoughts rather than in our deeds, sin happens to be more of doing that is not to be done or not doing that is to be done than having a soul that is sick similar to a body that is unhealthy. Sin is the illness of man's soul; the symptom of this sickness of one's soul is the evil deeds one is engaged in.

St Paul led man to an insight on the reality of sin rather than searching for the origin of sin. His epistle to Romans discusses this topic seriously in chapter 7. We are made to understand the contradiction of man being encircled in evil though he is a creation in goodness. As man's nature is in submission to sin, he slips down to evil. But, this sin is an 'alien master' stewarding over man. Sin is not a part of his nature; had it been so, man would not have been held responsible for his deeds of evil. Man has his own freedom; he has his creativity. As such, he is subject to changes. The possibility of such changes makes man susceptible to sin. Mar Aphrem calls this feeling of change as the 'stripping of the robe of glory'. This is not confined to one's body alone, but to the wholeness of his person. There is no base in saying that our body is the main culprit in our person. On the other hand, body is a faithful servant of the soul and acts to the will or otherwise of the soul, the master. If the master is sick, so is the servant. Therefore, the annihilation of human nature commenced not in the body of man, but in his soul (Mark 7:21).

Consequences of Adamic sin:

Adam's sin is said to be the cause of our sin. "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 7:12).

What was the sin of Adam? In one word we can say, it is disobedience. Man was created with the dust outside Eden in the image of God into whom divine breath was blown and thus being a living being, God made him to work in the Garden of Eden and to take care of it. God expected that the will of God and the will of man would always be the same. Yet, God gave man a free will to act positive or negative to the will of God. Further, God fixed a criterion for him as a challenge to act in line with the will of God; this was in the form of a commandment: "But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Adam used his freedom and acted in his will opposing the will of God. Thus the will of man and will of God which were to be same always turned different. Using his freedom, man proclaimed, 'O God, your will is not mine'. And this is Adam's sin. This sin filled him and he ate the forbidden fruit as an external expression of the sin inside him. In other words, sin is the soul's choice against the will of God and soul is inseparably related to body. Sin originated in the soul of man internally and invisibly, which came to be expressed externally and visibly through bodily reactions. The resultant impact of these is that sin made its entry into this world.

So, what was the net result of the sin of Adam? A one word answer would be 'death'. "For when you eat of it, you will surely die". This proclamation was realised true. However, Biblical narrations witness that Adam lived many years after his sin. What does this mean? What happened consequent

to eating the forbidden fruit was not a sudden death to the body, but it was the judgment of death to body and soul. This is an experience of death in its ethical dimension. We can assimilate this in its true sense once we realise that death in its reality is alienation from God, the origin of life. They experienced that they were far away from God once they sinned against Him. The body and soul of Adam lived together in this world for some more time, but the separation of body from soul became a reality which Adam had to confront because of his sin; he experienced the material feeling of death where the dust returned to dust (Genesis 3:19).

The first experience of sin that man faced was the feeling of nudity and fear. He felt nudity because the holiness that covered him as an attire of light was stripped off, as generally interpreted by ancient Greek and Syrian Church fathers. God created man as male and female blessing them to multiply in numbers through procreation and rule over (Genesis 1:27, 28). God commanded the woman, "I will greatly increase your pains in child bearing; with pain, you will give birth to children; your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). He commanded Adam, "For dust you are and to dust, you will return" (Genesis 3:19). "He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever. So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken" (Genesis 3:22, 23).

The male – female gender difference and the ability for procreation were blessings God had given to man at the time man was created. But how God had planned the procreation before the fall of man could not be understood now; this is particularly so because there was no procreation before the fall. But certainly, the possibility of sexuality and procreation was there in man even before the fall. This should not be interpreted as an installed process to overcome death that would have occurred with the fall. If so, it would have led us to an inference that God had prepared man for the fall. As such, it would be better for us to accept logically that sexuality and procreation had attained a new dimension and nature consequent to the fall. Once he was made to feel this new change of his nature with the fall, he would have felt scared of God as well as felt a sense of nudity. These feelings of death, corruptibility and experiences of the transformed characteristics to human nature had been continuing with all the new creations in that lineage.

Scenario with the fall:

Wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). St Paul continues to write thus in Romans 5:12 – 21: many died of the sin of one; sin of one caused judgment ; sin of one caused death to rule; one's sin caused judgment to whole mankind; disobedience of one caused many to sin; sin was ruled by death.

Therefore, what we humans inherit from Adam is not the individual sin of Adam; instead, we inherit the consequence of that sin namely death and corruptibility. The sin of Adam doesn't pass on to his successive generations. Those who are born in mankind are facing death and corruptibility in relation to the fall; they have a possibility to sin like Adam and thus to get transformed as sinners. This is to be understood as a universal likelihood.

The nature of man that has been part of the fall in sin undergoes certain consequential changes.

- The image of God in man gets distorted; he presents a distorted picture.
- In his unclean conscience, he becomes impure as a creation.

- A feeling of guilt that he has denied the command of God rules him.
- Relation between God and man from father – son nature and the relation between man and man from brotherly nature get distorted to a sense of enmity.
- The freedom to do deeds of goodness gets distorted to slavery of evil.
- The free will of man gets corrupted to a state of embracing evil instead of hating sin.
- Man loses his wings of holiness, incorruptibility and immortality; he is weighed by lust and fails to raise him to the nature of God.
- He suffers from spiritual blindness and weakness which affect his personality in its wholeness.

Questions:

1. What have you understood about the genesis of sin?
2. As a result of Adamic sin, what has happened to the nature of man?
3. What is the mental and physical status of man in his fallen scenario?

Lesson 4

Faith, Deeds, Grace

Faith # Segments of Faith # Deeds # Grace

In the Christian concept of salvation, there are three important principles namely faith, deeds and grace and these are mutually related. When these three are put into practice in life individually as also as a community, we can say that there is positive movement towards redemption. The deeds that come out of a man who is filled in faith at its depth, life in its abundance and the grace from God which is a free gift lands him in the experience of salvation. Thus, these three principles are facets that link man with God. Further, it also gets revealed here that Christian life is one that right at the beginning till attaining its goal has been aligned with God.

Faith:

Meaning in general:

“Now, faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). Thus, the background of faith is our partial awareness of something or total unawareness thereof. This leads us to the need of having faith. All those things we are not able to assimilate using our intellect and wisdom are to be accepted in faith. The impact of this faith is hope which indeed is said to be the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19). Christian faith is that which leads a man to a life totally following Jesus Christ. This places him to be in unbreakable relationship with God. Thus, we have a true faith that makes us to be in complete submission to God and thus obey His commands always. It

is not a faith that we have in the existence of God, but it is the faith in God that leads us to rely Him fully and to place our hope in him in its wholeness.

Segments of Faith:

General Understanding:

Faith is explained as that which follows the truth behind divine revelations with the conviction that God is always supreme. In other words, what is meant here is that God is the supreme authority and that He is the power, the centre and the basis behind everything; keeping this in mind, the truth in divine revelations are to be understood and accordingly, individual life pattern has to be reoriented. There are a few crucial aspects here.

Traditional Faith:

What we mean by traditional faith are those written and unwritten truths passed down the generations which have been revealed to fathers of the Church by the intervention of Holy Spirit from time to time (John 16:13; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 John 12; 3 John 13, 14; Jude 3; Acts 20: 27, 31). Traditional faith is an ongoing process when these are accepted as realities by individuals as also as a community.

Faith in Miracles: The belief of a common man is that in the life of an individual, as well as in the history in general, God would act through miracles as a sequel to the faith of man. God willing, miracles are possible and this is an undeniable truth. It is a reality that Jesus who did miracles in the life of those who believed him totally answering to their supplications can perform miracles even this day if God wills so (Mark 5:34, 36, and 41; 6:5, 6, 13; 7:29; Matthew 8:10,13).

Faith from one's heart of hearts: What is meant here is not a faith that gets deteriorated in the midst of problems and tribulations, but the submission to God relying on the grace of Holy Spirit in its wholeness not caring about any circumstantial pressures or temptations. Faith can never be taken as a sum total of what one understands about God logically. A probability that God would be existing is not faith, but it an absolute belief that God is in existence. This belief arises only from our personal relationship with God. Faith is an experience where we understand God as a person rather than considering as a principle or value or power.

Growth of Faith: The formative step to faith can be said to be knowledge of any truth. This can be learnt from the word of God or even from others. This knowledge coming out of one's intellect can assist in realising faith, but faith can never be inferred as an intellectual invention or conclusion. The next step is to make this knowledge affirmative. The affirmation we have about divine truth is that God is truth. But wisdom is different in as much as that it is a state of one's mind based on explanations; but faith is something that cannot be explained and from there, mind is led to a state of simplicity or humility as taught by St Clement of Alexandria. Thus, one can attain the experience of faith when there is a desire to decide and there is an emotional alignment to the affirmation of knowledge.

Subject of Faith: St Basil of Caesarea has said that God alone is the subject of faith. What we mean here is divine revelations. In Christ, we experience the wholeness of such revelations; the redemption revealed by Christ happens to be a key subject of our faith.

Background of Faith: Protestant thought processes attribute word of God as the exclusive background of faith. However, Churches of Catholicism teach that the base for faith is the Church. Holy Spirit is live in Church, the body of Christ. Word of God emanating from Church too can be said to be the basis for faith.

Deeds:

When a man is filled in faith, it flows out from him as deeds. Faith ensures ethical vigil. Apostle teaches that faith without deeds is dead (James 2:26). Thus there is an inseparable relationship between faith and deed. True faith discards all sorts of leniency towards evil deeds. St Phelixinose of Maboog has said that any good deed not lively in faith is as good as just one's emaciated legs. Faith, indeed, lives through its deeds. Life in a community prompts a Christian to express openly the deeds in faith.

"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (Romans 3:28; Gal. 2:16). When St Paul says thus, the importance of deeds expressed by James may appear to be discordant to some readers.

Faith in Action:

New Testament Truths:

The basic stress on Christian faith has been that faith needs to be expressed through deeds. We see this in the New Testament throughout. The exhortation of John, the Baptist to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8) along with Christ's advice that "they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16) and "only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 7:21) all point out the importance of deeds.

However rich be in theological insights, none of the epistles of St Paul ends without an exhortation on the Christian ethics to be followed in life. St Paul keeps his basic principle that our deeds are the criterion of our Christian faith (Rom. 2:6; 13:12; 14: 12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:9).

In the thoughts of St Paul:

St Paul has been stressing on the relation between grace and faith in his epistles. The core advice of St Paul, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31) is not something confined just to the intellectual arena, but it is faith revealed in practical life. St James has been teaching that any specific stand adopted by one in life is expected to act in line with such stand and if not, his stand is senseless; in Galatians 5: 10 – 22, St Paul has been advising that the deeds of soul shall always be above the deeds of body. It shall, therefore, be understood that these two teachings are never in contradiction. On the other hand, they are in perfect harmony.

The approach of St Paul and St James:

The views of St Paul and St James on faith and deeds are not different to each other. The beginning of redemption in Christ cannot be achieved by a Jew by his mere observance of Law or by a gentile by his simple observance of rituals based on ethics. This can commence only with the grace of God. For this, one needs to have faith in Christ as also preparedness for repentance. There, grace of God intervenes and man moves to redemption. This is what St Paul advocates. Now, St James concentrates on a man whose life is based on his faith in Jesus Christ. He has to be in tune with the life of a new creation. What the Apostle means is that a claim of being a new creation is simply not sufficient. St James stresses that such a new creation is expected to prove his newness through his deeds and St Paul has absolutely no difference or opposition to this. We move to redemption not through our deeds, but for our deeds.

Deeds and faith are not mutually contradictory; there is no need to differentiate them. One cannot come to deeds without faith. Before he enters into deeds, he would have come to his faith in its true sense. The deeds and faith of a man are two sides of the very same divine feelings.

Grace:

Grace is the unconditional fondness that God shows to man. Man's virtue or evil is not a criterion to grace which comes from the free will of God. This is not something God gifts to us in our virtues or prohibits in our evil. As such, deeds or law or sin are not coming in the way of grace. This has been so right from the beginning of creation and is so till now. All goodness comes from God. Therefore, man's desire to live in deeds of goodness has been induced by grace of God. A moral life led by man indicates man's growth in grace and with grace.

Grace of God and man's cooperation:

The prime cause for man's redemption is his life is cooperation with the grace of God. The first step here comes from God and that is grace. Man has to respond to this grace positively and has to cooperate with it. Redemption becomes possible there. Freedom is the important facet of God's image in man. Such cooperation leads man to live in greater goodness by divine grace. This shows that there is no contradiction between grace of God and efforts of man. The grace of redemption from God flows freely to man through the Sacraments of Church. But man has to submit before God and be subject him to the will of God and here, man's effort has relevance. This submission too is a virtue of man out of the grace of God. The wholeness of goodness is seen only in God, but man being created by the grace of God has His image in him and therefore, goodness can flow from him. Thus, the grace of God works in man.

Fruits of Grace:

The root cause behind all virtues is God. The goodness in man is always through the grace of God. When the gift of divine grace acts in man, he works for his redemption and of his community. We see these as the fruits of Holy Spirit living in us (Gal. 5:22; 1 Cor. 12, 13, 14). When man takes part in this act of redemption independently, man becomes a true man. Man becomes man in the grace of freedom. Otherwise, the beauty of grace just appears as the beauty of a flower or the goodness of a river. All these survive in the presence of divine grace. But, the grace of God transforms man as a free source of virtues. The noblest gift from God through His grace is the gift of freedom. This

freedom in divine grace enables man to live in virtues as well as in all the free gifts of God and the deeds with them.

Questions:

1. How are faith, logic and knowledge related to each other?
2. To participate in the process of redemption, what is the relation between faith and deeds?
3. Explain the inevitability of divine grace and human initiative in redemption biblically.

Lesson 5

Freedom of Man and Redemption

Evil and Freedom # Freedom from Evil # Freedom in Christ # Freedom and Redemption

Freedom happens to be a very important facet of the image of God in which man is created. Not only of the history of man, but the history of the whole universe has commenced with this freedom of man. This freedom of man is inseparably related to the will of God. Freedom of man is a reflection of the will of God. The noblest gift God has given to man is to love virtues freely with no compulsion from anyone else or based on circumstances. But man stands between God and co creations as an intercessor; this prompts man to get attracted to divine features on the one hand and to the malice filled nature seen with co creations on the other hand as if to opposing poles. Under such circumstances, he has every possibility to practice his freedom in the true sense thereof. Indeed, this is the testing standard of his redemption as also that of the universe.

Evil and Freedom:

The propagators of Manichaeism in the 3rd century insisted that evil has its own existence. There may be many who have been thinking about the origin of evil and the mannerism of its spreading apart. There are others who have been teaching that there is free will among creations which cause evil to come up. The inequalities among men like differences in height, colour, shape or voice are all having some likeness to evil, but man has no role in such differences. These are not caused out of the free will of men. On the other hand, evil traits related to morality such as sin, unethical deeds or injustice are all caused by man using his free will in his own ways and hence he is responsible. In a sense, all these traits indicate the absence of righteousness, ethics and positive character. Man has to be in a status expected of him; but if he is not in such a status, it amounts to rejecting his true existence. Wherever righteousness, morality, truthfulness and goodness are present in their fullness, there is no existence for injustice or untruthfulness or immorality or malice. As such, evil is something having no existence of its own. In other words, only those which are created can sustain. Evil is not created by God which infers that there is no chance that evil can sustain eternally. Yet, moral evils are realities. They are formed out of the actions of free will. Those who are followers of Manichaeism have been arguing that evil is nothing but the fruits of the will of an evil god. A god who can act only the evil way with no goodness in him is not free. One cannot say that such a god possesses an existence. A god who has no existence of his own and a god who has no free will cannot be said to be a god. Only a creation that can do good and evil alone can say that there is something like moral evil. Evil is not just a feeling, but a truth from which man has to be redeemed. This also means that the presence of evil doesn't limit divine freedom. This is perhaps a mystery in as

much as that man engaged in evil deeds occasionally gets freed from such deeds to do virtuous deeds.

Freedom from Evil:

Evil has entered man through the door of his free will from outside the nature of man. But man is struggling to get liberated from the clutches of this evil. For such liberation, man needs the grace of God. Liberation of man from evil is a sign of his growth. But redemption is not to be understood in a negative sense as a freedom from just sin and death. Sin and death have to be overcome ultimately. Man has to get freed from sin and should be capable to lead a life beyond sin doing virtuous deeds.

All these explanations are rather a negative way of illustrating what is redemption. Evil is an undeniable presence in the battle field of human life which can be considered as reason to enhance the freedom of man. However, true freedom comes not from our fight against evil alone; it really comes from our commitment to do good by being courageous always. Choice of goodness is the true initiative from free will of man. Here, one's approach should be one of courage and strength. In comparison, slipping to evil is too smooth an exercise. In short, it is hard to act good, but easy to align with evil.

It may be possible that evil can help man in the development of his nature by exercising free will as he pleases. Man has to work hard to overcome the negatives in life caused by evil; once he succeeds in this, the fineness of his freedom enhances. This is a truth that is revealed in one's personal life as well as in social life. The message of evil is just good enough to lead one to vacuum; the role of evil in this universe is contributing to disharmony, corruptibility, disintegration and discordance thereby obstructing development of mankind and the society. In other words, nature of evil is nothingness and therefore it has no sustenance in the end. At the same time, goodness makes harmony, integration, unification and oneness as practical realities inferring that the message of freedom is its existence. In a different way, we can say that the true nature of freedom is existence.

Freedom in Christ:

Man's self evaluation is reason enough to place him in that scenario of he not being free in its true sense. The freedom gifted by Christ and modelled in his life remains a distant dream for man. Or, man immersed in sin cannot enjoy the freedom in Christ. This underlines the importance of man to be redeemed in Christ and liberated from the bondage of sin and then experience the life of freedom believing in Christ.

Whatever Christ has done for us is done independently and as free. His taking flesh as man and his death on cross are all done without any sort of preconditions. This reveals his freedom. He was not bound to undertake all those tribulations, but he did them in his free will and in his obedience to his father in heaven. The cause for these free deeds was nothing but his love for man. Father sends his begotten son to earth and the son accomplishes what is expected of him which is revelations of love of God. This love was showered on a people who never deserved it in its essence. This indeed is the meaning we must understand when we say that the love of Christ is free. The love God enlightens not considering the virtues of man or looking into his evil in life. "He causes his sun to rise on the evil

and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). Thus God wills independently and acts independently. In short, God doesn't react according to our good or evil.

The death of Christ on cross was not for the virtues of the righteous, but his death was for the sinners and for the evil men. He did not expect any reward for such a sacrifice from them. His goal was their Theosis. His love for them was in the free grace of God.

Those who have undergone Holy Baptism to join Christ are empowered to be the children of God. When we experience the impact of this power in our free will, and our deeds are centred in this freedom, we have the freedom in Christ. That scenario will enable us to love men beyond all barriers of class, caste and gender as well as the evil deeds and failures of men. This indeed is the freedom in Christ. There is nothing as self here. In the Song of Love of St Paul, this freedom gets revealed.

Freedom and Redemption:

The redemption offered by Christ can be accepted by man free and that is proof enough for the freedom of man. Our progressive growth in Christ makes us experience this freedom in its wholeness. We, being inmates of the kingdom of heaven have the feel of the true nature of it that in our personal and social life, we can experience the fullness of that freedom. For this, we have to develop and sustain a personal relationship with Christ. This can be made possible through our participation in worship. The unbreakable communion we can develop with Christ through our worships leads us to an independent Christian nature within us.

By the term Christian freedom, we do not mean a scenario where there is no stress or strain among human relations normally seen in this worldly life. But when men are bound by such stresses and strains, a consistent communion with Jesus Christ help them to maintain equilibrium based on hope and faith so that they move forward and this is the true Christian freedom. And this progressive growth is also the opening to redemption. St Paul says, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him" (2 Cor. 2:14). And St John inspires Christians growing in salvation, "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:17). Likewise, the progressive movement in freedom of Christ can be said to be the forward march gaining strength from the grace of Christ to overcome the powers of evil, the attacks of sin and the circumstances causing disappointments in life. We see this promise with all its clarity in, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Man is capable enough to move ahead in his freedom of redemption; but this doesn't mean that he doesn't need the grace of God. Further, it may not be necessary that there is no need to establish man's inability to do deeds of goodness independently without grace of God. It should be understood that grace of God and freedom of man are two sides of the redemption plan. A man who falls in sin can come up to redemption only through grace of God. However, remaining in sin that grace of God may flow to one is a sort of testing God; in our free Christian life, one who doesn't venture purposefully to live above sin is totally wrong and false that doesn't care to enlighten the free will within us. Look at what St Paul says on this, "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" (Rom. 6:1).

Questions:

1. How man's freedom and evil are related?
2. What do you understand from the term freedom in Christ?
3. If redemption is through grace, what relation can be there between freedom and redemption?

Lesson 6

Redemption, Regeneration, Theosis or Deification

#Redemption # Regeneration # Theosis #

What we are discussing in this lesson is three basic facets needed for the redemption process to reach its fullness. Christ has opened the possibility of salvation of man through the process of redemption; Christ has made it possible for each individual to make his entry into salvation through the process of regeneration; Christ has shown the possibility for mankind to make a progressive march to the fullness of the experience of salvation through the process of Theosis. All the three facets indicated here are explained in this lesson.

Redemption:

This term indicates the interferences God had been making in history to save mankind. In verbal form, releasing a slave from a master by paying off a price is denoted 'to redeem'. This action is called redemption and the person who does this is called redeemer.

In the Old Testament:

In Hebrew culture and language, a person under bondage when freed by paying money is said to be redeemed. The first born of man and animals are earmarked for Jehovah and they can be retrieved by payment; this too is redemption (Exodus 13: 13 – 16; Numbers 18:15). Levites were seeing the services at the Temple itself as equivalent to redeeming the first born of other tribes (Numbers 3:46). At the same time, Jonathan was freed by Israelites from death sentence without paying money and this indicates liberation and not redemption.

Redemption Deeds of Jehovah: Jehovah liberated Israelites from the slavery of Egypt leading to the promised land of Canaan not by paying a ransom, but by using His might and figuratively this too is redemption (Deuteronomy 7:18; 13:6; Micah 6:4). Jehovah liberates His people from dangers, problems, strong hands and enemies but symbolically, these are redemptions (2 Samuel 4:9; Jeremiah 31:11; Psalms 78:42). Redemption is a deed of Jehovah's might and love (Deuteronomy 15:15; Psalms 44:27). Again, it also said that Jehovah is redeeming Israel to make them His people (Psalm 74:2).

Redemption of Individuals: Symbolic meaning of redemption is liberation from calamities or wickedness (Jeremiah 15:21; 2 Samuel 4:9; 1 Kings 1:29). The petitions and submissions to Jehovah seeking protection of life are seen in Psalms in the sense of redemption (Psalms 34:22; 22:16; 15:19).

Protection from persecutions and destruction too are viewed as redemption (Psalms 15:12; 119:134).

In the New Testament:

Nature of Redemption: In the gospels, there are only two verses where we see the terms ransom or redemption (Matthew 20:28). "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus is the ransom; in his death, he has become the ransom. What we mean here by ransom is that Jesus gave himself of his own for us as offering. This also indicates his death representing the fallen man. The one who benefits from a ransom is not that who pays the ransom but the one for whom the ransom is paid. We enjoy the benefits of Christ having laid his life for us as ransom; but that doesn't offer him anything. The prophecy about the suffering servant underlines this; "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). What is being specifically foretold here is that Christ would redeem many from their sins. "Therefore, I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12). Gospels do not clarify to whom ransom was paid; yet, ransom is paid to the Father, and a more convincing analysis of the factor of ransom cannot be worked out. Christ offered himself as a sacrifice to Father and thus committed wholly to the will of God; this indeed is ransom as we understand.

Ransom to Whom: The explanation to this question has been addressed in different ways by fathers of ancient days such as this ransom is paid by Christ as his blood to Satan who has been holding man in his bondage of sin or Christ has been attempting to reconcile with Father by this ransom that justice is restored, who has been angry with men for their sinful life. These interpretations may succeed in showing some truths, but they do have shortcomings also. Therefore, one has to understand that Christ through his death and resurrection has redeemed men from the punishment and slavery of sin and to own up the experience of such redemption, must necessarily join with Christ. This is what we learn from the Holy Bible. St Paul says, "For there is one God and one mediator between men and God, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men" (1Timothy 2:5, 6). This clarifies that Christ himself is the ransom as also the mediator for men before God.

The term redemption is just a technical terminology for the deeds of Christ to save men. In Old Testament, this term indicates liberation from sin, but it is to be understood in the background of the resurrection man has to have at the end and the Theosis he has to achieve.

Regeneration:

Entry to Church:

Right from the days of Apostles, one was making his entry into the Church through Holy Baptism. As being born into a new life, his life can also be called as being born again or regeneration. Holy baptism has in it the deeds of redemption Christ has done for us as well as whatever has been done by God, our Father as individuals and as a community. The Baptism proclaims the death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ. The one being baptised makes his entry into water indicating his taking part in the death of Christ, thereby symbolically dying to the powers of evil and coming out of water happens to be a symbolical participation in the resurrection of Christ thereby, commencing a new life personally (Rom. 6:3 – 11). Thus, one becomes a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) and a new man. As a sign of this, he accepts a new name. One's first physical birth took place with his mother's concurrence; likewise, this second birth has the consent, concurrence and conviction of the mother Church. Any person needs the protection, support and discipline of physical parents till he grows up to a matured person; similarly, after regeneration, he has to be brought up in true faith, proper discretion and be strong in ethics for which overseeing from the Church is needed; one has to move forward in life accordingly.

Being Born into the New Age:

The victorious life in this new age: The one who has been baptised undergoes his physical death in this world, but as one who has resurrected with Christ and living in the heavenly kingdom with Christ (Coll. 2:12; 3: 1), death doesn't rule over him. One who has been anointed with Holy Spirit in Baptism lives in the experience of the new age (1 Cor. 12:13). He lives in the experience of new earth and new heaven. He experiences the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ and lives in the fellowship of Church foretasting heavenly kingdom. In the new age, we are in a new family. We are in the family of our Father; we are in the fellowship of those who are baptised; we are in the experience of the flesh of Christ which is the heavenly Manna.

The pointers to baptism being unfolded in the Old Testament are: (1) old Israel being baptised in Red Sea [1 Cor. 10:2] (2) sojourn through the desert (3) victory over enemies at the end (4) Jehovah giving them a life of victory to inherit Canaan, the land where milk and honey was flowing. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament baptism in his life as we see here: (1) accepted baptism from John (2) fasted in the desert and overpowered the tests of Satan (3) the enemy annihilated in his death (4) through his resurrection heavenly Canaan being gifted to those who follow him. It is in this redemption deeds, we become partners through baptism. The death and resurrection of Christ has been a onetime act; likewise our accepting baptism too is a onetime act, never to be repeated.

Circumcision and Baptism: Circumcision signals the covenant between God and Abraham. In a sense, this can be called a foretaste to Christian baptism as a ritualistic process marking one's entry to the clan of children of Abraham; yet this has been incomplete as the womenfolk has no role here. Entry to the new Israel is possible to all with no difference on cast or race or gender (Matthew 28:29; Gal. 3:28). There is similarity that the ritual of circumcision was a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham in Old Testament and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is the sign of the covenant between Christ and those who believes in him in New Testament. Yet, in the Old Testament, there has been no foretaste of Christian Baptism in its true and full meaning having the wholesome presence of Holy Spirit.

Basic steps to Christian Regeneration: An inseparable part of the sacrament of baptism is the anointing of Holy Mooron, which indicates the blessings of Holy Spirit. Anointing of Holy Mooron and Holy Baptism are two separate sacraments, but both are mutually binding and are performed together although in certain extremely peculiar and inevitable situations they would be done separately. Further, when we think of one's entry to Church, partaking in the Holy Qurbana is essential for the entry to be complete. This is done immediately on being baptised. We all know that

an infant is fed regularly by its mother or it is provided with proper clothing and dwelling by its parents not because the infant demands or wishes or as per the concurrence or opinion of the infant. Likewise, a baptised child needs to be provided spiritual food as it is essential for its spiritual growth and this is the responsibility of parents. It certainly is a false impression that children need be made partakers of Holy Qurbana only when they are grown up and after undertaking a deep study on this sacrament using their intellect and get convinced of the meaning behind these; it certainly depicts a sense of irresponsibility on the part of such parents about the spiritual nourishment of growing up children. The basic faith that is needed is that Holy Qurbana is the flesh and blood of our Lord. A person gets blessed by own faith or even by the faith of another as illustrated umpteen occasions. Even if a child doesn't realise what is happening and doesn't possess the required faith, it would still be blessed because of the faith its parents possess. Apart from all these, our understanding of Holy Mysteries remains only in part however matured we grow because they are mysteries. Thus, the basic steps towards Christian regeneration are Holy Baptism, Holy Mooron and Holy Qurbana.

Theosis or Deification:

Theosis of man is a concept founded on the famous statement of St Athanasius of Alexandria that God has become man so that man could become God. On the basis of this, the ultimate goal of man is Theosis. The fullness of Theosis of man attains its totality only with the second coming of our Lord; yet, those who follow the path of Christ and living close to him are growing towards Theosis. Christ is providing us all the ways and means for us through the Church for our Theosis.

Man Becoming God?

It may not be easy to comprehend the true meaning of Theosis. There are certain interpretations that in his process of growth, man changes his essence from that of man to that of God. Once God became man, we do not take it as if the essence of God is changed to the essence of Man. Our fathers have been objecting to such thinking right from the days of Nicene Synod. God became man without forsaking His essence of God; likewise, by Grace of God, man can become God without forsaking his essence of man. May be, this is an incomprehensible mystery for man's intellect. Man has limitations, but God has no limitations; as such God becoming man is just possible at the crux of a moment. But Theosis of man is a process that is progressive in communion with God and an experience of growing in total reliance to God. This growth process cannot be curtailed at any point of time; nature of God cannot be stopped in its wholeness.

In Daily Life:

Our union with God has to be attained through continuous prayer. The personal relationship with God and man commences here. Once the will of man unifies with the will of God, man crosses the first step towards nature of God; he steps in through the first door of the process of Theosis. Adam has been a model to Theosis when he submitted himself to the will of God. We grow into the love of God through worship. Worship is the revelation of our love towards God. Our love to God leads us to our love to man; such growth in love is the path of Theosis. Theosis is not imitation of God; neither is it the imitation of Christian way. We have to grow in the nature of God (Phil. 2:5). Grace of Holy Spirit helps us to grow in love. The supreme realisation of love or in other words, Holy Trinity, makes

us part takers in such a life. This growth and life are continuous as well as an ongoing sojourn to wholeness; thus, the excitement of our progressive individual movement doesn't end in itself.

Questions:

1. What are the differences between redemption in Christ and liberation through deeds promoted by Hindu way of life?
2. How do we commence our total participation into the experience of salvation?
3. Explain the meaning of the term Theosis on the basis of theological studies.

Unit 2

Eschaton and Life after Death

Lesson 1

Death

Death # Sin and Death # Death of Believers # Post Death Scenario

Death is a reality. Its effects and consequences are affecting all men. All religions have attempted to address these issues and formulate specific inferences. In Christian faith, one's death and the situation after death are viewed with importance.

What is Death?

Based on Biblical truths, death is classified into three categories namely death of soul, Spiritual death and natural death. But there are no detailed explanations in the Bible on the varying characteristics of these classifications of death. Instead, all these related thoughts are correlated and death is summarised as distancing from God. The Holy Bible pictures natural death different from the death of soul as seen in Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:4. Death of soul doesn't takes place with the natural death. On the other hand, with the natural death, what happens is the separation of soul and body. This is the basic truth we learn from the Holy Bible on death.

Death doesn't nullify the essence of anything. Instead, it is just a separation from the material relationship possessed in this world. We have to understand that death and life are varying experiences of the same individual.

Relationship between Sin and Death:

Adam was a creation and therefore he was created subject to death according to natural law as taught by some ancient fathers of the Church. Based on these teachings, immortality was a just characteristic Adam would have inherited had he lived in obedience. According to this view, it has to be accepted that death was very much there even before the fall of man. But let us see what the Bible says on this.

1. Since man possessed the nature of God in him, it is not possible to accept that death was there within man right from the creation.
2. The Bible has been witnessing that the natural death of man is an after effect of his spiritual death (Rom. 6:23; 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:56; James 1:15).
3. Death entered mankind through sin or in other words, death is the punishment for sin (Genesis 2:17; 3:19; Rom. 5:12, 17; 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:23).
4. Death is not simple a value based failure; it is an enemy that has forced its entry into the nature of man and his life to annihilate him by overpowering with its brutality; it can also be a reflection of God's anger (Psalms 90:7, 11; Rom. 1:32, 5:16; Gal. 3:13).

To sum up, man has been created in the nature of God and his distancing from God itself is death. This distancing causes distortions in his good relationship with God as well as with other men, leading to natural death. Sin has bound the whole creation to sufferings and death (Rom. 8: 20 – 22). Christ has redeemed us from sin and those who believe in Christ do not fear the poisoned teeth of death.

Death of Believers:

Wages of sin is death. Though mankind inherited the judgment of death from Adam's sin, it was nullified with the death of Jesus Christ. Those who are joined with Christ in Baptism, having part taken in the death of Christ, are exempted from the judgment of death. Why do they have to confront natural death again? Baptism doesn't liberate us from natural death; instead, we are not driven to eternal death but are led to eternal life (John 11:26). However, if one desires to have eternal life or to resurrect after natural death, must necessarily be a part taker of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ (John 6: 50 – 58). As such, for those who are part takers of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, natural death is nothing more than a change of status. Natural death is a stage of rest with the hope that he is resurrected. His body has in it the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ and therefore, natural death is not an end; it is the beginning of a new life. With this hope, a believer has no fear to face natural death (Hebrews 12:23; Rev. 21:27; 1 Cor. 15:55; 2 Thess. 1:7; Rom. 8:11; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

Post Death Scenario:

One who has lived in this world in communion with Jesus Christ and got detached from this world through natural death leads a lively and conscious life as matching the spiritual world (Luke 19: 16 – 31; 2 Cor. 5: 6 – 9; Phil. 1:23; Heb. 12:23). However, more discussions would be needed to understand the peculiar status, position, situation and their relationship with Christ for the righteous and the unrighteous.

With natural death, the souls of the righteous and the unrighteous are placed in appropriate situations; this has been pictured as a foretaste of true experience awaiting us at the final judgment by Justin Martyr, Irenios, Tertullian, Nevisian, Origen, Gregorioso of Nyssa, Ambrose, Augustine and such fathers. But writers of Catholic tradition have argued that post death scenario is a period of purification of souls. Gregory of Rome is one name that can be specially mentioned in this connection. Such thought processes were developed later into the concept of Purgatory in the Roman Catholic Church during the mid centuries. These teaching do not have any Biblical evidences. Further, these include many corrupt theological inputs also: (1) to earn redemption, our deeds are

also necessary with the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ (2) it comes up here that the sufferings due to sin in itself happens to be a way of redemption (3) the importance final judgment, a Biblical truth, gets reduced (4) prayers for the departed souls loses significance.

The teachings of Church about Post Death Scenario:

1. Those who believe in Christ, after their natural death, continue in relationship with Christ similar to their relationship they have been having during their material life, be it close or otherwise, in spiritual state, till the common resurrection (Matthew 25: 31 – 46; John 5: 28, 29).
2. They are alive: Moses and Elijah come on Tabor (Matthew 17: 1 – 3). They hear the call of our Lord (John 6: 55, 56; 11: 26, 43). They are in sleep doesn't mean a lifeless status; they live in sleep also; their cells are growing (1 Cor. 15: 36, 37). The metaphor about the rich man and Lazarus also show that they are alive even after natural death (Luke 16: 19 – 31). "You will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22: 32)
3. They are active in prayers: "It is we who extol the Lord, both now and for evermore" (Psalm 115:18). The rich man in the metaphor of Lazarus and the rich man, after he is dead, intercedes for his brothers (Luke 16:23, 14). "So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it" (2 Cor. 5:9).
4. They continue in hope when they were alive: They look forward to the eternal dwelling place in heaven (2 Cor. 5:1 ff). They are live in their hope for their citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20). They are in hope till coming of Christ (1 Thess. 4:5).
5. They are in the process of growth: Whatever has life in it is in a state of growth like the live seeds alone spurt (1 Cor. 15). Pupa is alive and therefore, butterfly comes out of it. Christ preached good news to those who were departed that their life in spirit matched the will of God (1 Peter 4:6). Those in bondage right from the days of Noah were exhorted to repent and grow with a change of mind (1 Peter 3:19).
6. They are living in a state of joy: "For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling , so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (2 Cor. 5:4). "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Phil 1:23).

Thus, the departed ones are in a state of life; they are actively involving themselves in the general communion of the Church being part takers in the life of prayers. As they are active, they take part in all the sacraments of the Church. The faithful are mutually indebted to pray for each other. We pray for the departed not for a relief at the time of judgment, but for our Lord be merciful to them at the Judgment.

Questions:

1. How do we console the close relatives of a departed person? Explain with a narration and dialogues.
2. Briefly explain the Christian view about death.

Lesson 2

Resurrection of the Departed and Final Judgment

Faith in Resurrection # Nature of Resurrection # Final Judgment

Body and soul separated with death join together at the second coming of Christ to commence a new heavenly life and this experience is resurrection. This Christian view is highly noble explaining eternity of man. Christ gifts new life to those who believe in him consequent to his resurrection. Thus the base for the resurrection of man is seen in the resurrection of Christ. At the second coming of Christ, what would happen is that each person would be judged once for all.

Faith in Resurrection:

During the time of Jesus, the Pharisees believed in resurrection whereas the Sadducees did not (Matthew 22: 30 – 32). The Greek and the Gnostics in particular have been dismissing this thought with contempt. However, St Paul (1 Cor. 15) followed by early Church fathers quite strongly established the truth of resurrection of the departed based on the teachings of Christ as well as relying on the resurrection of Christ himself. In general, the fathers have been in consonance with the resemblance of the pre resurrection body and the post resurrection body. Those who believed in the millennium reign have been teaching about two resurrections namely those of the righteous and 1000 years later, those of the elders. During the mid centuries, people like Thomas Aquinas have been presenting the issue of resurrection within a sense of imagination or in a fictitious manner. However, all the ancient Churches have been teaching that the incidents of common resurrection, second coming of Christ, final judgment and the ending of this world are to be taken place at the same time.

In the light of the Holy Bible:

There is no specific mention of resurrection of the departed in the Old Testament before the period of prophets. However, there are quite a few hints as we read in Gen. 22:5; Psalms 16: 10, 11; 49: 14, 15; Isaiah 26:19, 20; 53:10; Daniel 12:3; Book of Wisdom 3:1; 4:15; 2 Macc. 7:14, 23, 29; Ezekiel 37. These readings throw light that there was belief in resurrection even before the exile to Babylon. Even Jesus Christ too is establishing the truth of resurrection based on Old Testament scriptures. Jesus has been commenting on this as if this faith has been there right from the beginning (Exodus

3:6; Matthew 22: 29, 32; Luke 20:37, 38). His specific teachings on these can be read in St John 5: 25 – 29; 6: 39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24, 25; 14:3; 17:24. Again, the New Testament concept of resurrection of the departed is well explained in 1 Cor. 15. There are further references of this in Acts 4:2; 26:3; 1 Thess. 4: 13 – 16; 2 Cor. 5: 1- 10; Revelations 20: 4 – 14; Philippians 3: 20, 27. The experience of Holy Qurbana indicates the foretaste or agreement to the glory of resurrection (John 6:54).

Nature of Resurrection:

Holy Trinity Acts:

Resurrection is an act of the Holy Trinity. In most of the narrations in Bible, what we read is that God has raised one from the dead; there is no attribution of this to any single person of Holy Trinity. This leads us to learn that raising one from the dead is a joint action of Holy Trinity. However, there are mentions about the roles of different persons of the Holy Trinity in certain contexts. God, the Son raising the dead has been commented in John 5:21, 25, 28, 29; 6: 38 – 40, 44, 54 and 1 Thess. 4:16. This is also shown as an act of Holy Spirit in Rom. 8:11.

Resurrection in Body:

There were people during New Testament days holding the view that resurrection was actually redemption of the soul (2 Tim. 2:18). But the teachings we have in Holy Bible is quite clear that resurrection takes place with body. Christ has resurrected with body as the first fruit from among those who have been in their sleep (1 Cor. 15: 20, 23; Col. 1: 18; Rev. 1:15); the redemption provided by Christ has been for body as well (Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 6: 13 – 20; Rom. 8: 11); therefore, those who believe in Christ and passes away have their resurrection in body and there is no doubt on that (1 Cor. 15: 53, 54). The very same corruptible body we possessed is resurrected after death in new glory and spiritual state. Jesus has nail scars while being dead and the same body with the same scars is resurrected and transformed. Bible teaches that though the body is transformed in resurrection, it can identify other persons in such a manner that the material body of worldly life resembles the same body after such transformation. In other words, the body that was satisfying the material life undergoes a transformation that the same body satisfies the spiritual world.

Resurrection of the Righteous and the Evil:

Bible scholars opine that Pharisees have been teaching that there is no resurrection for the evil. Following these teachings, the Adventists (from AD 1831) have been working out the day of the second coming of Jesus Christ as an immediate event; likewise, the followers of millennium reign too express their views that the evil be annihilated before the common resurrection. But their argument that there is no mention of resurrection of the evil in Bible is not correct; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15 and Rev. 20: 13 – 15 provide insights to these. It is obvious that though the true benefits of resurrection go to the righteous, the evil too resurrect. As all die in Adam, all live in Christ (1 Cor. 15:22); thus, it has to be understood that man has redemption in Christ. Based on the second coming of Christ, it has been quite transparent that each individual has to have a first death, each individual who is righteous has a judgment to eternity and each individual who has been evil has his

entry into second death. Thus, the evil too has a resurrection, though not for eternal life. The final judgment is to be carried out to those with body and soul (John 5: 28, 29).

The time of Resurrection:

Biblical inferences point out that the resurrection of the departed takes place along with the second coming of Christ. The final judgment takes place with the second coming of Christ which is also called the Lord's Day and is the end of this world. There is no Biblical truth that there are thousand years between the resurrections of the righteous and the non righteous. St Paul too clarifies this beyond any doubt (2 Thess. 1: 7 – 10). The resurrection of the believers, the second coming of Christ, the final judgment and the categorisation to eternal life and eternal death are all one and the same.

Final Judgment:

In Christianity, resurrection of the departed and the final judgment are discussed related to each other. All the departed are to stand before the judgment throne of Christ for the final verdict. This faith as proclaimed by our ancient fathers has been specified through the Nicene Creed. Churches have not changed from this basic creed.

Nature of the final judgment:

There are many incidents recorded in the Bible that God punishes evil and blesses goodness during the present itself (Deut. 9:5; Psalms 9:16; 37:28; 59:13; Eccl. 11:5; 14:11; Is. 32:16, 17; Lam. 5:7). The coming of Jesus in itself was a judgment for the Jews. Even the continuous presence Christ in Church is for a judgment, for man to choose truth or deny truth. This is happening these days (John 3:17 – 19; 9:39; 10: 19 – 21; Rev. 1: 5, 8; 2: 8; 21:6 22:13). But this need not be considered as the only judgment from God; often, evil may continue without being properly punished or goodness may continue with no reward (Mal. 2:17; 3: 14, 15; Job 32: 1 – 14; Psalm 73). Bible says that the final judgment takes care of these (Matthew 25: 34 – 46; John 5: 27 – 29, Acts 25:24; Rom. 2: 5 – 11; Hebrews 9:27; 10: 27; 2 Peter 3:7; Rev. 20: 11 – 15). These verses show that the last judgment is just not a process, but a pre determined completion of an event that is fulfilled at the finality of time. This is inseparably related to the second coming of Christ, resurrection of the departed and the regeneration of the universe.

The Judge and the one being Judged:

Though the final judgment is an act of the Holy Trinity, we have seen that Christ, as the intercessor between man and God carries out this process (Matthew 25: 31, 32; John 5:27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Phil. 2:10; 2 Tim. 4:1). The Bible says further that the angels and saints assist Christ in this final judgment, but how this is being done is not clarified (Matthew 13: 41, 42; 24:31; Psalm 149: 5, 9; 1 Cor. 6: 2,3; Rev. 20:4).

The righteous and the evil are expected to be judged by God alike. The fallen angels are also expected to be present before Christ at the seat of judgment (Matthew 8:20; 1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6, 7). Satan and his gang have to accept their eternal doom at the final judgment. All individuals are to stand before Christ for judgment (Eccl. 12: 14; Psalms 50: 4 – 6; Matthew 12: 36, 37; 25:32; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12). Man is expected to account for all his false words (Matthew 12:36) and his deeds behind the curtain (Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5). It has to be understood that the

angels of God would be assisting Christ in this process of judgment (Matthew 13:30, 41; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1: 7, 8).

The Criterion of Final Judgment:

No one knows the time of final judgment, but it would happen with the second coming of Christ and that would be the end of this world. This judgment applies to the entire mankind (Matthew 13: 40 – 43; 2 Peter 3:7). Of these, one has no clue as to what happens first as also how long the process of judgment would last. There are no hints in the Bible that this happens on a day of our 24 hours or on day lasting 1,000 years. The criterion of judgment for the righteous and the evil are exclusively based on the will of God. The approach may not be the same for all. Judgment could be weighed on the basis of the talents gifted to each individual and the circumstances under which each individual has been carrying out assigned tasks (Matthew 11: 21 – 24; 25: 14 – 30; Rom. 2: 12 – 16). However, this may not lead to different levels of redemptive life. Yet, there would be varying heavenly experiences of joy based on the deeds performed in life (2 Cor. 5:10; Matthew 11: 22, 24; Luke 12: 47, 48; 20: 47; Daniel 12: 3; 2 Cor. 9:6). What the best we can infer is that the gentiles would be judged based on their natural law and their conscience (Rom. 2: 12 – 24) whereas the old Israel according to their Law. In other words, all men would be judged in line with a criterion best suited to him.

This is evidenced in some of our liturgy; the Order of St James for the Holy Qurbana has a prayer like this: “-----we look forward to your second coming where you reward each one of us in line with the deeds each one of has performed in our life that you judge this universe with righteousness” .

The Order of Holy Qurbana by St John says thus: “When you reappear in full glory with the angels of heaven, when you set up your noble throne, when you command the earth to release all the departed ones to stand before you in fear with trembling hearts, you align the small lambs on your right hand side and the goats on your left hand side to reward each one of them as they deserve and they look forward to the dwelling places they have been provided -----”.

It shall be noted that in all Orders of Holy Qurbana, the Celebrants do this prayer before invoking Holy Spirit and in all Orders, the contents mean the very same despite differences in wordings. The Sedro during the second order for the funeral service for a departed male, there is a prayer : “the right hand side turns noble in their victory whereas the left hand side gets doomed to eternal sufferings, receives as they deserve that there are no deviations from this and at that time -----”.

Again, the third order of funeral service for a departed male has this prayer: “be good or bad, whatever has been done about which explanations are to be furnished by all tribes and all clans for which they all stand before your fearful throne-----”.

The hymn we sing during the fourth order of the female service of a departed female,

“All are rewarded as they acted,

Judgment is fearful as righteousness is yardstick”.

The above examples show that the final judgment for each one depends on how they lived in this world.

Questions:

1. Compare the Christian view on resurrection with the rebirth theory in Hinduism.
2. The final judgment means a self induced assessment each one makes about his own spiritual status. Prepare a reply to this statement.

Lesson 3**Angels, Devils, Communion with Saints**

Angels # Devils # Saints # Communion with Saints

Angels:

Faith in angels has been well clarified in Holy Bible, both in Old and New Testaments. They are the innumerable sects between God and men (Gen. 32:2; Daniel 7:10).

Faith in Angels:

'The Book of Jubilees' authored by a Jewish Rabbi in around BC 153 contains information about the yearly celebrations to be carried out by Israel as revealed to Moses in Hebrew language by Jehovah. This book narrates details about different angels, their orders and their responsibilities. In a similar manner, early Christian Church too accepted teachings about good and evil angels. These angels had enough freedom; they had been conveying messages from Jehovah for the good of men; they had been symbols of presence of God before men; they possessed a physical body in all minuteness along with their spiritual body as believed by a good number of early Church fathers. It is commonly believed that all angels were created good, but some among them were possessing pride and greed resulting in their fall from grace and Satan is thought to be their leader. The goodness flowing into men are the deeds of good angels whereas sufferings, losses, troubles and illness were all believed to be the deeds of evil angels. There is no base in the thinking that these angels were having limitations of time and space. Dionysius of Areopagus in AD 500 possibly inspired by the above 'jubilee' book classified all angels into three sects. Later Christian writers are seen to be agreeing to this. Those angels closest to God are placed in the first sect; they are Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim. The second sect includes Dominions or Lordships, Virtues or Strongholds and Powers or Authorities and the third sect includes Principalities or Rulers, Archangels and Angels. It is believed that all these nine sects of angels are created as part of the creation of universe. There were ancient thoughts that angels were created to protect mankind and were being named guardian angels. Further, there are two prominent schools of thought that (1) angels possess minute physical and spiritual body and (2) that they are different powers without a physical or spiritual body.

Existence of Angels:

All religions have agreed to the existence of a spiritual world. In all ancient epics, there are mentions about gods, servants to gods, spiritual forces, messengers, devils and those performing deeds of heroism. The epistemology about angels has its beginning in Persian religions. Christian Church believes in the existence of angels right from ancient days. Modern theologians have expressed doubts about this, but relying on logic, existence of angels can neither be proved nor disproved. Scriptures do not have anything to prove the existence of angels; moreover, there are no concerted efforts to confirm such existence; yet, the contents of scriptures lead us to believe that there are angels.

General Nature of Angels:

The Created Ones: Angels living in spiritual world belong to created beings. The narrations we read in Bible about heavenly creations in Genesis 2:1, Psalms 33:6 and Nehemiah 9:6 are doubtful as to whether these are about the angels of god; but the references we have in Psalm 148: 2, 8 and Col. 1:16 are quite specific. Further, 1 Kings 22:19 and Psalm 103: 20, 21 are also informative. Though we are not sure when these angels were created, definitely, we can say that this would have been before the seventh day (Gen. 2:11; Exodus 20:11; Job 38:7; Nehemiah 9:6).

Beings with no Body: It is generally accepted that angels are having no physical body and that they have a spiritual essence only (Matthew 8:16; 12:45; Luke 2:14; 11:26; Acts 19:12; Eph. 6:12; Hebrews 1:14). They do not have any material needs to be satisfied (Matthew 22:30). They are invisible (Col. 1:16). They have all those limitations being creations different from creator. As such, though spiritual beings, they are not omnipresent or not omnipotent.

Discretionary Intellectuals and Immortals: Teachings in the Bible show that angels are spiritual beings possessing intellect and will power (2 Samuel 14:20; Matthew 24:36; Eph. 3:10; 1 Peter 2:11). Though not omniscient, they are superior to men in wisdom (Matthew 24:36). Those among them showing disobedience loses immortality. Those who are disciplined live in immortality. Because of this, saints of our Lord are said to be at par with angels (Luke 20: 35, 36). They are also known to be the heavenly army who are ready to assist in the redemption process (Psalm 103:20; Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; Hebrews 1:14). The evil angels are part of Satan's gang working to torpedo all the Divine Plans (Luke 1:21; 2 Thess. 2:9; 1 Peter 5:8)

Community of Angels:

The Bible doesn't specify their number, but it is quite clear that they are an innumerable host of angels (Deut. 33:2; Psalm 68:17; Mark 5:9, 15; Matthew 26:53; Rev. 5:11). Legion is a common name for a sect of army of 3,000 to 6,000 members. These angels are there right from the days of creation, but they stand without any clear ascertainable numbers. They do not grow in any peculiar situation. They are learnt to be part of different sects.

Cherubim: They are guards to the Paradise (Gen. 3:24); they are observers to the atonement cover (Exodus 25:18; Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Isaiah 37:16; Hebrews 9:5); they form the foundation to the canopy of God descending to earth (2 Samuel 22:11; Psalm 18:10); they possess a peculiar vigour and liveliness (chapter 1 of Ezekiel and chapter 4 of Revelations). Cherubim are pictured as symbols revealing the power and glory of God.

Seraphim: Isaiah 6:6 is the only Biblical reference about Seraphim. They have legs, faces and two wings each to cover legs and faces; they have further two wings necessary to implement commands of God at the required pace. They stand around the Divine Throne and praise God continuously. Apart from Seraphim, there are angels named Principalities, Powers (Eph. 3:10; Col. 2:10) as well as Thrones (Col. 1:16), Lords (Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16) and Dominions (Eph. 1:21; 1 Peter 3:22) here.

Arch angels: They are referred to twice in New Testament (Jude 9). Michael has been mentioned as an Arch angel. In 1 Thess. 4:6, there is a mention about the voice of Arch angel. In Church tradition, Gabriel and Raphael are also Arch angels. Michael is referred to in Daniel 10:13; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12: 7 – 9, Gabriel in Daniel 8:15; 9: 21; Luke 1:11; 1:26 and Raphael in Tobit 12:12, 15 and Enoch 10:7.

All the angels keep on praising God without any break (Job 38:7; Isaiah 6:3; Psalms 103:20; Rev. 5:11), they are readying for the redemption of men (Hebrews 1:14), they look forward to sinners having a change of their mind to repent (Luke 15:10), they protect the believers (Psalms 34: 7; 91: 11) and they dwell in the Church. Under such scenario, the concept of guardian angel is prevalent (Matthew 18:10). But when St Paul says 'rulers and powers' (Eph. 6:12; Col 1:16), good angels and evil angels are included in that.

Devils:

Start: It is quite clear that just like good angels, there are evil angels as well. The task being taken up by these evil angels are to ensure that the deeds of good angels end up fruitless in men. They are creations of God and thus not created with evil spirit. 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 narrates their fall from grace. What is found wrong in them is that they showed off their pride against the Divine Throne. Also, the book on 'Jubilee' says that their fall and punishment happened as a result of their relationship with sons of men. It is natural that in such a background, these evil angels have been acting smart to trap man after his creation to take him to their gang by alienating from God. Satan have been trapping more and more men as also other angels to his side that strength of numbers is always with him.

Satan: Satan is pictured as the leader of the fallen angels. The fallen Satan had been very prominent among the angels. The term Satan means 'adversary' and its Syriac equivalent is 'akalkaruso'. As he has attempted to attack and annihilate man, the prime creation of God, he is called 'destroyer'. He attacked Jesus at the very beginning of his redemptive actions. Once sin made its entry into this world, he isolates man and destroys him (Rev. 12:19). As the beginner of sin, he becomes the leader of the fallen beings (Gen. 3:14; John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 John 3:8; Rev. 12:9; 20; 2, 19; Matthew 25:41; Eph, 2:2) as well as the leader of those who deny Christ (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). He is the lord and god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). This doesn't mean that this world is owned by Satan. The authority of this world is always God. But what we have to understand here is that the supremacy of evil in this world is with Satan. In other words, for those who shift away from the territory of God, have Satan as their ruler.

Satan Acts:

Just like the good angels, even the evil angels are talented more than men. Good angels praise God, serve God faithfully and fight for God; the evil angels curse God and act against Him as well as

against His anointed one. They always stand against God. They lead even those chosen by God to malice and encourage sinners to do evil deeds. They are discarded and lost spirits.

What we have discussed here is extended teachings about Satan from the Jewish scenario just prior to the New Testament era. Satan who was creating obstructions to growth of the Kingdom of God has no influence over Christ. Christ has taught us that Satan and his followers would be pushed to eternal fire at the final judgment (Matthew 25:41).

Saints:

Saints form the third sect in the spiritual world. Man becomes saint through communion with the Divine Holiness. God is Holy in His 'being'; man becomes Saintly in his 'becoming'. In other words, God has not become Holy, but was Holy in its fullness and in His 'being'. Man becomes Saintly in his communion with this God. Therefore, be it in this world or be it after departing from here, Saints continue to be in communion with God. The basic truth about holiness is being a part of the Holy body of Christ. Like this, those who live in communion with God are the sect of saints. Thus, Church can be called as a community of saints. All those who have joined this sect through Holy Baptism are saints. Such a saint who has joined the Church through Baptism maintains holiness in thoughts, talks and deeds. The enthusiasm of holiness is always reflected in him. At the same time, if he falls to satanic temptations and moves to evil desires in thoughts, talks and deeds, he doesn't deserve to be called a saint. He becomes a faint flower having lost its fragrance in the community of saints. He is a paralysed organ of the body of Church. Though the weakened organs of the body of Church are branded saints, they are not considered as other healthy and model organs and also are not honoured. However, those who do not deviate from the Divine communion and continue to live in their Divine nature are addressed Saints by us. They have been active in their Divine communion during their life in this world as well as even after departing from here and live as models of holiness; our communion with them would lead us to our own holiness. It is in this sense, St Paul had written, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

St Mary:

Among the sect of Saints, St Mary stands as the foremost. There is no one in this world who was blessed to be the mother of the son of God, the redeemer of this universe, including even her. She was born an ordinary woman; but was filled with the Grace of God; and she submitted herself totally before the will of God saying, "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said". Power of God was on her in her holiness. Eve fell to the evil designs of Satan and acted against the will of God to have her will be implemented; in order to address this deed of indiscipline, another woman of human race, the second Eve, the Virgin Mary, totally obeyed the words of Arch angel Gabriel and transformed her will as the will of God. The quagmire created by Eve in her disobedience was untwined by Virgin Mary, the second Eve through her obedience. There is no other human being equivalent to the Virgin Mary to have participated in the redemptive deeds of God. This adds sense to her song of glory in Holy Spirit, "From now on, all generations will call me blessed". As the Queen of Saints, she has proximity to Messiah more than all other saints; and this had never been possible for any other being; it will not be possible ever.

Communion of Saints:

We have seen in lesson 1 of unit 2 that those who are in communion with God would keep on glorifying God and continuously intercede for the universe. As they have grown above all those material temptations of this world, it would be easier for them to be in communion with God after they depart this world. "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry" (Psalm 34:15); as such, their prayers are our refuge of strength and our path to dependence. The blood that flows in the body of Church is our prayers for them and their prayers for us. The criterion of one's holiness is his prayers for others and his dependence on others' prayers for him to overcome his own limitations. This truth is the corner stone to the communion with saints.

Our Church had introduced interceding prayers to St Mary and other saints right from the 4th century in our liturgies.

Questions:

1. What do you understand by the status of angels?
2. Make a comparison of the biblical teachings about Satan and the views of other religions about evil.
3. What is the necessity of our communion with saints?

Lesson 4

Heaven – Hell – Christian Hope

Scenario of Heaven # Experience of Hell # Fullness of Christian Hope

According to Christian Theology, the scenario of 'Heaven' is the dwelling place of God with all His saints and angels which is the place of eternity expected by the redeemed ones. The place where punishment is faced or the scenario of sufferings is called hell. The essence of Christian hope is a deep desire and interest for a possible goodness, though not that easy, to attain heavenly kingdom.

Heaven:

Narration:

Heaven or sky is the translation of a Hebrew word 'Shemayim'. In a literary sense, this Hebrew word means an arch- vault like canopy above earth. References in the Old Testament say that there are foundations and pillars to support it (2 Samuel 22:8; Job 26:11) and its small windows would be opened so that the earth gets rain (Gen. 7:11; 27:17; Psalm 78:23). In the spiritual sense, heaven can be understood as the dwelling place of Triune God. St Paul would have meant this dwelling place of God as the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2). He would have simply thought this as paradise or a place to be in communion with God. There are no references to first heaven or second heaven in the Bible. But the Jewish apocalyptic writings during the post Old Testament – pre New Testament days have called the free space above earth for the birds to revel as first heaven and the arranged space of

stars as the second heaven. Also, seven heavens are hinted in the second book of Enoch more or less of the same period. Under this background, what St Paul said about third heaven need just be understood as the dwelling place of God. Heaven is glory (Hebrews 2:10). It is the dwelling place of all those who are holding the status of fullness by Divine grace (Hebrews 10:14). This also is the place of those who are partners in Christian fulfilment (John 1:16). This is the fullness of everything (Col. 1:19). It is here we can understand God (Christ) in His glorified body (Col. 2:9). St John and St Paul have seen heaven as the place for worship at its zenith (2 Cor. 12:1 – 9; Rev. 21:1 – 22:7; Rev. 19: 1 – 3).

The Heavenly Feeling:

New Creation: Even before the heavenly experience of the believers, the present universe will undergo a transformation and have a new attire (Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:21). Everything is regenerated and re established; “Once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens. The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken - that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain” (Hebrews 12:26, 27). St John has already seen the creation of a new heaven and earth where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:12, 13; Rev. 21:17). Following the establishment of new creation, New Jerusalem would descend from God in Heaven and the tabernacle of God would be set up among men; the righteous would make their entry to eternal joy (Rev. 21: 1 – 15). The new creation is not one totally new, but it is a renewed experience of the present creation (Psalm 102:26, 27; Hebrews 12: 26 – 28; Rom. 8:19, 20).

Dwelling Place of Righteousness: Heaven can be said to be that feeling of joy and content experienced by a man consequent to his communion with God and the internal peace he has out of such communion. The righteous can experience this in this world itself though not fully, but that experience reaches its fullness by the second coming of Christ. Yet, there is indeed a mention of heaven in the Bible; Christ has come down to earth from heaven and also ascended to heaven. Moreover, Christ has been mentioning about the many dwelling places in the house of his father (John 14:1 – 3). Therefore, we understand that the varying levels of transformation experienced by the righteous and the others would be the different dwelling places. ‘Place’ if interpreted in the material context could cause a bit of confusion; but, if seen in the spiritual sense, such confusion can be avoided. In a material dimension, God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Triune language and we are able to understand the spiritual truth contained in these nomenclature. Through Father, son and Holy Spirit, we are seeing the three persons of Holy Trinity. Likewise, in a spiritual dimension, we can understand the many dwelling places being prepared for us as our spiritually glorified status we have with Christ in all our senses which certainly is heaven (Matthew 5:5; Rev. 21: 1 – 3).

Reward for the Righteous: Reward for the righteous is eternal life. This is not to be understood as an unending life, but as a life of wholeness. This would be an experience exceeding all limitations and boundaries of this material world. The essentials of eternity are to live in total communion with God (Rev. 21:3). We experience God in Christ and have eternal joy (1 Cor. 13:12). This way, the righteous are content. Their life is filled with praises of God; here they have the fullness of joy in their whole person. Each one would be joyous in their communion with God and would be content in that. May

be there are level differences, but we can see a sense of equality also here. Each one, despite his level, would be filled with heavenly joy in its wholeness.

The Hell:

Background:

The term 'Sheol' has been used in Old Testament meaning 'hell', 'grave' or 'pit' to indicate the general dwelling place for those who are dead (Psalms 9:17; 16:10; 30:3; Isaiah 33:10; Numbers 16:33; Job 24:19). Again, a term 'Hades' has been seen in New Testament meaning 'hell' or 'death' where the dead are staying till their resurrection (Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; 1 Cor. 15:15; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14). The thought 'hell of fire' expressed in New Testament is related to the valley of 'Ben Hinnom' of Old Testament. It may be recalled that King Solomon (961 – 922 BC) succumbing to the desires of his gentile wives resorted to idol worship in his old age; as part of this, he had built alter for the idol Molech of Ammonites (1 Kings 11:7) at the valley of a mountain south of Jerusalem. This is called the Valley of Hinnom. To please this god Molech, there used to be burnt offerings of infants at this valley. Later King Josiah (640 – 609 BC) destroyed this alter and utilized Ben Hinnom Valley to burn dead bodies in large numbers (2 Kings 23: 10, 13, 14). Thus, Valley of Ben Hinnom or the valley of fire symbolised lost souls and was considered a pre taste to the forthcoming fierce hell or Gahanna (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6)

The Biblical teachings about Sheol are not just confined to what are discussed above. There lots of commends about Sheol like continuing fire, total darkness, pit of fire, second death, pond of burning sulphur, place filled with worms those never die, dwelling place of Satan and his gang and so on, but these are not be understood in their literary sense.

Experience of Hell:

The place of evil men:

The theological inferences about eternal punishments have been questioned on the basis of love of God. According to Christian teachings, Hell or Gahanna has been the pain and sufferings of men and women mentally as also physically due to their not able to be in communion with God. The sustenance of such a situation is Eternal Hell. The comments in the Bible about Gahanna are being interpreted on these lines (Matthew 24:5; 25:30, 46; Luke 16: 19 – 31). Different terminologies of these have been discussed above (Matthew 13:42; Rev. 20: 14, 15; 4:6; 1 Peter 3:19; 2 Peter 2:4; Luke8:31). These readings make us realise that hell is a status and its net impact is spiritual and not material. The situation where man does not feel presence and communion of God, he is in darkness. Man cannot survive if he is not within the circle of God's love; he gets into a vacuum.

Not sustainable:

It is not easy to explain the nature of punishment evil men are likely to receive. However, there are certain basic principles in the Scriptures. The non ending experiences of lack of providential care, continuous irritations of sin, pain and sufferings of the soul and spirit, tribulations of conscious mind,

disappointment, tears, agony, teeth biting are all considered along with the Gahanna feelings (Matthew 11:22; Luke 12: 47, 48). But in all these narrations, the language used is metaphorical. These metaphors are used in Bible to picture the status of men who are distanced from the communion with God.

Period of punishment:

Eternal hell is a concept many do not agree to. Yet, 'surviving for ever' or 'eternal' are all terminologies hinting an era. The meanings to these are not limited. This is also seen symbolically. Matthew 25:46 uses the same term for righteous and non righteous alike. Fire never going out (Mark 9:43), the worms never dying (Mark 9: 48), the great chasm between the righteous and non righteous are all metaphoric usages.

Hope:

Base:

'Hope' is a thought seen quite often in New Testament. Generally, this is seen as the expectation of the life after one's physical death. The resurrection of Jesus Christ forms the foundation of Christian Hope. Along with that, this hope is strengthened by the personal relationship with the resurrected Christ. Jews were having hope in resurrection except the Sadducees. "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). This proclamation is repeated by Jesus in the above background (Matthew 22:32). In this world, whoever lives in true communion with God has no aspersions about the life after death in communion with God.

Old Testament:

In the Old Testament, the thought on Hope is clarified through the words safety, vigil and faith (Psalm 16:8; 22:9). Hope is also used to mean a firm and confirmed expectation (Pro. 22:19; Job 8:14; Psalm 42:5; 71:5); we this call 'place of refuge'. Hope is also used for hiding place and place of refuge (Psalm 62:8; Jer. 17:7, 17; Joel 3:16). In Old Testament, further, it also means awaiting (Ezra 10:2) and expectation of redemption (numbers 9:12). However, the expectation of resurrection grew among Jews quite late. Before the exile, the only thought about the departed was confined to Sheol and there were no further hope for them. But the reign of Antiochus IV (175 – 63 BC) and his persecutions paved way for post death hopes. The Jews were gaining confidence that Jehovah would not push those who laid down their lives for the sake of Law to Sheol. This teaching took firm roots among Jews.

New Testament:

The Greek origin for Hope as given in New Testament is 'Elpis'. This word means 'expectation'. In the backdrop of Old Testament, expectation is about goodness; the source of Christian Hope is the resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 1:3). Resurrected Christ is the essence of Christian faith. (1 Cor. 15:14). We look forward to the resurrection of Christian believers on this foundation. St Paul is one who has explained this topic elaborately with all its details (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5:1; Thess. 4:13 – 5:11).

Fullness of Christian Hope:

Eternal life is gift of God. Human efforts shall not be wasted for earning eternal life. Reliance in resurrection and mercy of God are the facets sustaining a Christian in the hope to eternal life. A Christian who places his hope in Theosis experiences its foretaste in this world itself. Such foretasting creates in him a strong desire to attain the wholeness of Theosis. The desire for Theosis in its wholeness would be sharpest if the foretaste is happiest. This hope of glorification is not based on simple promises, but as inspired by the glorified life of Jesus Christ. As such, St Paul explains the second coming of Christ as a hope filled with great blessing (Titus 2:13). The Christian joy and hope is part of the lasting glorification.

Questions;

1. Heaven and Hell are just not personal internal experiences. How do you establish this?
2. Based on Biblical evidences, explain the basis and goal of Christian Hope.

Lesson 5

Evil, Sufferings

Certain Remedial Theories # Christian Approach

God created Heaven and all those within that in six days. God saw whatever He has made as good (Genesis 1:31). He made everything proper and in order. In creation, He intertwined harmony and unity. Whatever distortions came up and are coming up challenging this uniqueness of unity is generally seen as evil here. God loves this universe and His children as a father; He is Omnipotent; then, why do these sufferings and related evil are allowed to be sustained in this universe? Is it because God is not so good? God is good, omnipotent, and loving His children and universe, but is it that He is careless? This comes up as an issue for believers of Christian, Jewish and Islam religions as they believe in a God who has a unique personality. As far as Hinduism is concerned, evil is part and parcel of a universal phenomenon.

How can one reconcile with providential care and sufferings of innocents? Children of innocents and harmless undergo sufferings and go through diseases ending up in death at the most unexpected situations; under such circumstances, what can we say about our God who takes care of us and who is good?

Certain Remedial Theories:

Evil doesn't have an essence:

God is fullness; God is the essence or the state of being. Therefore, lack of fullness and lack of the state of being we come across in this universe are evil. The thought that evil doesn't have a state of being got originated in Plato and was found acceptance with Plotinus; in due course, this thought that evil doesn't have a state of being grew strong taking deep roots with Thomas Aquinas. Thus, evil helps us to understand fullness and the state of being; this phenomenon is very much necessary. However, the proponents of this thought end up with their argument that only fullness and the state

of being have sustenance and therefore, evil would get destroyed. It is true that white designs appear prominent in blackish backgrounds; as such this theory deserves favourable considerations, but this is not found sufficient enough to console those human beings who are suffering under the worst tribulations by showering on them hope and comfort..

Bi power Argument:

The ancient Persian religion has been propagating a theory that two opposing forces namely good and evil rules over the universe; this theory is called Bi Power Argument. The basic dogma of the Zoroastrian religion is that there is a good god namely Ahura Mazda and his six spirits; there is an evil god Angra Mainyu and another six spirits. The former has been waging an eternal battle against the latter for the sustenance of the universe. As part of this, to topple all the programmes of Ahura Mazda, Angra Mainyu would spread all sorts of sufferings and persecutions in this universe but at the end, Angra Mainyu and his spirits would get defeated. There are theologians who think in this line about a final battle between God and Satan. This theory has its weakness that the power of God is shown belittled and thus has not been found that acceptable; further, it has not been good enough to influence human hearts.

God, the Autocrat:

God is the supreme power. What He desires is correct; what He does is correct. A potter has his authority over clay (Isaiah 45:9; Rom. 9:20); likewise wherever God feels that tribulations and sufferings are needed, He places them there. We have no right to question the will of God. The autocratic authority of Allah is quite evident in Islam. May be, such an authority is not seen that clearly in Christianity. Based on this, sufferings or evil are not that much of a worrying problem. Yet, the thought that suffering is needed for the good of man and that happens according to the will of God has been seen as an aberration to a certain extent to the concept of God's fatherly love.

Choosing goodness:

When God created man, nothing was imposed on him. He was expected to live freely choosing goodness; this has made pain, suffering and sin possibilities at creation itself. We may feel content that sufferings are needed for spiritual growth. But look at the common sufferings like war, flood, earth quake, eruption of volcano, thunder and lightning and drought; once we think of the consequences, these cannot be counted as events helping spiritual growth. It can be admitted that in the efforts to overcome sufferings, refinement of character may take place; however, when millions of human beings die of starvation, some others keep glorifying God and have their nature refined to be more pure cannot be said to match logic. Can one establish that virtues would not flourish in world free of sufferings? A Christian can accept that God can shower His grace to redeem man without bothering about his evil deeds, and that even sin can cause him to avail divine grace; but this too doesn't seem to match logic.

Christian Approach:

Though no religion has come out with a satisfactory remedy to evil acceptable to all, let us try to understand the Christian approach on the issue.

Providential Care:

Evil and consequent sufferings are realities, but these are never beyond providential care. As such, we can overcome them. This is what we learn in the Scriptures. Therefore, to address the issue of evil, we need to have faith in our Omnipotent God, which certainly is an essential requirement. Whatever happens to us, our God would cover us and the universe forever in His umbrella of love. This providential care, that works far exceeding our negative experiences and obstructions in life, which are temporary in character, helps to face evil with a positive attitude of mind. It needs to be noted that it would never be possible for us to convincingly explain the mystery behind our tribulations.

Freedom:

We possess the gift of freedom in our Divine nature; we have already seen that this contains the possibility of sin also. God cannot gift freedom to man without foreseeing the possibility of sin. Man uses his freedom to move against the will of God and thus slips down to tribulations, but still, God honours man's freedom. Sufferings come up from the misuse of freedom. God utilises that too in His redemption plans. The same divine love that has gifted freedom to man has been acting to help man to tackle the impacts of evil. By understanding the senselessness of evil, man succeeds to address evil with courage. Thus, God enables man to overcome evil through the freedom gifted to him.

Joint Responsibility:

The above explanation may be found satisfactory under circumstances where one voluntarily chooses evil; however, we have to look into our sufferings those cannot be attributed to our individual sins. We do not feel worried when those who carry out evil deeds undergo sufferings. But when children or innocent men are facing tribulations, we are shell shocked. It can be accepted that the tribulations undergone by Job was for a test of his faith in God; it can be accepted that the one who was born blind has been chosen to reveal the glory of God. But how do we justify the fate of those who died when the Siloam tower collapsed, even if many among them were sinners? The punishing acts of God has not been just a reaction to evil deeds of men; this is evident from the metaphor where a land lord pays same wages to all his labourers equally though the hours they worked in the field were different (Matthew 20:1 ff). God created mankind as one family and deals with us in that manner even now. We, members of this human family enjoy many gifts which may not have been earned through our efforts, but results of others' hard work; as such we are indebted to the entire mankind as well as to the entire creation. Under such a scenario, it would not be possible for us to escape from evil exclusively. Many of such evil would be consequences of sin; yet, many need not be due to individual sins. A sinner lives in a community and the effects of his sin are spread over those who live with him in that community.

Thus, we can explain the sufferings of men, which are not consequences of personal deeds, on the basis of this principle of joint responsibility. For example, in a family life, the head of the family would have been having many positive traits; he might also have many negatives in him. But the effects of his positives and his negatives are experienced by the whole family, for which the individual members may not be directly responsible. God never makes one family alone to suffer from evil; if He does, the basic nature of joint responsibility of mankind would be broken. All the good deeds are based on this joint responsibility and therefore though God doesn't wish so, he accepts the entry of evil into mankind.

To save mankind from the punishment of sin, Jesus Christ was born in mankind and suffered tribulations and death. He was not a sinner; but he took flesh in mankind which was filled in sin and took up the punishment for mankind voluntarily on him. One member of the family of mankind took punishment on his shoulder for the sake of all others. The one who did not sin accepted death on the cross for all the sinners, thereby dismissed the punishment on mankind. This representative nature of the suffering of Christ can be experienced in the sufferings of innocents even today. St Paul too explains one's suffering for the sake of others (2 Cor. 11: 23 – 28). "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Rom. 5: 3, 4). The approach of St Paul to sufferings should be a model for us. In all these situations, divinely appointed joint responsibility for redemption of mankind, is being evident. Not only that flood, earth quake and such natural disasters are quite common in nature. Man infers that he has no role in such calamities. But most of these are caused due to the irresponsible exploitation of nature by man. Science has proved that the causes of natural disasters can be traced to increased deforestation, uncontrollable atmospheric pollution and continuous defilement of water resources. God keeps check on creations based on the law of nature. When man acts against this divine alignment, he faces tribulations and he faces such tribulations jointly as a community.

Based on what are discussed above, it could be seen that man faces sufferings along with others or for others. Sufferings need not be seen as a punishment or a means to punish. It comes as a part of the pains of this world; each one of us is a part taker of that. Such a divinely aligned world life is for us, the mankind. Among us, those who face sincerely and courageously the sufferings they have in their life take up their effective role in the redemption of mankind positively; as such it can be certainly inferred that they are already in that personal relationship with God.

Questions:

1. What are the views held about sufferings and evil by world religions?
2. Based on this lesson, how do you explain the sufferings of Job who was righteous in the eyes of God?
3. Explain what is meant by joint responsibility.

Lesson 6

In Divine Glory

Divine Light # Experience of Mount Tabor # Experiencing Light # Light and Judgment

The possibility of man unifying with God is a great mystery. This happens just because of God's grace. Man doesn't lose his personality even in such a scenario of forsaking all natural desires and material needs. He would remain in a state of full consciousness in his wisdom of Triune God. This wisdom of God is a testing standard of his spiritual growth. As such, the absence of this wisdom is often said to be a spiritual slumber.

Divine Light:

God is Light. Sun and galaxy of stars are light created by God. God alone is uncreated light. This light enlightens human hearts day and night without any difference and transforms men as light. To understand God like this as light and man being transformed as light, the first step for man is total repentance. So long we continue in our sin filled life, we can never understand the Divine light. Once we are freed from the bondage of sin, grace of God reveals light that is the true essence of God.

Once we are enlightened before the Son of God, the eternal light, we will also look like burning candles. While we are in close relation with that big light, we also are fully lightened and become part of that light. What Moses saw in the burning bush and what Saul confronted on his way to Damascus was revelation of the same light. This light carried Elijah right up to the heavens. The angels of God are always at service to God being partners in the glory of this light. The experience of Christ's disciples on Mount Tabor points to this light. Thus, God reveals Himself and communicates with those who unite with Him in repentance through this uncreated light. This light far exceeds our sensual wisdom; this is not something formulated with intellectual imagination. This light is a sign of Divinity being revealed. This light fills not only our intellect, but our whole person. After Christ resurrected, Mary Magdalene saw this light at the grave where Jesus was buried. This light strengthened her to see the angels and talk with them the grave side.

Experience of Mount Tabor:

Based on what has been discussed above, it can be said that the Tabor experience and the transformation of Jesus Christ come up with a self revelation of Jesus, the eternal light. While living in this world in flesh, as the eternal Son of God, he has been spreading this light in the universe. It would have been for the sake of his disciples to be convinced, he would have made this self revelation. For a short while, they were raised to a state that was far beyond the history bound by time and space. They experienced the essence of Godliness in Christ. Even for us, this vision is possible; but we have to have Divine grace to lift us to that level. We do have this experience within our own specific levels of repentance. As such, we have this experience more and more visible as we move ahead in our purification through true repentance. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). As we have repentance within us, we have the Tabor experience too with us. Here, we are in communion with the Divine light not through the transformation of God, but in the renewal of our heart.

While thinking on these lines, a question comes up; how come that we do not experience this Divine Glory? The answer is quite clear in the discussions above. A man who is a victim of Satan's influence and is subject to worldly temptations and material desires, to have a communion with God would look like a mere joke. He may even view the Biblical truths as just myths. Even if one believes in the realities of Scriptures and the essence of God, unless he leads a life in line with such realities, he cannot become a part taker of this light. Those who have been such part takers of this light were present in the Church throughout its history. Seraphim, the saint who lived in Sarov of Russia in the 19th century had this divine light filled in him consequent to his pure communion with God and once he showed it to Motovilov, his disciple. Motovilov just turned his face down; nothing else he could react. Motovilov himself has recorded this incident. He was doubtful about such Divine light transforming man to divine glory, but could experience it in his master Saint Seraphim. The very next moment, Motovilov was taken aback when he was told by Saint Seraphim that he was seeing

Motovilov too in that divine light. However, we do not have a concerted effort within us to have this experience in us; even if we have it occasionally, the tendency is to earn fame across the world and the selfishness hidden in us draws us to wrong directions. Those directions we feel good would be good enough to some extent, but not really sufficient to reach Divine glory.

Experiencing Light:

Our fathers have recorded that this communion in Divine glory is an experience that is beyond narration by words. They have seen this as something transcendent as a divine feeling exceeding words, similes, colours, pictorial beauties, names etc. We come to know God in such experience. He talks to us and we hear Him. But our fathers say that these can just be experienced and cannot be explained or narrated. It is this 'divine ignorance' we attain eternally in our experience of this splendour. Here, the knowledge and love of man and God reach their sanctum sanctorum. The love and light being the pinnacle of glory in Holy Trinity is filled in man from where it flows continuously. Deeds of love that is within the comprehensive power of this uncreated light turns out fruitful and sustainable.

With Holy Baptism, each Christian enters this experience of light. What happens here is the commencement of the experience of glory that gets fulfilled with the second coming of our Lord. A person on getting baptized enters the beginning of Eschaton glorification. A Christian who lives in this reality would not find the second coming of Christ an accidental occurrence. It would not be a day of surprise for him. It would be a simple continuation of what he was experiencing till the previous day. However, for those who are not living in this experience of Divine glory would find the Day of the Lord sudden, accidental and external as well as of a different feeling. For them, this day is expected to be a day of fear and shivering. "A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light in him" (John 10:9, 10). {The word used in Greek origin is 'no light in him'. There are Malayalam versions where this has come wrong as 'no light for him'}. Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12). As such, the one who walks in light doesn't fear darkness or evil. When Jesus Christ lives in us as light, we do walk as those during the day and live with no fear of darkness that is evil. However, the one who lives in darkness that is evil doesn't have light in him and thus he fears light. Once light rises in him, his life in darkness would end; with that the temporary happiness he was enjoying would also end. Moreover, in this world, he was leading a life rejecting the light in this world despite the coming of Christ, the light of this world; he was living in his will choosing darkness for which he has to answer before Christ, the creator and the light of universe. Thus, the coming of Christ is a joy for those who live in light and fearsome for those who live in darkness.

Light and Judgment:

The desire for repentance comes up in one when the rays of this light pierces into him. One who repents and accepts this light has a judgment and consequently, he has tears of penitence in his eyes and a commitment in his heart to commence a new life. The feeling of love of God leads one to repentance. Influence of this light creates a feeling of love of God and a judgment takes place in him; as such he is placed in the new life within that circle of light. This makes him not to fear the final judgment as some sort of a dreadful event. However, those who do not live in that splendour in this world would face the final judgment with a terrified state of mind. While living in darkness, they could not understand Divine love and they had their sinful way of living as a shield albeit temporary.

They never had any judgment yet. As such, they look forward to the final judgment at the second coming of Christ with tremendous fear. In their darkness, they could not see the decayed state of their soul that has been distorted in sin. But when the eternal light rises universally, (Matthew 24:30) they would feel shy at the decayed state of their soul. They were continuously engaged in their sinful way of living, but Divine love was calling them back filling them with virtuous gifts; once they realise this, they would feel the prick and would lament in sorrow. Thus, on the final Day of Judgment, they would experience the hardest torture out of divine love. The dazzle of light causes hard punishment for the companions of darkness. Love of God and justice of God assemble here. Love of God never wavers. In the splendour of final judgment, those who have been living in light enjoy their fate and be joyous; those who have been living in darkness suffers the torture of that fascinating power and are struck hard by the judgment.

The created universe wholly gets transformed in the Divine light with the final judgment and gets unified with God. Each individual shines dazzlingly as per his vision of light. We can understand the dwelling places in the House of Father in this sense also (John 14: 1, 2). However, those who have not got involved in the light may or may not come to ultimate redemption, but how this happens is beyond human logic. Man cannot formulate borderlines for the mercy of God.

Questions:

1. Explain the possibilities and experiences of living in Divine light.
2. How do we relate final judgment and life in light?

Unit 3

Redemption Thoughts in Worship

Lesson 1

Entry into Eternity

Holy Baptism: Point of Entry, Identifying to Redemption, Sealing # Water of Baptism: Stepping Stone to Redemption # Anointment of Holy Mooron: Sword of the Spirit # Holy Qurbana: Dwelling with Christ

Holy Baptism; Point of Entry:

Having born again through Christian love is the entry point to eternal life. Being entrusted this spiritual and priestly service to his chosen disciples by Jesus Christ, the Church is carrying out the same through successive priests today. Each individual who comes to join Christ through Baptism experiences the realisation of redemption that is made possible in his having taken flesh as a man. Thus, to become men of Christ, one should earn mercy and grace (1 Peter 2:10). In other words, the call of baptism is to commence a new spiritual life of redemption by one submitting to Christ beyond worldly relations. It is in this sense, Psalms 29: 1 – 4 and 45: 10 – 12 are included at the beginning of the Order of Holy Baptism.

Renewal from corruptibility to non corruptibility is the commencement of eternity. This starts at Holy Baptism in an individual. While going through the Order of Holy Baptism, we understand through the teachings of our fathers that the Baptism of Christ in Jordan was answering the lamentation of Adam to renew him from his corrupt nature.

Identifying to Redemption, Sealing:

On the fore head of the one who is baptised, there is a sealing to eternity in the name of Holy Trinity, which protects him from death of sin. The sealing done with the blood of the slain lamb on the door frames of houses where the Israelites stayed in Egypt at the time of Passover to escape the wrath of our Lord was a foretaste of this sealing in Baptism. This has enabled them to understand the senselessness of this worldly life and to experience the mystery of Holy Trinity through our internal eyes. Moreover, the possibility comes up to earn grace to overcome deeds leading to death. As a new birth, what happens in Baptism is the entry to the Divine harbour of light from the fortress of darkness under Satan. As mankind was under bondage in that fortress of darkness, this entry makes it possible to renew the decayed strength through this entry. The initial sealing, therefore, is the sign of an earmarking to that.

Any person born to mankind that has been 'fallen' should make it possible that there is an entry to eternity through Baptism. What happens here is an admission to the spiritual stable of the herd of lambs owned by Christ from being born to the material stable of mankind. Church is the spiritual Canaan where flows the streams of redemption as different sacraments from the source of life which is Christ. To have our place there, we wash ourselves to be clean and pure that our hearts are with no stains so that we are sealed to eternity. Christ is light that is far above all sorts of human illustrations and assumptions. By our joining with him, we are sharing his facial grace which starts reflecting within us as well. Christ has made us children to God, the Father and has been renewing our evil influenced human nature of the past consequent to the fall in sin. One who believes in Christ and become a part of his body, the Church, gets filled in the light of Kingdom of God. He experiences wearing the incorruptible attire reflecting the sealing to eternal life. This enables us to live a life of easiness and peace based on Christian hope opposing satanic temptations.

Through Baptism, we earn a purity of redemption, a Divine Holiness and unity with Jesus Christ, our Lord. Our names are then entered in the Book of Life along with the names of those saints called to the experience of redemption. Christ has redeemed mankind through the cross and the one who is baptised is sealed with the sign of this cross; he has thus been redeemed with the sign of cross in his heart. One you are sealed with the cross for eternal life, you are freed from all possibilities and bondage of evil; this can be understood to be a beginning to the final sealing (Revelations 2:3).

A crucial part in the Order of Holy Baptism is the prayer to cleanse the person being baptised to holiness of Holy Spirit dwelling in him thereby saving him from satanic surroundings (1 Cor. 3:16). The person declares that he is discarding Satan and that he is accepting the Messiah and his pieces of advice; this declaration redeems the person from sinfulness and makes his entry to the reflection of Christ's light revealing the path of redemption. He declares the faith that has been passed on by the apostles and fathers down the line and thereby gets sealed as a son of God.

Water of Baptism; Stepping Stone to Redemption:

The trough for Baptism is the second mother of the person to be baptised. The water in this trough is mother's womb. The spiritual birth of the one being baptised happens from this spiritual womb. This water is boiled in the fire of Holy Spirit and the person who enters this trough of water gets melted and he is transformed as a new man; the old man is melted to be transformed as a new man. Thus, this water is a crucible that moulds 'incorruptibility'. The attire of Satan as temptations of evil systematically annihilates those wearing them; this attire is replaced by that white robe of heavenly glory and splendour and this is the water of baptism. This water becomes a stream of purification when the celebrant blows in divine breath into this water and blesses with the dwelling of Holy Spirit. The sign of cross is drawn over this water that it symbolises the death and resurrection of Christ; thus the one being baptised participates in the death and resurrection of Christ. For the person who is dipped in this water to have the experience of renewal, Holy Mooron is poured in. Thus, in short, the water for Baptism is believed to be: water of comfort, water of joy, symbol of Christ's death and resurrection, means to purify the filth of soul and body, means to release bondages, means to forgive sins, means to enlighten soul and body, means for bathing to being born again, means of blessings to being son of God, attire of incorruptibility and the means of renewal in Holy Spirit.

Baptism as participation in Redemption:

The person who is baptised is immersed in the water of baptism to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and he comes up; this symbolises death and resurrection. Thus, the new man is born in the experience of redemption through baptism. { 'Didache', written in 2nd century containing the teachings of Twelve Apostles advises thus: for baptising, the person can be dipped in a flowing stream of water in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; in the alternative, he can be dipped in stored water or even, water can be poured on his head three times.}

Anointment of Holy Mooron; Sword of the Spirit:

Anointment of Holy Mooron is the preparation to wage a battle as a bold warrior against Satan. Wearing the sword of Holy Spirit indicates that realisation of redemption happens only through continuous fight against Satan as taught by Mar Aphrem. This fight commences at the entry point to eternal life. As the path to redemption is opened, one is prepared to wage the battle on his way. Anointment of Holy Mooron provides these in a new man: the seal and sign of Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:14), all the spiritual fragrance or the blessings and gifts of Holy Spirit, power to confront evil forces, power to walk in Divine glory as son of Light, eligibility to live with the Messiah and finally being the dwelling place of Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).

Crowning of Redemption:

We are to be rewarded with the Crown of Eternity at its fullness. To symbolise this, the new man is made to wear a crown. We are to earn the crown of Divine glory splendour at eternity.

Holy Qurbana; Dwelling with Christ:

The new man's acceptance of Holy Qurbana is the sanctum sanctorum of his entry to eternal life. The Messiah is pictured here as the symbol of the Tree of Life which Adam, the man of corruptibility could not even taste due to his fall in sin. As such, Adam renewed through the redemption deeds of Jesus found the flesh and blood of Jesus as life providing. The fruit of the Tree of Life was prohibited for him; but the Messiah purified him from sin and gave him the fruit of the Tree of Life. Through baptism, the old man is discarded and the new man experiences the flesh and blood of Jesus; he becomes the dwelling place of Jesus Christ. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him" (John 6: 56). Unless we are in unison with Christ like this, we do not enjoy partnership and full membership with the Church. Therefore, the one who gets baptised accepts the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ immediately and fulfils his entry into eternal life in full membership with the Church.

Questions:

1. How do we say that Holy Baptism, anointment of Holy Mooron and acceptance of Holy Qurbana are unavoidable factors in entering eternal life?
2. What are the meanings of the declarations being made during the service of Holy Baptism?
3. What all symbolise the blessed water of Holy Baptism?

Lesson 2

Remission of Sin

In Holy Baptism # In Holy Qurbana # In Holy Confession # In Holy Matrimony Service # In other Services

Relevance:

The idea of remission of sin is explained in the literature to liturgy related to sin. If sin is bondage, remission of sin is liberation. See the comparison below:

Sin	Remission
Bondage	Liberation
Darkness	Light
Distancing from God	Closeness to God
Disobedience	Submission
Wayward Way of Life	Life in Straight Path

In short, the place for this in the theory of redemption is quite clear. This assumes importance in all the liturgies of Orthodox Churches. Remission of sin is relevant in the process of redemption as a first step towards purification. In all our sacraments and worships remission of sin is a crucial factor; further its importance is highlighted that there is separate sacrament for remission of sin itself.

In Holy Baptism:

Children of Adam corrupted in sin are born as part of fallen mankind; in Holy Baptism, they are purified and strengthened to be transformed to incorruptible nature of true man. This is the remission of sin every person gets in Baptism. However, when an adult is baptised, apart from this, he can confess sins committed in his practical life and earn remission thereof. Remission of sin is a first step of redemption.

In Holy Qurbana:

We accept Holy Qurbana to earn remission of sins and forgiveness to shortcomings. The Holy flesh and blood of our Lord happen to be the piece of live coal providing remission of sins. The piece of live coal touched Isaiah's tongue and he earned remission for his sins (Isaiah 6:3). Likewise, the Holy flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ provide remission of sins to a faithful and purifies him the moment they are on his tongue.

The celebrant prays to Lord Jesus Christ for all those who are alive and for all those who are departed interceding with all the saints of the Church during the preparatory service to Holy Qurbana for remission of their sins and for forgiving their shortcomings in life as also for the Lord to be pleasing with them. Offering incense over the prepared Bread and Wine, the celebrant submits all the needs of those who are taking part in the Holy Qurbana as well as for all the departed ones to retrieve them to the path of redemption and for their progressive spirituality. The concluding prayers in this preparatory service reveals the inevitable facet that the wrath of God that has fallen on mankind due to sinful life of man be taken away and all those who are alive and departed may receive remission for their sins. During the Holy Qurbana, we have a prayer called Hoosoyo just after the Promiyon and before the Sedaro; this prayer is for remission of sins for all those children of the Church – alive and departed. Even in prayers of Sedaro, the thoughts of remission of sins are evidently seen. Offering incense and reciting these prayers of Sedro for remission of sins of the faithful are really sensible and purposeful (Rev. 8: 3, 4).

Before touching the Holy mysteries, the celebrant prepares himself by washing his hands; this symbolises remission of sins by washing away the 'filthy dirt of the soul'. The celebrant kneels down before the Holy Throne and offers prayers for remission of his own sins and for all those who have given names for remembrance in Holy Qurbana; these prayers prepare the congregation to accept the Holy flesh and blood in the feeling of being redeemed. Once he steps on to the Dargo and the prayers those follow stress that the celebration of this Sacrament is for remission of sins as well. This also clarifies the importance of purification for the experience of redemption. While blessing the Bread and Wine, it said in particular that they are for remission of sins as also for eternal life (Matthew 26: 28; John 6: 54). By invoking Holy Spirit or Epiclesis by the celebrant, Holy Spirit descends and purifies the Bread and Wine to transform them as Holy flesh and blood of our Messiah; this purifies all present there providing remission of sins to all (The Thaksa of Twelve Apostles).

Tub dens are intercessions of those alive and departed. The Order of Service for Breaking Bread has prayers indicating that the sacrifice of Holy Qurbana is being offered for remission of sins. This again conveys the thought that remission of sins is a need for redemption to be realistic. Again, all the prayers during the Holy Mysteries being brought to the west are for remission of sins for those who take part in the Holy flesh and blood of our Lord. In the final Hoothomo by the celebrant, he prays to our Lord that the wrong doings of all those sinners who have accepted the holy flesh and blood be forgiven. In the concluding benediction of the Holy Qurbana too, the celebrant offers remission of sins and forgiving of shortcomings by the Holy Trinity. Thus, Holy Qurbana is a sacrament where those who submit them before Holy Trinity through their consumption of Holy flesh and blood earn remission for their sins from Holy Trinity and receives Grace to live in the feeling of renewal of the experience of redemption.

In Holy Confession:

Any person who is in Christ receives remission of sins in Baptism and subsequently, remission of sins is available through Holy Confession. In this sense, Holy Confession is also called 'second Baptism'.

Remission of sins is not to be viewed as an authority received by a priest individually from Christ or as a priestly responsibility. Christ establishes redemption through his Church. Christ is not only the one who remits sins, but he himself is remission of sins. As such, remission of sins indicates return to

Christ. As Christ carries out redemption through church, just like redemption is in Church, remission of sins too is in Church.

Church provides to a repenting believer through Holy Confession the very same experience he had while he reconciled with Christ in Holy Baptism. When a person who had distanced himself from Christ through sin returns to Christ, Church is not discarding his sins, but is providing remission to his sins. This remission helps him to progress in a new experience of redemption. He starts to walk in a renewed life with a body of refreshed glory (2 Kings 5:14) with the wounds of his sins totally healed. It is the Church that provides the gift of Kingdom of Heaven. As such, remission of sins is a blessing that brings back those who had been distanced from this kingdom. Those believers who were proceeding towards Kingdom of Heaven the right way through Holy Baptism, but turned wayward in between are made to return through this gift of remission of sins from the Church. Continuous repentance helps one to experience the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven through continuous remission of sins.

In short, Holy Confession is a remission granted by Christ through the Church. We commence to experience these blessings from Holy Baptism. What happens in Holy Confession is the progressive growth and renewal of this blessing. The priest lays his hands on the head of one who repents and prays for remission of his sins; it is a symbolic act of his return to the joyous experience of the remission of his sins. Each Holy Qurbana is not repetition in itself; but is a raising and recognition to the eternal feast. Likewise, each Confession is not a repetition of Baptism; but is just returning to the renewal of life gifted to us by Christ once for all.

In Holy Matrimony Service:

The thoughts of remission of sins are inclusive in the Holy Matrimony Service directly as well as indirectly. In both parts of the services for Matrimony, Psalm 51 is recited. A direct reference to remission of sins comes when the bride is made to wear the veil and the celebrant prays, 'be your sins and shortcomings be forgiven as it was to that sinful woman'. Against the will of God, the first family leaned towards Satan's wishes and thus sinned; they showed disobedience by distancing the world away from God and belittled God; they fought with God. Once God's love is recognised they responded by obeying God and submitting to God; thus there happened a rejoinder with God and the world turned out to be the bride of God. Church becomes the bride of Christ. The holy Service of Matrimony symbolises this. Christ and Church turn out to be bride and groom when Christ's love is responded and through love filled obedience, Church earns remission for its sins. This metaphor is evident in the husband – wife relationship. Our ultimate goal in life is fullness of love and victory over Satan. This is the truth behind redemption as well. This thought is expressive in a prayer: 'O Lord, let them be seekers of eternity and their deeds be far away from those fallen in death of sin; let their hearts be joined to you that they are always moving nearer to your Holiness and stay far away from the slavery of the doomed Satan'. Thus, matrimony is a mystery of a life of cooperation in the experience of progressive growth through redemption in remission of sins. It is worth noting that a second marriage has prayers of repentance and remission of sins in the order of service.

In other Services:

The entire service for funeral carries prayers for forgiving of shortcomings and remission of sins at the second coming of Christ and thereby earning wholeness of eternal life. The service order for anointing the sick symbolises the eternal remission of sins offered by Christ; this is indication of the experience of Kingdom of God where there are no mental or physical weaknesses. Because of this all prayers for this service are of remission of sins. This service is coordinated in such a way that the basic cause for illness comes from sins and therefore remission of sins is needed for healing the sick. During the blessing of a house, there are prayers for the remission of sins of members of that family. It is worth remembering here that the repentance and penance of Zacchaeus ensured redemption for him and his kith and kin (Luke 19: 9, 10). In all services related to priestly ordinations, while invoking Holy Spirit, the celebrant prays that Holy Spirit who dwelt in Moses, Aaron, Apostles and Prophets dwell in him and purify him from all sins. Accordingly, it is a service enabling him to attain wholeness; this certainly is a highly sensible thought. Ordination in effect culminates in marriage of overflowing love with the Church. A priest is understood to be marrying the Church as attaining fullness of Christ's love. This service of ordination is an epitome of love that transforms the whole world. Thus the priest and his Church move forward to redemption. The thought 'remission of sin and redemption' is very much evident here.

Questions:

1. For remission of sins, there is just one Baptism. If so, why should there be a Holy Confession?
2. How can the remission of sins through Holy Qurbana be explained?
3. The service of Holy Matrimony is a symbol of remission of sins and also of redemption. How?

Lesson 3**Growing in Holiness**

In Holy Baptism # In Holy Qurbana # In Other Services # In Holy Matrimony Service # In the Service for Funerals # In Rituals

In Holy Baptism:

Means of growth in Holiness for a Christian are Sacraments. Being part of Holy Baptism is the first step in spiritual growth. One receives grace through this sacrament to discard all those deeds leading to death. The celebrant prays that the one who is being baptised is brought to good protection and fullness in his growth. We learn that Holy Baptism is the prayer for staying away from the senselessness of this world and the means for moving forward in the commandments of God to grow in Holiness. When the celebrant prays that the one being baptised be filled in divine gifts the purpose is to grow in Holiness. The prayer during the anointment of Holy Mooron shows that the

one who has been anointed commences his growth in Holiness: 'let him be not afraid of the lords of evil or powers of darkness; let him walk in your glory; let him move forward as a child of light and reach your presence'. What is being stressed here is that his heart is strengthened in the heavenly power of Holy Spirit and is provided a royal anointment that he is chosen to reign with Christ. Reigning as a royal son of heavenly kingdom is certainly an indication of progressive growth in Holiness. Crowning of this king is 'to be pleasing to your Lordship and to be in line with your Holy name'. Further, it is also prayed: 'let him grow guided by your Lordship's right hand and strengthened in it'. All these prayers are aiming at growth to Holiness through a life in righteousness.

In Holy Qurbana:

The basic aim of Holy Qurbana is this: 'through this live service, make us good enough to submit ourselves as live sacrifice acceptable before you'; this prayer is part of the preparatory service to Holy Qurbana. The purpose behind this spiritual sacrifice (1 Peter 2:5) can be summed up as 'let us transform afresh and be renewed in Holiness to move forward'. Our thoughts, our words and our deeds are to become burnt offerings before God; this happens only when our thoughts, words and deeds are submitted in their absoluteness to Christ by having Christ's mind in Holy Qurbana. This submission forms the basics of Holy Qurbana. We take part in the Holy flesh and blood of our Lord to be part and parcel of the great service of Holy Trinity and glorification of His Holy name as if being suitable homes of purity and chosen vessels. Christ has become a life providing sacrifice for us; likewise, we have to submit ourselves to Christ as living sacrifices in Holy Qurbana. In Sedaro, the prayer contains thoughts like these; we shall be Holy dwelling places for God; our hearts and mind are purified by our Lord Messiah; we are to be the leavening flour to be leavened to the flesh and blood of messiah in Holiness; we have to be promises to redemption reaching the wholeness of growth to eternal life. We have to spread fragrance of righteous deeds and offer the best of services in wholeness thereof to Christ throughout our life in the presence of God; this is what is expected from us in our participation in Holy Qurbana. So we pray in Sedaro that our breath, our tongue, our mouth and our lips spread fragrance of Holiness.

Our experience in Holy Qurbana helps us to observe the Holy Commandments in its proper ways and to live in peace by having joined together in a relation of love that is free from all sorts of ill feelings. The relation we have been having with Holy Trinity, if broken in our sinful life, is re-established through the remission of sins through the performance of this sacrifice and the Holiness as well as in our total submission; thus we are in the experience of togetherness with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Purification of life and its stainlessness are to be achieved ultimately in this sacrament. It becomes possible when our Lord dwells in us forever. By accepting the Holy flesh and blood of our Lord, we can say that he is in us, but he doesn't act in us mechanically or unilaterally or in a magical way. He acts in us only if we, using our free will, retain in us a suitable scenario for him. In case we are acting in contrast, God will not act in us overlooking our free will. Therefore, even if we accept Holy Qurbana regularly, in spite of his dwelling in us, our growth in Holiness will be hampered due to our not taking a stand in us conducive for him to act.

In Other Services:

Holy Confession is a re-consecration of our life in Holiness. What happens here is leaving the wrong path and returning to the way of truth taking the oath to grow in Holiness. Through Holy Confession, a Christian enters the battle field once again courageously with his weapons sharpened. A believer

who comes prepared for a Holy Confession possesses a deep desire to grow in Holiness. In Holy Confession, he represents the creation that is groaning for the glorification of children of God (Rom. 8:22). After this confession, he represents the Church wearing robes of whiteness and worshipping before the Divine Throne day and night with his attire cleansed in the blood of the lamb (remission of sins).

In Holy Matrimony Service:

Even the service of Holy Matrimony is means for growth in Holiness. Creations as a whole accept God as the creator, protector and guardian in Divine love and obedience leading to fullness of redemption process. Likewise, in the path of Holiness, the man and woman on the basis of love accept each other mutually; their sharing and obedience pave the way for a new nature and style in their journey to redemption. They are enriched in wisdom and are filled in righteousness. From them, fragrance of righteousness is spread across. They have in them a unity that is not of emotional feelings. They are protected mutually in stainlessness. They earn wholeness in truth and justice. They are decorated with maturity. They are noble in humility. They are rich in character that earns them Divine favours. They affirm themselves in faith and love with each other sincerely. They are enriched in virtues. They have the Divine grace to move forward to kingdom of heaven. It is prayed that the married life would help the man and woman to lead a life that is matching the lives of the saints of the Church through acts of divinity.

In the Service for Funerals:

In funeral service, the thought of growing in holiness after death is mentioned. In the funeral service for men, there is a prayer for the departed soul meaning like this; 'let this soul be led by your holy angels to places rich in comforts and joy till the day of resurrection and stay happily to confront you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit forever and ever'. We pray that the departed soul dwell in cities of saints; we pray that the departed soul be comforted in heavenly Jerusalem and the beautiful dwelling places there. We pray that the soul departed from the body dwell in peace till resurrection; we also pray that the Lord comfort the departed soul and keep the soul courageous; these prayers indicate that the soul is alive after its departure from the body. Again, we have detailed narrations about the ghastly hands of death, the attack of evil forces hiding in the air to catch hold of the departed soul, the fearsome scenes of Sheol and all in our prayers in the orders of funeral services; these are helpful to view the reality of death with all seriousness it deserves. Yet, the exhortations of St Peter and St Paul help us to look at death with a sense of hope and courage as well as with a smiling face; after death, the soul can lead a life matching the will of God (1 Peter 4:6); once the soul leaves the body, it is with Christ and we have that pleasing experience (2 Cor. 5: 8, 9).

In Rituals:

Learning the Holy Word creates our way to growing in Holiness. Consistent reading of Holy Bible and meditation thereof help us arrive at solutions and solace to our day to day problems. Also, this is helpful for us to grow akin to will of God and prepares us to lead a life of repentance and worship. All our senses such as intellect, memory, will power, wishes, genetic traits and natural emotions are purified and transformed through regular meditations of the Word.

Prayers, Lents and fasting are all different facets of worship. There are no means further to these to help a person in disciplining his soul and body. Man is not having soul alone; he is one where a body, a soul and a mind combine. Redemption of a man is the transformation of all these factors in a unified manner. Thus, prayers, Lents and fasting are arranged in unison to all these. Body that is beyond restrictions is suited for prayer. Absence of prayers would adversely affect the internal sense of contentment thereof and the spiritual joy so generated. The Church has taken all these into considerations and thus for the growth in Holiness of its members, the saintly fathers have set apart a system of prayers, Lents and fasting.

Questions:

1. Explain the relevance of sacraments while growing in Holiness.
2. How does our partaking of Holy Qurbana help our growth in Holiness?
3. How do prayers, observance of Lents and fasting help the growth in Holiness?

Lesson 4

Social Commitment

In Holy Baptism # In Holy Qurbana # In Holy Matrimony Service # In Other Services # In Rituals

Man and creations were cursed because of man (Genesis 3:17). As such, redemption of creation is dependent on the redemption of man. This makes it clear that man has his commitment towards the community (Rom. 8:22). Our worship orders are codified based on these truths also.

Our messiah has used metaphors that 'you are the salt of earth' or 'you are the light of earth' (Matthew 5:13, 14) indicating the relations and commitment a Christian has towards the community. "Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20); "You are of this world" (John 8:23). These verses call upon our responsibilities to this universe. In the letter to Diaconates (125 AD), it is exhorted that as soul is to body, Christians are for the world; this is quite true. This indicates that the goal of a Christian is not to attain redemption of his soul by choosing to close his eyes to the issues of the world. The unavoidable task for Christians is to achieve redemption for the whole universe. The world of our dwelling surely is for us, but we are responsible for its transformation matching the Divine designs as we are responsible for its curse by God.

In Holy Baptism:

There was a general interpretation by early day fathers that Jesus Christ had entered the Jordan water for being baptised with a view that the entire sources of water in this world be purified. There is a prayer: 'O Lord of Holiness! You have purified the entire sources of water, all the lakes and rivers through your baptism; be it that through your Holiness, we too are purified on your Danaho, the day of Holiness'. Likewise, during many of our orders of worship, we use certain objects and those in relation to such objects are also blessed, which is an indication that the universe too is purified. For example, when the tender leaves of coconut trees or palm trees are blessed in the order of service for Hosanna, the trees from where they are cut off are also blessed through our prayers. Plants or

flowers are used in our worships not just as decorative objects, but they represent the participation of the universe in worship. In the worships of Byzantine Churches, such objects are used with greater symbolic representation. Water, oil of gladness, Holy Mooron, Bread and Wine in Holy Qurbana are all symbolising the representation of all creations in the worship. When they are purified by Holy Spirit through our prayers, the ongoing purification of the universe is taking place.

One who is baptised wears the sword of Spirit and enters the battle field to wage a war against the forces of evil those are present among the creations. Therefore, he is responsible for the purification of the universe and has to act accordingly. All our worships are services taking place under the auspices of Church; yet, Holy Qurbana can be qualified as a sacrifice of the community.

In Holy Qurbana:

During the preparatory service to Holy Qurbana, the celebrant prays, 'we remember all those who have contributed towards the construction of this temple; we remember all those who are in relationship with this temple; we remember all those who have relations with us in words or in deeds, be them little or more'. This prayer illustrates the representative character of the community in the service of Holy Qurbana. During this preparatory service, the celebrant prays for all those who are being in persecution, all those who are in tribulations, all the widows as well as all those who are in destitution, all the sick and all those who suffer on one account or another; here, we can include the members of the Church as well as those who are not. We have this supplication in one Sedaro of our Holy Qurbana: 'O our Lord, by the participation in thismay peace prevail over all nations; may the accused and the sinners be accepted; may the whole world be protected; may all the years be blessed abundantly'; this certainly looks into the goodness of the universe in general and to prevail righteousness of God among the good and evil. In the intercession prayers of Holy Qurbana, we pray that peace may prevail in all countries and that wars between nations come to end forever. During Tub den, we pray for the blessings of the years and for abundance of agricultural produce (Thaksa of Mar Yuhanon). The concluding prayer addressed to our Messiah in the same Thaksa has supplications like this: 'let the whole universe be redeemed and raised; let there be guardians for all those who are alive in this earth; let comfort rule over all the departed; let all those who are hungry be satisfied; let all those who suffer from poverty be protected; let all the sick be taken care of; let all those suffer from one reason or another be relieved'. This supplication makes us to be live to our responsibilities to this universe.

In the Thaksa of Mar Isaac, what the celebrant prays is worth noting: 'O my Lord! Please look after those who pass through the oceans and other paths of roughness with your mercy in abundance; please remove merciless governance and troublesome ordeals from us by providing your comfort; please provide us your days of joy and your years of prosperity from your joyous presence'. This is a prayer by the Church doing interceding priestly service for the whole universe before the Omnipresence of God.

In Holy Matrimony Service:

A Christian family is one that is joined by God through the sacrament called matrimony as a model to the community. Family is a micro unit and symbol of the universe. As the members of a family have mutual responsibilities and relations among themselves, its horizon of responsibilities has been expanding within the community. Wherever this micro unit is associating itself, it is committed to be

leaven to the community at large as an individual does in personal life. This truth gets highlighted in the service order for Holy Matrimony. Man and woman join in matrimony where Church is the mediator and members of Church are participants as witnesses; they too are blessed in the service of matrimony. There are prayers for such blessings throughout this order of service. This illustrates the relationship the community is holding along with the initiation from the Church during matrimony.

For the progressive growth towards redemption in its wholeness, the man and woman who are joined in matrimony as well as that community who participated in their matrimony service are mutually indebted to each other. The prayer, 'as the name of our Lord is called upon you, be it that all people sing His glory joyously' makes us understand the relevance the formation of this small family has on the community for its redemption. In the benediction, the words 'the one from the very high who came down to Mount Sinai to enter into a covenant with the bride that was being led out of Egypt would bless you and the whole of this gathering' is certainly the sanctum sanctorum of social commitment in its entirety. Again, the celebrant declares, 'children, note in particular that now you are standing in the presence of God and before this gathering of people'. All these show that the bride and groom are mutually entrusted and they are moving ahead in the fullness of love towards redemption for which the community hands them over to each other in faith. They are responsible to ensure that they do not fail here; so also the community.

In Other Services:

Those believers who participate in a funeral service take the opportunity to pray also for their own lives to be filled in righteousness and their good end. This is a characteristic of the service order showing the common nature of redemption plan. The intercession, 'with the rays of light emanating from your resurrection, may the souls of each one among us be enlightened' also indicates the same.

The illness of one person is a cause of sorrow for the community as well and his healing provides joy to the community too; such thoughts are prevalent in the order of service for the anointment of sick. The community shares the sorrow of one's illness and sin and rejoices with him when he is healed is indicative of the mutual responsibilities of the members of the Church or community. The prayer, 'be his sorrow removed and we made happy in his healing' is really meaningful.

In the order of service for blessing of dwelling places, what we see is the members of that place of dwelling is purified and those who stay there are cleansed; they are put together in a feel of redemption as was done by our Messiah at the house of Zacchaeus. What happen here in its reality are the prayers of the Church as flowing blood gets circulated through those veins which are the dwelling places of the members of the Church, thereby formulating an unbreakable relationship amongst them that is live and active.

Whatever sins we do or shortcomings we possess knowingly or unknowingly are reasons for evil to prevail in the community causing the wrath of God. Each individual represents and symbolises the community and happens to be its micro unit; therefore the confession of an individual reveals his responsibilities to the community. Such confession is useful not for the individual alone but also for the community for its remission of sins, purification, dilution of evil within it and so on. As such, a

person who doesn't carry out true confessions is staying away from his responsibilities to his community.

In Rituals:

Lent, fasting and prayers should be understood in line with these meanings in mind. Often, immorality, fights, loss of peace, uncontrollable malignant deeds and such evils increase in the society and therefore those people who are possessing a sense of responsibility to the welfare of their in and around, individually and collectively need to observe fasts and lents to control body and soul and this has to be seen as something very essential in a healthy community. As we construct check dams in rivers to control the fury of rushing water to utilise it effectively for agriculture or hydro electric plants or even for drinking, the creativity and inherent talents of men and women should be checked in time that they are not wrongly channelized to undesirable directions; instead, such creative talents can be used under proper control for constructive activities by exercising self control for which, fasts and lents are quite helpful. Therefore, the lives of individuals are always expected to be targeted to carry out their responsibilities to the society.

Among all the orders of service within our Church, the one that is most oriented towards expressing responsibilities of individuals to the community is the order of worship for priestly ordination. A person chosen to priesthood is indeed chosen by God; he is chosen for God; he is appointed by God. At the same time he is one chosen by the people, chosen for the people and being ordained by the Church for the people. Here we can observe an excellent unification of social commitment in a priest. His day to day life has to be immersed in his responsibility to the community. He has to be careful that his social commitment has been oxygen to his life and cannot deviate a bit from that. He is a priest for the universe as is truly demonstrated by the Auxiose (meaning 'he is eligible') call by the Church. The members of Church raise their voice in 'Kuriyelaison'; this is an indication that the entire Church cooperates that the ordained priest carry out his responsibility with dignity.

Questions:

1. What is the responsibility of man to creations?
2. How is our responsibility to the community illustrated in the order of worships for Holy Qurbana and Holy Matrimony?
3. Explain the social commitment in these orders of worships and rituals: Blessing of dwelling place, Anointment of the sick, Holy Confession, Lent and Priestly Ordinations.

Lesson 5

Outlook on Kingdom of God

Entry # In Holy Qurbana # In the Order Worship for Holy Matrimony # In Holy Confession # In Other Orders of Services

A true view of the Kingdom of Heaven can be said to be the centre of Christian worship. The reason for this could be that the main message of the public ministry of Jesus has been 'kingdom of heaven'. It shall be realised that we are called to be the royal priestly community to reign over the kingdom of Christ with him.

Entry:

Holy Baptism is treated by Church as one's entry to kingdom of heaven. The terms kingdom of heaven and Church are considered as similes and metaphors of man's dwelling with Christ. The sealing done in baptism has to be seen as a partnership or recognition to a chosen segment. This sealing is done thrice in the order of worship for baptism to ensure protection of the Messiah; Church or kingdom of heaven is viewed as the fortress that protects us from the attack of enemies. There is a prayer here: 'let them be sealed to life and they earn their right to enter your house. . . .' this indicates that kingdom of heaven is pictured as Christ's home. Sealing in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for eternal life, the Holy Baptism and the anointment of Holy Mooron are indicative of entry into the experience of kingdom of God. The very first food one gets there is the Holy flesh and blood of our Lord; the fruit of tree of life from the spiritual paradise is made available here in the Church that is the earthly paradise. In other words, the kingdom of God that was shut off due to sin is opened now with Holy Baptism.

In Holy Qurbana:

The Throne in the Holy Madbaha is the ceremonial and holy seat where the King of Heaven is seated. On that, the first born son of our heavenly father who is the Messiah is sacrificed as a great feast of Heaven and this is Holy Qurbana. The celebrant wears splendorous attire of glory and participates in the feast. It is necessary that the attire befitting the occasion has to be worn. On this fascinating feast, Holy Trinity is present; angels are present; believers alive and departed are present along with our saints. Symbolising the presence of them all, there prayers are organised remembering them in the preparatory service to Holy Qurbana. Symbolising the dazzling presence of the enchanting glory of heavenly kingdom all over the creations, the submitted bread and wine are covered with Sosaffa.

The set up of our Holy Qurbana happens to be a contemporary presentation of the incidents related to God having taken flesh and lived among us as a man. The Madbaha is opened to present the King of Heavens coming down to earth and thus commences the service of Holy Qurbana. The truth that the Kingdom of God is among us is manifested through Holy Qurbana by serialising all the events right from the birth of Jesus Christ, crucifixion and resurrection up to the second coming. The members of the Church reiterate the pledge that they believe and re confirm it beyond doubts and practice the same in life. In the Sedaro, there are prayers of submissions to grow progressively to the wholeness of the experience of kingdom of heaven. When the celebrant place incense in the censor

and blesses it followed by offering the incense and the smoke raises to heaven along with the prayers of all our saints symbolises the golden censor at heaven and the smoke from there rising to the presence of God; this again resembles the experience of kingdom of heaven. Here, we experience the presence of Holy Trinity, the gathering of all saints, all the believers and therefore this evolves in us a transformation to kingdom of heaven in its wholeness. Right from the starting point of this universe, we have the eternal sacrifice of our Messiah being continued in the heaven for us (Rev. 13:8). To be part of this sacrifice, 'our thoughts, senses and hearts are to be raised to the highest where our Messiah sits on the right hand side of Father, the God'. In this sense, our Holy Qurbana can be said to take place in heaven. We have the grace and blessings of Holy Trinity in three benedictions and the blessings of Jesus Christ in one benediction. This experience we are having can be seen as a foretaste of eternity in the companionship of all the heavenly armies in the presence of Holy Trinity.

In the Order Worship for Holy Matrimony:

The basis of matrimonial service is the relation between Church and Christ. This is an experience of Kingdom of Heaven and therefore in its wholeness of love, a marital life experiences kingdom of God. The relationship between Church and Christ attains its wholeness in Agape. The husband – wife relationship is not something that is confined to just physical love, but one loves his / her spouse as much as his / her own life thereby the relation sustains even beyond death. The experience of kingdom of God is nothing but heavenly love. The two are mutually unified by golden rings symbolising our Messiah's Holy flesh and blood; the man and woman are blessed by the heavenly crowns of nobility and glory. They are entrusted mutually by the Church to grow progressively in the experience of redemption. In this sense, matrimonial service is the realisation of kingdom of God. (Traditionally, Services for Holy Baptism and Holy Matrimony have been conducted before Holy Qurbana and the one who has been baptised and those who have been joined in Matrimony used to accept Holy flesh and blood of our Lord). This is to introduce them to the promise that they would be sustained in the experience of kingdom of God. They are blessed with rings and crowns in the name of Holy Trinity as a symbol of their revelation of Holy Trinity and their participation thereof to have the feel of that joyous enlightenment to maintain purity in life which are all part and parcel of a marital life. The bridegroom holding his hands with that of the bride leads her to the bridal chamber as a foretaste to that experience of our Messiah leading the redeemed Church to eternal chamber of Divinity through his death on the cross and his resurrection. The love feast without bread or drinks but reflecting the justice and righteousness of the Divine Kingdom is symbolised here.

In Other Orders of Services:

Funeral service: We believe that those who depart from this world pass on to the other world to dwell in the presence of God and to continue progressively in their experience of kingdom of God. Those who are departed are sustained in their divine relationship they used to have here. As there are no bindings with physical body, their status would be one with no sorrows or tribulations, but filled in comfort and joy. We pray for divine grace that they continue like this till they inherit eternity after the wholeness of final judgment. Christian hope itself is this divine experience. This hope is reflected in our prayer, 'let him be comforted spiritually that he sits with companions in the heavenly feast'. Another prayer meaning that the departed telling us that they move towards the

place assigned to them by God is a revelation of Kingdom of God where one occupies his position according to will of God indicating a total submission to Divine reign.

Anointing the Sick: The experience of Kingdom of God is one with no illness, no sorrows and no tribulations. Sinful lives of men cause illness, sorrows and tribulations. Therefore, liberation from these can be said to be reinstatement of the experience of Divine kingdom. This is the vision contained in the service of anointment of the sick. Christ and disciples healed the sick and many believed in the good news of kingdom of God. Likewise, our prayers would pave the way for many sick being healed and many would believe in the glory of God and the gospel of Divine Kingdom would be propagated (James 5:15; Matthew 10: 7, 8). Sickness would have caused one to glorify God's name; therefore healing is needed for glorification of kingdom of God.

Blessing of Dwelling Places: Evil deeds within a family distance it from the experience of the kingdom of God causing malice to the Divine Kingdom; thus it is necessary that the dwelling places within the Kingdom of God be cleansed and sanctified. Therefore those who dwell there experience prosperity and goodness abundantly and receive the pleasantness of the kingdom of God. The exhortation to have a change of mind that the kingdom of God is near (Mark 1:15) touched the heart of Zacchaeus and he repented leading to his redemption entering the experience of Kingdom of God; likewise, the service of blessing of a dwelling house would better be done with Holy Confession of those family members. Because of Zacchaeus, that family was redeemed; thus, any dwelling place that is blessed consequent to the members of the family repenting, is 'sealed with the sign of Slebo, that is live and life providing and is blessed forever and cleansed'. This is effectively the rededication in the kingdom of God.

Holy Confession: Holy Confession is a sacrament where one is liberated from the reigns of Satan and reinstated within the reigns of Christ. Here, the process looks like a replanting within the Kingdom of God after removal from the terrains of Satan. The heaven rejoices at that one sinner who repents rather than the ninety-nine righteous who might not need to repent. (Luke 15:7); the reason thereof is that the kingdom of God is reinstated in that one sinner who repented. When the prodigal son returned to his father, he was welcomed wholeheartedly by that loving father; this is because his son has decided to leave his submission to Satan and having decided to live in obedience to God to live as a son of the Kingdom of God. Holy Confession is that sacrament which reinstates one in the experience of the Kingdom of God and thus it certainly is a milestone in anybody's redemptive life.

The service of Shubakono that is observed on Monday, the first day of Big Lent, which are days of lent and fasting, is an entry point into the experience of kingdom of God. This door to the experience of kingdom of God is for unity, love and mutual peace; here every believer seeks pardon from every other believer. During the periods of lent, the good news of mutual love is spread which is really the life in tune with kingdom of God. Fasting enhances concentration in this experience.

Feasts: Feasts are occasions reminding the believers about the key events during the public ministry of our Lord and Messiah. These are means to achieve cleanliness and holiness as part of the redemptive acts carried out through him to include them in his territorial jurisdiction. The feast of the birth of our Lord renews in us the experience of our Lord taking flesh and living among us, thereby reinstating kingly glory. By taking part in the feast of Danaho, we are purified, we are being lightened and we are being in the likeness of God. By taking part in the feast of Hosanna, we are chosen to carry the branches of trees to our spiritual paradise of redemption; the blessed Hosanna

branches of trees are for confirmation of faith, decoration of childhood, maturity of old age, glorification of parishes, nobility of Dayaros, blessings of houses, sustenance of believers as well as for discarding wars, to remove ill feelings and to avoid calamities. In the service of washing of feet, we learn to be humble and be of service to others spreading a divine pleasantness all around. When we take part in the services of Passion Week, we should be able to nail the evil forces on the cross and with the power of Christ, be resurrected to be part of those joyous feelings in eternity. On the feast of Pentecost, we are cleansing and renewing the anointment of Holy Spirit that we had during our baptism but distorted in our sinful deeds, thereby turning out to be means of reinstatement of Kingdom of God.

Questions:

1. How is the experience of Kingdom of God possible in our sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Qurbana?
2. How can we say that the service of Holy Matrimony symbolises the life within the Kingdom of God?
3. What are the notable worship services where one can move into the experience of Kingdom of God through remission of sins?
4. How can we come to the feelings that the memoirs of the redemptive deeds of our Messiah happen to be the experience of Kingdom of God?

Lesson 6

The Final Hope

In Holy Baptism # In Holy Qurbana # In the Service of Holy Matrimony # In Funeral Service # In Feasts

The ultimate goal in all our worships is eternal life. By and large, we have no prayers where we do not have a sealing for eternal life or a hope for eternal life. What we have in the forefront of all our prayers right from Holy Baptism onwards, is the hope to live with Christ eternally, after the final judgment. In fact, it is this facet in our prayers that highlights the noble characteristic thereof.

In Holy Baptism:

The celebrant prays for the one who is being baptised: 'let him be led to true protection and growth in wholeness that he meets a good end, the true Christian end'. This prayer aims at eternal redemption as well. Further prayers during this service contain supplications that his name be entered in the Book of Life, that he may attain eternal life, that he attains the crown in the Kingdom of Heaven that is earmarked for those who reach a good end and that he may walk through the light to reach Divine presence. All these prayers do stress on such hope in eternity.

In Holy Qurbana:

There may not be many open statements highlighting our goal, but such a hope is dominantly present throughout the liturgy. The prayer in the preparatory service to Holy Qurbana contain this prayer that aims at our eternal hope: 'let us be transformed as a herd of lambs those are noble and

pure before you, that we are sent to the renewed world carrying lamps of faith marking our eligibility'. Again, the prayer in preparatory service remembering the departed ones clarifies the goal beyond doubt; 'let them be comforted in the gathering of all those who did the will of God'; there is also a mention, 'comfort of Heavenly Jerusalem'. There is again prayer that noble end or Christian end be provided to all of us. We pray for our place with the chosen and the Holy on the right hand side of Christ in the company of those noble lambs. In most of the Sedaros, we have prayers that we along with our departed be placed on the right side as noble souls at the second coming of Christ. What we have here is the eternal hope where there are no sorrows or tribulations, but an experience as resembling the angels. The Holy Qurbana has prayers throughout that there shall be mercy on us and let us not be dealt with according to our misdeeds when the last judgment is on its way.

Holy Qurbana is the spiritual nourishment till we land up at the Heavenly Canaan. As such, all those who are living and those who are departed surely take part in the sacrament of Holy Qurbana till the second coming of our Lord. We must understand that it is in this sense, we, the living are accepting Holy Qurbana for us as well as for those departed souls. St Paul has taught us affirmatively that those who believed in Christ but could not accept baptism for one reason or another and departed, would receive the grace of being baptised when another living faithful accepted the sacrament of baptism for the departed believer (1 Cor. 15:29). Likewise, those who were, while living here, could not join in the fellowship of the Holy flesh and blood of our Lord thereby losing their opportunity to earn remission of sins and eternal life are receiving these graces through the participation of the living believers in this fellowship. We believe that all those departed believers are taking part in our sacrament of Holy Qurbana and therefore they earn Divine grace needed for their eternal redemption through such participation. The celebrant accepts Holy Qurbana on behalf of all the departed believers. The celebrant kneels down before the Throne and prays, 'In the Holy Qurbana we have celebrated today, let God, our Lord and the chosen angels and the saints be pleased; thereby, let our Lord's Mother and the saints together with all those departed believers be honoured and they be comforted, particularly all those for whom today's Holy Qurbana is dedicated'; this is a pointer to the above narrated facts. Further, we get added clarifications on this issue through prayers during the post communion service.

Look into these prayers we have: 'O God our Messiah, be merciful to relieve the flames of fire as well as your bitter punishments from the souls and bodies of the departed believers by their participation in your Holy flesh and blood, the life providing fire. O Lord our Messiah, be them allowed to stand on your right side on the Last Day'. 'Please, our Lord, be merciful to accept the souls of those departed for whom we have celebrated this Holy Qurbana that you are the one who raise the dead and resurrect the buried; please let them dwell with your dear ones like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in those blessed homes as also with all those departed in your hope; be them stand on your right side with life you provided; let we all submit praises and glory to the Holy Trinity now and forever.'

'O Lord! The Holy Qurbana we have celebrated now before you for yours servants may turn a sweet fragrance to them; O Lord! Be your will be pleasing enough that they are comforted in your mercy'.

The experience of Kingdom of God is seen as the heavenly feast of eternity and therefore, we pray, 'let us be made joyous along with your servants and the guests of the feast' (Thaksa of Mar Osthathiose); the metaphor of those ten virgins may be seen as based on this divine hope.

In the Service of Holy Matrimony:

There is a prayer in the service of Holy Matrimony for being joyous in that 'imperishable happiness'. There is another prayer leading the man and woman to the heavenly bridal chamber akin to the practice of their being led to the earthly bridal chamber after solemnization of marriage; this prayer too targets eternal hope. We pray that all those who take part in the matrimony service be eligible for the 'immortal feast' and 'bridal chamber of morality' as well as for eternal joy. In the service of matrimony, blessed crowns are placed on the bride and groom symbolising the crowns of righteousness to be received at the Heavenly Kingdom. This is a true indication of the eternal hope.

In Funeral Service:

The thoughts prevalent in funeral service are related to a hope to confront Christ in the Kingdom of God after receiving grace and mercy at the Last Judgment as also with the hope in resurrection. God is loving, righteous and Holy; we are redeemed by Him not for our deeds of righteousness; we are weak, we are sinners; obviously, we are redeemed in Divine Grace at no cost.

'Take him to your divine dwelling place and make him a part taker with your holy men'; this prayer reveals our eternal hope quite certainly. 'Be merciful to stretch your right hand to raise him from the whirlpool of second death. Be merciful not to judge him in line with his disobedience of commandments! All are mortals and guilty in your Holy presence'.

These prayers strongly stress that man is not redeemed without divine grace. Nobody can inherit eternal redemption through his deeds of righteousness; this is a free gift of divine grace. For this our only way is to surrender ourselves before mercy of God. The rays of resurrection from Jesus Christ lighten us in our resurrection and lead us to the house of Light. 'Let his dwelling be at the very same spot where the first man was dwelling before he sinned'. This concluding prayer is a sort of confirming our hope in heavenly paradise. 'Like the lambs enjoying themselves in heavenly grasslands, let these be made eligible to be joyous in your dwelling place' is another prayer which highlights the eternal hope once again. (This is a prayer from the funeral service for children)

Blessing of Dwelling Place; Holy Confession:

The service of Blessing of Dwelling Places has prayers raising hope in the dwelling places marked for us in the Kingdom of Heaven. The place where Christ lives is one of joy with no sorrows or sufferings. This eternal hope rekindles us through the service of Blessing of Dwelling Places as well as in the sacrament of Holy Confession.

In Feasts:

Moronayo Feasts reflects our dwelling with Christ in eternity. However, the big day is the day we live with Christ. Thus, all feast days attain their wholeness with our taking part in the Holy flesh and blood of our Messiah. His resurrection is the foundation of Christian faith and anchor of Christian hope. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54). On the basis of this promise by Christ, our eternal hope is cemented with our participation in his Holy flesh and blood. As such, any day of feast for a Christian is a foretaste to the forthcoming great and fearsome day of Christ. Our participation in feasts and taking part in Holy flesh and blood of Christ is a foretaste to the common resurrection and the following experience of

fascinating joy and happiness. Thus, all feasts help us to be aware of the forthcoming morrow of gladness and the eternal hope of that golden morrow.

The processions during feast days are also carrying this message. The Procession we perform on Moronayo feasts or feasts of Saints is symbolic of welcoming Messiah in his glory on his second coming, by the chosen people along with the angels and redeemed children of God and rising to the Throne of the Lamb of Heavenly Jerusalem. Here, the cross indicates our Lord, Messiah and the segment of saintly fathers.

{For our Procession, there is a tendency to use the term Rasa. Also, in addition to or in place of the cross being held by the priest, 'Arulikka' is being used. This is just an imitation of the Western Catholic tradition in an eastern style. Catholics started a practice of taking the Holy flesh and blood of our Lord for public to show their respect as a sort of retaliation against Protestantism from the 15th century onwards.}

Questions:

1. Where all we see the thoughts of eternal hope in our service of Holy Qurbana?
2. How can we say that our funeral services are cementing our Christian hope?
3. Find out the metaphors we have in Holy Bible as well as in our different worship orders regarding our eternal place of redemption.

Unit 4

Creeds of Faith in the Christian Church

Lesson 1

Creeds in New Testament

Creeds in our Church centred life # Certain Old Testament Pointers # Creeds in New Testament

Creeds in our Church centred life:

Creeds are basically the expressions of Christian experiences narrated in words. Therefore, it can be said that creeds in Christian Church stand among its foundations. Right from the early days, the practice was to declare dogmas of Church jointly. Though such unified stand cannot be considered as an exclusive criterion for true faith, it has to be accepted that the faith has to be reinstated in languages one can understand that is needed to lead a life committed to Church. Yet, the faith of Church cannot be confined to certain words contained in such creeds alone. These creeds which are suggestive of the faith usually carry only a gist of revealed truths; just an outline of faith that is essential for redemption. However, these are the essence of dogmas of faith the Church has been teaching. These are guiding us to read and assimilate the contents of Holy Bible as well as to witness our faith in Christ as a community. These creeds stand as cannon for a Christian believer in his life of worship, his life of liturgy and in his social and cultural life. Such creeds are in reality, the interpretations of Holy Scriptures by early fathers and thus, they stand as valuable guidelines for believers of the present days. Church traditions point out that the entry of heretics into the life of Church has caused formulation of such creeds and hence they are also considered as a war cry as also a victory song. It is here we realise the nobility of the ancient tradition where the creed of faith used to be sung midway through the worship.

Old Testament Pointers:

Though we see a series of creeds in the New Testament, there are some pointers to them in Old Testament also. Two of them are considered quite important.

Creeds related to Historical events:

Jehovah asked the people of Israel to firmly declare their historical commitment and loyalty to Him. "Then you shall declare before the Lord your God: my father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians ill-treated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labour. Then we cried out to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an out stretched arm; with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 26: 5 – 9; also see 6: 21 – 25). This creed declares that Jehovah is their God through History, the might of their God as also what all great things this God has done for them; thus this creed turns out to be the gist of their religious dogmas.

The Pledge:

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6: 4, 5). This is the 'Shema' declaration of Jews. 'Jehovah is God, Jehovah is God'.

These verses are the pledges expressing total reliance on the might of Jehovah, the God and of total commitment to God. There used to be many gods then among the gentiles like Baal of Canaan and the like. Here Jehovah is acknowledged as different from all these gods as second to none. This creed that places Jehovah as second to none is treated as the criterion of faith by each Jew. More than a creed, this seems to be a commandment.

Creeds in New Testament:

Christology Related Ones:

Jesus, Lord and God: This is the most important creed of faith of New Testament Church (John 20: 28). The witnessing of resurrected Jesus as declared by Apostle Thomas has been accepted as a basic creed of the Church. The Apostle John was one who took efforts more than others to reveal the Divinity of Jesus and quite possibly, he was inspired by this declaration of faith by Thomas, the Apostle when he declared, "Word was God" (John 1:1).

Jesus is the Lord: A most accepted slogan we see in New Testament is this: "Jesus is the Lord" (1 Cor. 12:3). Nobody can say "Jesus is the Lord" unless he is inspired by Holy Spirit (Rom. 10:9). "That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). This creed was a great slogan among early Christians who were persecuted by Roman government and were being ordered to declare 'Caesar is Lord, Jesus is cursed'. This slogan inspired the Christians to resist persecutions. Later, this turned out to be a pledge during the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Likewise, one was being baptised in the name Jesus, the Lord (Acts 8:16; 19:5; 1 Cor. 6:11); again, declaring Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:11) has come up through the liturgical background. During the martyrdom of St Polycarp, the Roman officials raised a question what was wrong to say Caesar was the Lord; this makes us understand the circumstances where Christians formulated "Jesus is the Lord" as a creed.

Jesus is Christ: The faith to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah has come from Jewish background. In Caesarea Philippi, Peter answered, "You are Christ" (Mark 8:29); later, John proclaimed, "Who is the

liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ" (1 John 2:22). These two statements clarify the issue beyond doubt. Further, the Apostles collectively proclaimed, "Jesus is the Messiah" (Acts 9:20). The words 'Messiah' and 'Christ' mean the 'anointed one'.

Jesus is Son of God: This is part of the pledge during Holy Baptism. The incident where the eunuch from Ethiopia proclaims before Philip, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37) as pre condition to be baptised, explains this. John attempts to suppress the Docetics' teachings by exhorting the human nature in Christ, "If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God" (1 John 4:15). "Who is that overcomes the world; only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5:5). "Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh from God, is from God" (1 John 4:2). Thus, it is an undisputable truth that New Testament Christians has been using the creed, 'Jesus is Son of God' as a pledge (Mark 5:7; Hebrew 4:14; Mark 3:11).

Incidents of exhortations: There are certain Biblical portions seen as a gist of the teachings about faith in the Church. Those who were coming to join the Church were made to learn these by heart indicating a commitment of their faith. "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance; that Christ died for our sins according to Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve" (1 Cor. 15: 3 – 5).

Proclamations of Creeds in Epistles: (a) Romans 1: 2 - 6 # "The gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendent of David, and who through the Spirit of Holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ, our Lord. Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you are also among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ". (b) Romans 8:34 # "Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us". (c) 2 Timothy 2:8 # "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel." (d) 1 Peter 3: 18 – 22 # "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him".

In Liturgical Hymns: The below given verses would have been part of liturgical hymns of early Church. (a) Philippians 2: 6 – 11 # "Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on

earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father". (b) 1 Timothy 3:16 # "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory".

Faith in One God:

Among gentiles, faith in many religions, many gods and many lords have been prevailing; here, St Pauls points out the pattern of his faith that matches his Christological views with no dilution thereof. Let us a couple of biblical verses. (a) 1 Corinthians 8:6 # "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live". (b) 1 Timothy 2: 5, 6 # "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time". Carrying the very same meaning, there are creeds where God, the Father and the Messiah are related in verses 1 Timothy 6:13, 2 Timothy 4:1 and Romans 4:24.

Declaration of faith in Triune God:

There at least two very specific mentions about faith in Triune God. (a) 2 Corinthians 13:14 # "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all". (b) Matthew 28:19 # "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Some other verses hinting at Triune faith are 1 Corinthians 6: 11; 12:4; 2 Corinthians 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Galatians 3: 11 – 14; 1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 10:29.

Questions:

1. What are the Old Testament pointers to creeds of faith?
2. Which are the important Christology based creeds of faith we come across in New Testament?
3. Find out some of the Biblical verses those reflect faith in Triune God.

Lesson 2

Creeds of Early Church

Background # Apostolic Fathers # In the Epistles of Apostles

Background:

During the early days of the Church, there were schools to teach basics of faith to those who came to join the Church; most of the creeds of faith had developed from these schools. There were other occasions too, in particular, during the worship also they had occasions to recite creeds and thus learn them. Thus the service orders of Holy Baptism and Holy Qurbana were useful means to

formulate creeds of faith. The entry of heresy here and there made it necessary that the short creeds of faith had to be developed. Marcion brought up a heresy that the material universe was not created by the Almighty God, but by a small god or Demiurge. To effectively counter this heretic teaching, there came up a proclamation in the creed of faith, 'God, the Father who has created the heavens and the earth, visible and invisible'. The Docetics propagated a heresy that the Son of God never became the Son of Man, but it was a just feeling we had. This was countered by the proclamation about the true human nature of Jesus Christ, 'took flesh from Virgin Mary, became man, suffered persecutions and died'.

Apostolic Fathers:

The writings of those fathers who lived close to the commencement of New Testament days often contain creeds of faith similar to those of New Testament creeds of faith.

Didache (Before AD 140):

'Following the exhortations, baptise the person in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in running water; in the absence of running water, stored water can be used; if not in cold water, use warm water; in case all these are not readily available, pour water over his head in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The one who baptises and the one who is baptised as well as whoever can, shall do fasting prior to the service of Holy Baptism. It needs to be commanded that the one who is being baptised shall do fasting at least for two days'.

What is seen here is the gist of what Jesus Christ has taught about Holy Baptism. Further, it stated that Holy Qurbana shall not be given to one who is not baptised, and such early days' explanations to the traditional faith of Church are seen in Didache.

"Your fasting shall not be with fake devotees; they do their fasting on Mondays and Thursdays'.

Epistle of St Clement of Rome to Corinthians (AD 80):

'Don't we have that Spirit of Grace showered on us by one God and one Christ? Aren't we having that single call in Christ'? This certainly is a proclamation of faith revealing Christian unity as also the Triune faith.

The 'Shepherd' of Hermas (Before AD 140):

Believe this: 'before everything God was there as One, He created everything, He placed all creations in order, He brought all from nothingness to a state of being; He contains all and He is not contained in anything'. (He is not subjected to limitations). Here, faith in God is being taught in relation to universe.

St Ignatius of Antioch (AD 110):

In all his seven epistles, the proclamations of faith are mostly Christological. However, the Triune faith is clearly reflected in the epistle to Magnesians, where the model of love and faith of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is narrated. Some of such Christologically important creeds of faith are given below.

Epistle to Ephesians 18:2 # 'The Divine plan made it possible that our Lord and Messiah Jesus was conceived from Holy Spirit in Mary, in the leniency of David. His birth and baptism was to purify water through his passion. This proves how Christ born as human redeems the universe'.

Epistle to Trallians 9:1, 2 # 'Stop your ears, therefore, when any one speaks to you at variance with Jesus Christ, who was descended from David, and was also of Mary; who was truly born, and did eat and drink. He was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; He was truly crucified, and [truly] died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. He was also truly raised from the dead, His Father quickening Him, even as after the same manner His Father will so raise up us who believe in Him by Christ Jesus, apart from whom we do not possess the true life'.

It can be noted that the word 'truly' is used very carefully and repeatedly in relation to the deeds of Christ as he took flesh to live as a human; this was, certainly, to counter the teachings of Docetics. In his letter to Smyrnaeans also, similar statements are seen.

Proclamation of Creed of Faith by St Polycarp (AD 135)

A creed of faith has been prevailing traditionally in the Church of Smyrna, which is repeated by St Polycarp, who was their Bishop in his epistle to Philippians 2:1. 'Wherefore, girding up your loins, serve the Lord in fear and truth, as those who have forsaken the vain, empty talk and error of the multitude, and "believed in Him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory," and a throne at His right hand. To Him all things" in heaven and on earth are subject. Him every spirit serves. He comes as the Judge of the living and the dead'.

Creeds of faith from St Eusthiose (AD 150 – 165)

Though not total, we have a formatted Creed of faith in the first Apology submitted by Eusthiose at Rome in AD 150 before Antonius Pius, the then Roman Emperor. There are clear reflections of these in his dialogues with Triffo, a Jewish scholar at Ephesus in AD 155.

Apology 1:6, 2 = 'We salute and worship the true God, His Son who came from Him and taught us all these and the Spirit of Prophecy'.

Apology 1:65, 3 = 'Praises to the Father of creations in the name of His Son and the Holy Spirit'.

Apology 1:67, 2 = 'Through His Son and through Holy Spirit, praises to the creator of all'. In Apology 1:31, 1 we have an expanded version of this.

It can be understood that the Creed of faith proclaimed by Eusthiose on the Son of God having taken flesh as a human, about his death, his raising from the dead and his second coming contain the essence of the general Creed we use today.

Dialogue with Triffo 132:1 = 'We proclaim that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God who has been crucified, raised from the dead, and is coming again to judge all the men right from Adam'.

In the writings of St Eusthiose, we can see traces of many of the proclamations of faith those were in use in the service order of Holy Baptism and other such occasions.

Rule of Faith by St Irenios (AD 190)

Rules of faith were quite common in the second century. They were prevailing in varying formats in different areas. These were helpful in teaching catechumens as well as to resist heretics.

The contents of the Rules of faith from St Irenios reveal that they were mainly the pledges in the service of Holy Baptism. Very often, St Irenios expanded these small pledges and used as principles for exhortations about Christianity.

Writing against heresies 3: 4, 2 = 'We believe in the one God who has created the heavens and the earth and all those are seen there; we believe in Christ, the Son of God who has born from a virgin out of His love for His creations and thus unifying man with God and who has been made to undergo sufferings by Pontius Pilate and has resurrected from the dead and to be raised to glory and coming again in all greatness as the redeemer of those being redeemed and as the judge of those being judged'.

Two contemporary creeds of faith

(1) During the martyrdom of St Eusthiose, it is understood that he had proclaimed a Rule of Faith as seen here: 'We offer our worship before the God of all Christians, who has been there right from the beginning, has been the creator of everything and the formulator of the entire universe; we offer our worship before Jesus Christ, the Son of God who has been proclaimed by prophets as the one who is coming as the trumpet of redemption to all mankind and as the propagator of all noble truths'. (2) Noetus was one who denied the individual person of God, the Son at par with God the Father, in the Holy Trinity. The priests of Smyrna had cursed Noetus and dismissed him and recorded their creed of faith in AD 180, which was recorded by Hippolytus: 'We glorify the one God as we know Him; we accept Christ as we know him as Son of God, as one who suffered and died and resurrected on the third day and sits on the right hand side of the Father who comes again to judge all the living and all the departed ones'.

In the Epistles of Apostles:

In a document prepared in Asia Minor during mid second century in Coptic language, the incident where more than five thousand men were fed with five loaves of bread is seen interpreted as five creeds of faith as narrated below:

Bread	Verse of Faith
1	In the Father, Creator of this Universe
2	In Jesus Christ, our Redeemer
3	In Holy Spirit, the Paracletos
4	In the Holy Church
5	In Redemption of sins, We believe.

This surely is a gist of the Creed of faith and would have been questions placed before the catechumens during Baptism.

Rules of Faith from Tertullian (AD 200)

Tertullian made attempts to formalise a creed of faith. His background in Roman legal tradition was an encouraging factor behind such attempts. He worked out proclamations mostly based in Triune faith. Though these were prepared for Baptism, it can be understood that these lengthy creeds were used as exhortations to new disciples. The main aspects covered in these are God, the Father who is the creator of all, Son of God who took flesh as a man for redeeming mankind, taking flesh through Holy Spirit from virgin Mary, death of Christ, resurrection, ascension to heaven, seated on the right hand side of the Father and the second coming for final Judgment.

Creed of Faith from Hippolytus (AD 215)

This creed is formulated as a questionnaire. The questions raised are like these: Do you believe in the Omnipotent God, the Father? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born from Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary, who was crucified during the time of Pontius Pilate, died and buried, who was risen from the dead as living on the third day, who had ascended to heaven, who has been sitting on the right hand side of God, the Father and who is coming again to pass Judgment on all those who are departed and all those who are alive? Do you believe in Holy Spirit and the Holy Church as well as in the resurrection of the dead in their physical bodies?

Eastern Creeds of Faith

In all Eastern Churches, there were respective creeds of faith of their own. Churches of Caesarea, Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria had many creeds of faith. Among these, the creed formulated by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (AD 313) was accepted as the common creed in the Holy Synod of Nicaea. That is as given below:

‘We believe in the one God who is the creator of all those visible and invisible and who is Omnipotent; We also believe in the one Lord Jesus Christ who is the Word of God, who is God from God, who is light from light, who is life from life, who is the begotten son and first born among all creations, who is born from the Father ahead of all ages, through him everything is originated, who took flesh and lived among men as a man, suffered, died and resurrected on the third day ascending to his Father and who is coming again in all glory to carry out Judgment on all those departed and all those alive; we also believe in the one Holy Spirit’.

This can be understood to be an expanded form of the creed, ‘we believe in one God, one Lord and one Holy Spirit’.

Questions:

1. What is the background for formulation of creeds of faith?
2. What were the intentions behind the creeds of faith formulated by Apostolic fathers?
3. What were the intentions behind the proclamations of faith by St Eusthiose and St Irenios?

Lesson 3

Nicene Creed

Nicaea – Constantinople Creed of Faith # Explanation

The creed of faith that we use in our Holy Qurbana and our other orders of worship today is one that has been formulated during the 4th century by Eastern Churches. This is commonly known as Nicaea – Constantinople Creed of Faith. However, there was a creed of faith approved at the Holy Synod of Nicaea which was being in use earlier. This lesson discusses both these.

Nicaea – Constantinople Creed of Faith:

Nicene Creed of Faith (AD 325)

The Holy Synod of Nicaea, considered as a mile stone in the formulation of Nicene Creed and its further growth assembled in Bithynia (Turkish area) of Asia Minor on 19th June, 325 AD. The background behind the calling of this Synod was the questions raised by Arius on certain issues like the eternity and equality of Jesus Christ, second in Holy Trinity on par with the Father.

The Synod discussed terminologies such as logos and wisdom with reference to the relative portions from the scriptures; but Arius and his supporters objected to them being connected to Christ. The arguments of Alexander Episcopa was based on the 'state of being' of Jesus Christ even before what was visible in this universe and Arch Deacon Athanasius quite strongly and excellently co elated these thoughts and put forth his propositions. Consequent to lengthy discussions, the issues raised by Arius were dismissed outright and a creed of faith was commonly accepted and formalised at the Synod. Below given is the full text thereof.

Creed of Faith (AD 325)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only begotten, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, who because of us men and because of our redemption came down and became incarnate and became man, and suffered, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and departed, and in the Holy Spirit'.

The Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church curses those who says that there was a time when he was not there or he was not there before he was born or he came from nothingness to the state of being or Son of God is of a different state of being or an individual or a created one or one subject to changes.

All those present at the Synod signed this creed of faith except Arius and two other Bishops. Thus, this turned out be a universal creed of faith of the Church.

The Constantinople Creed of Faith (AD 381)

This document of faith was formulated between the years AD 325 and 381 and had been known with the universal Synod assembled at Constantinople in AD 381.

Below given is a version of the Creed of Faith we use in our worships today translated from the origin language of Greek.

‘We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things, visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men, and for our redemption, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and suffered, died and was buried and the third day, he rose again, according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father, from there he shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the departed, whose kingdom shall have no end; and in the Holy spirit the Lord and giver of life who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoken by the prophets.

In one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead and life of the world to come; Amen’.

What we use in our worship is a translation from Syriac to Malayalam where the Syriac version was translated from the origin Greek. As days passed by, there are slight variations in certain usages on account of different translations.

Explanation:

What is being attempted here is to explain the back ground of some of the terms in the Nicaea – Constantinople Creed of Faith we are regularly using in all our service orders and worships.

1. We Believe: During the service of Baptism, Catechumens proclaim their faith individually as ‘I believe’ in singular form. However, all the proclamations of faith in the Synod are in plural form like ‘we believe’. This demonstrates the unified nature of the Church indicating the fellowship in faith. Therefore, during worship, it is always better to proclaim our faith in the plural form.
2. One God: The Gnostics were denying the ‘One God’ faith and therefore all the early century fathers such as Irenios, Tertullian, Origen and Clement of Jerusalem were stressing that God is one and only one. Because of this, the creed of faith also highlighted this fact.
3. Father: “One God and Father of all” (Eph 4:6); “yet for us, there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live” (1 Corinthians 8:6). All our early fathers stress that God the creator is our Father (St Clement 19 and Irenios 4:34:1).
4. Omnipotent: A term ‘Pantocrator’ is used in Greek to show the dominion of God over the creations. In Old Testament, there is a usage ‘Lord of the Armies’. In the Greek version for this, they use ‘Pantocrator’ (2 Samuel 5:10; 7:8, 26; Job 5:17; 8:5; 2 Corinthians 6:18). What

is being expressed about God is not a philosophical view, but an understanding of Him in a spiritual and moral sense.

5. Creator of all those are visible and invisible: This is a statement against Gnostics who used to teach that creation of the universe has been done by certain powers within the spiritual world and is under their control. The terms heaven and sky have been included in this sense.
6. Jesus Christ, only one Lord: “One Lord” (Ephesians 4:5); “there is but one Lord” (1 Corinthians 8:6). We have Jesus Christ as the one Lord. There are names attributed namely, Jesus, the human name meaning saviour (Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21); Lord means Jesus is our Lord because as members of the Church, we are owned by him (Matthew 28:20; Philippians 2:2); Christ means the anointed one (John 1:41; 4:25; Luke 2:32; Acts 2:31; Romans 8:12). He is the man of promise to Jews to satisfy their national hopes and is the beauty for gentiles (Haggai 2:7).
7. Son of God: Christ is Son of God; in him, we have the fullness of Israel (Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1). He has revealed the Father to us (John 5:19).
8. Born of Father: This is to witness the eternal birth of the Son from the Father as also to resist the thoughts of ‘historical birth of the Son’ propagated by Arius.
9. The only son (Second to none); John 1:18 say, “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known”. Here the term ‘One and Only’ has the Greek root ‘*Monoganesē Theos*’ which is used to denote Jesus as God, the Son, second to none. This word is peculiarly against Arius. The sect called Witness of Jehovah misinterpret this term.
10. ‘Born of the essence of Father’; ‘born but not a creation’; ‘having the same essence as that of the Father’: These three phrases have been the crucial usages against the faith of Arius. These show that Christ is not a creation, but the creator.
11. God from God: The true nature of a son is that he accepts his life from his Father (John 5:26; 8:42; 16:28; 1:1).
12. Light from Light: (Hebrews 1:3) “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory.” Light is always with its source; likewise, Son is always with Father.
13. True God from True God: (John 5:20) we know that Son of God has come and we are provided wisdom to know the true God. In true God, we are in Jesus Christ, His Son. He is true God; he is eternal life.
14. The One through whom all was formed: The verses 1 Corinthians 8:6, John 1:3, 10 and Colossians 1:16 happen to be the base for this thought. The feeling that the entire creation is unified with him is revealed here. “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Colossians 1:16).
15. For we, the humans and for our redemption: ‘The Son has been just created as one like us’ was a teaching of Arius. To counter this, this statement is included that that the Son came down and took flesh for our sake.
16. Came down from Heaven and took flesh: This has been included to express the thoughts of the Son of God being so humble by his own wish and of his truly taking flesh to be a man among us. This is to counter the teachings of Docetics.
17. Has become man: This part is for expressing the eternal unified character of God while possessing human nature. Arius had been propagating that the Son in flesh did not have human nature in him; this too had to be countered.

18. Buried: As stated in Scriptures, he was raised on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4); Christ was raised from the dead as we read in Scriptures on the third day (Hosea 6:2; Luke 24:46; Mark 8: 31, 34; John 12:24).
19. Raised to Heaven and sitting on the right side of Father: The passages from scriptures Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9, Ephesians 1:20 and 1 Peter 4:5 reveal this. In present tense, we say that the Son is sitting on the right side of the Father not after his ascension, but it is so always, forever. This statement is not to ignore the verses Ephesians 1:20 or Revelations 3:21 or Hebrews 5: 1 – 10, but to counter what has been propagating by Arius about the eternity of the Son and hence the usage, 'one who is sitting'.
20. Coming again in glory to pass judgment on the departed and the living beings: 1 Peter 4:5 reveal this clearly. "But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead". Other relevant verses are Acts 17:31, Romans 2:16, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 5:4, Matthew 16:27, 24:30, 25:31, Mark 8:38, 13:26, and Luke 9:26, 21:27.
21. There is no end to his kingdom; "He will reign over the House of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:33). This reveals the eternity of the Son as well as his omnipotence (1 Corinthians 15:24).
22. Holy Spirit who is Lord and life giving one: Macedonian heresy was denying the Divinity of Holy Spirit and this issue had to be addressed. There were aspersions about the third person in Holy Trinity during the first four centuries; this issue had to be clarified. The subject usage is incorporated to take care of these aspects. The Holiness of Holy Spirit and being the provider of Divine life make the person Holy Spirit different from other spirits (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 John 4:1; Isaiah 6:6; Acts 16:7; 1 Peter 1:10; 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18). Lord is Spirit; there is freedom where Spirit of the Lord is present. The propagation of Macedonian heresy that Spirit is just not only a creation, but also is lower than the angels of heaven gets collapsed here (Romans 8:2). The Spirit of life is not simply sustaining life, but also is providing life (John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6). It is in this sense it is said that Spirit is one in essence with Father and Son.
23. Originating from Father (John 15:26): "When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me". "We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us" (1 Corinthians 2:12). Just like 'being born' is for the Son, 'originating' is for Spirit expressing the relation to Father and their essence.
24. Being worshipped together with Father and Son: This contains an exhortation that considering the unified nature Holy Spirit has with Father and Son, same worship has to be offered.
25. Spoken through the prophet: This phrase was included to convince that it was the same Spirit that spoke in Old Testament as well as in New Testament (2 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 1:1). As such, the Markians were countered that there are no differences between Old and New Testaments. Also, the very same Spirit is active in Church even today (Mark 13:11; Acts 11:27; 13:1; 14; 32).
26. Church that is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic: Holy Spirit has unified us with the one body of Christ and thus, Church is unified in its wholeness, though that is invisible despite seemingly incomplete as visible in earth (Ephesians 4:6). What is meant here is not the administrative unity, but the fundamental oneness of the Church. Church is the body of Christ and the community of those called to be separated as people of holiness. Thus the

Church is Holy. Church always maintains its catholic or common faith. Early fathers like St Ignatius (AD 110) and all witness this characteristic of the Church. Church that is maintaining its apostolic faith is an Apostolic Church (Acts 16:7).

27. Only one baptism for remission of sins: As a natural birth cannot be repeated, the spiritual birth into the Church too cannot be repeated (Ephesians 4:5; John 3:4). Thus St Peter ascertains that there is only one baptism. Remission of sins is related inseparably to baptism. However, sins committed after Baptisms do not find any mention here; no explanation is provided about their remission.
28. Hope that the departed would be raised: It is the promise of Christ that whoever believes in him would be raised from death. Once a person with body, mind and spirit is raised from death, his body would be transformed (1 Corinthians 15:21, 36, 42, 44; John 11:25; 6:54)
29. Hoping for the life in the coming world: Eschatological hope is the fundamental principle of Christianity (revelations 3:14).

Questions:

1. What is the background behind the Nicene Creed of Faith (AD 325)?
2. How can the authenticity of Constantinople Creed of Faith (AD 381) be proved?
3. Find out the differences between the Creed of Faith we use now in our worships and the Constantinople Creed of Faith.

Lesson 4

Apostolic Creed of Faith and Athanasian Creed of Faith

Apostolic Creed of Faith # Athanasian Creed of Faith

Apostolic Creed of Faith:

Background: After the Constantinople Creed of Faith, the next creed of faith known widely the world over is the Apostolic Creed of Faith. There is no clear indication as to the origin of this creed. But the contents give clues that this could be a pledge during western baptisms of the 2nd century. The proponents of reformation movements such as Marti Luther, Calvin and Zwingli have accepted this as an authentic creed of faith. Since there is nothing worth mentioning in the theological sense, the Eastern Churches have not taken this creed very seriously. However, this is still retained as the creed of faith in Western traditions. The Labatt conference in 1920 and the Faith and Order conference held at Lausanne in 1927 have accorded their recognition to this creed. Below given is a translation of this from Latin.

The Creed of Faith: ' I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell: the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen'.

A study: Just like all other ancient creeds of faith, this too has three parts. Each of these parts contains respectively, proclamation of faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). This creed is quite small having no theological explanations. The narrations contained here are in line with New Testament, but has no reliable inference that this has come from the Apostles. Jesus descending to Sheol is something that started earning honour only from the 5th century. Similarly, the fellowship or communion with saints has earned popularity in the Church only from late 6th century. And further, this has been recorded only from the 8th century. Under such circumstances, it has to be inferred that this earned recognition from Rome as the Creed of faith for the Western Church and thus attempts would have been there to attribute apostolic authenticity by propagating under the name Apostolic Creed of Faith. During mid centuries, this creed was being used in Baptism services of the Western Church. Slowly, this started finding place in worships and daily prayers. Later, Anglican Church too accepted this.

Athanasian Creed of Faith:

Formulation: This creed written in Latin is given below in English. This has been formulated in 44 sentences.

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith;
2. Which faith except every one does keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.
3. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
4. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.
5. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.
7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit.
8. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.
9. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.
10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.
11. And yet they are not three eternal but one eternal.

12. As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.
13. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty.
14. And yet they are not three Almighty, but one Almighty.
15. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;
16. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord;
18. And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord.
19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;
20. So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say; there are three Gods or three Lords.
21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.
22. The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten.
23. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.
25. And in this Trinity none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another.
26. But the whole three persons are coeternal, and coequal.
27. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.
28. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.
29. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
30. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.
31. God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of substance of His mother, born in the world.
32. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.
33. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.
34. Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.

35. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of that manhood into God.
36. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.
37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;
38. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;
39. He ascended into heaven; He sits on the right hand of the Father, God, Almighty;
40. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;
42. And shall give account of their works.
43. And they that have done deeds of good shall go into life everlasting and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.
44. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believes faithfully, otherwise he cannot be saved.

A study: This creed of faith has found its place in the books of worships followed by Russian Orthodox Church from the 17th century and the Greek Orthodox Church from 1780. But Eastern Orthodox Churches have not accepted this as a formal creed of faith. Some of the verses here are good explanations to faith in Holy trinity as well as Christology. However, in verse 23, it is stated that Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son; this has to be considered as related to Filioque concept of Western Churches. Again, in verse 33, it is sated, 'Son is inferior to Father; this has scope to interpret Son as being of secondary nature. As such, before accepting this Creed as a creed of faith, Church has to have a very cautious approach. As Eastern Churches are quite convinced of these lacunae contained herein, they have not come forward in terms of any sort of acceptance of this. Yet, it can be noted that basic aspects of the faith are seen in this and therefore, this is viewed as a good treatise on our faith in Holy Trinity and scientific studies about Trinity; beyond that, this doesn't deserve acceptance as a Creed of Faith.

Questions:

1. What are the reasons behind Eastern Orthodox Churches not accepting the Apostolic Creed of Faith as their official creed of faith?
2. Summarise the contents of Athanasian Creed of Faith.
3. What are the objections to accept Athanasian Creed of Faith as the formal Creed of Faith of the Church?

Lesson 5

Later Day Creeds from Roman Catholics and Protestants

The Creed of Faith with Filioque added # Chalcedon Dogma of Faith # Lateran Council IV # Council of Florence # Augsburg Confession 1530 # Ten Decisions; Bern 1528 # Trent Council 1545 – 63

The Creed of Faith with Filioque added:

Till 6th century end, the Creed of Faith formulated through Nicene – Constantinople Synods have been acceptable to the Church universally with no East – West differentiation regarding the person of Jesus Christ, equality with Father and Holy Spirit, ministry of redemption and so on. The Creed of faith being used in service orders too maintained uniformity. However, the propositions of Arius that Jesus Christ is not equal to Father caused efforts coming up towards establishing equality. These thoughts developed gradually and the Western Church introduced Filioque addition to the Creed. This led to a split in the West centred Church and the addition became part of Roman Catholic Church's creed of faith. The Latin term Filioque means 'Holy Spirit, like coming from Father, comes from Son also'.

Even in Roman Catholic Churches, this addition was practiced for centuries in some local Churches only. This was the cause of split between Constantinople Patriarchate and Roman Patriarchate in 1054; but the Filioque addition earned wide acceptance in Roman Catholic churches as a whole only by mid 15th century after its official recognition through Florence Council in 1439.

Theological Issue:

The Son is born eternally from the Father; but his coming to earth and ministering among men for redemption of mankind is considered as his human ministry (John 3:16). Such deeds of the Son are in his person, but they are in relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Holy Spirit comes from Father eternally. But, Son sends Holy Spirit for his ministry among creations for redeeming all mankind. The verse John 15:26 has to be understood in this sense: "When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the father, he will testify about me". Christians of the West saw the coming of Holy Spirit from the Father and the sending of Holy Spirit by the Son as one; this led them to a wrong understanding that Holy Spirit comes from the Father and the Son. Therefore, they didn't find it difficult add Filioque to the Creed of Faith. But Eastern Churches clearly differentiated and understood correctly the essence of these two verses: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son . . ." (John 3:16) and "When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father . . ." (John 15:26). Based on these understandings correctly, even today, Eastern Churches object to Filioque addition to the Creed of Faith. Not only that this addition to the universally accepted Creed of Faith has been

without authenticity, this addition is a theological blunder too; therefore this is unacceptable to Eastern Churches.

Chalcedon Dogma of Faith:

During the Chalcedon Synod in AD 451, the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Rome jointly worked out a dogma of faith. The Patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch did not participate in this. This dogma is quite a lengthy one and is not a substitute to the Nicene Creed of Faith. But it is seen as an explanation to the Christological factors contained in the Nicene Creed. Many of the dogmas accepted earlier about Christ having taken flesh as man are reiterated. There are quite a lot of good interpretations which can be accepted even by those Churches which have not accepted the Chalcedon Synod. The only one thing Oriental Orthodox Churches cannot accept is this: 'We know Jesus Christ, our Lord, the only one Son in his two natures'. We can certainly agree without any difficulty the other elements here like, godliness and manliness of Christ are not intermingled, not differentiable, not divisible and not contrasting, thus sustaining as one. Eastern Churches take a stand like this: If there are two natures persisting in one person and they act as they will, there would be two centres in him for his manifestations, which would make him a split person. Therefore, the singular person Christ should possess only one nature where manliness and godliness are combined. On account of these, Easterners do not accept Chalcedon decisions.

Lateran Council IV:

At the Lateran Palace of Rome, there were councils of Roman Church during 7th to 18th centuries which are called Lateran Councils. Among these, the council called by Pope Innocent III in 1215 gave official accord to Transubstantiation theory in Holy Qurbana and for the annual confession for men and women who had attained majority in age. The theory of transubstantiation promotes that the interior matters of the Bread and Wine used in Holy Qurbana get transformed as the flesh and blood of our Lord, but the external nature such as colour, taste, solid and liquid states and the like remain as such with no change. But the Eastern Churches teach that such a differentiating viewpoint on Holy Qurbana would not be a true approach.

Council of Florence (1438 – 45):

Pope Eugenius IV called this council where representatives from the Greek Church too participated. An understanding was reached that there could be dialogues on topics such as Holy Spirit coming from Father and Son, the Roman tradition of unleavened bread being used in Holy Qurbana, the place where departed souls are kept for their purification called purgatory and the Roman Pope's primacy. However, Orthodox Churches rejected this later. It was in this council Holy Sacraments were limited to seven.

Augsburg Confession 1530:

This is an abridgment of Protestant creeds of faith formulated by Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon and presented to Emperor Charles V in 1530. First 21 parts are those needed to be corrected in the Church. The basics are taken from the Nicene Creed, the Apostolic Creed and the Athanasian Creed. This can be summarised as under:

Article	Title	Description
I	God	Lutherans believe in the Triune God and reject other interpretations regarding the nature of God.
II	Original Sin	Lutherans believe that the nature of man is sinful, described as being without fear of God, without trust of God and with concupiscence. Sin is redeemed through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.
III	The Son of God	Lutherans believe in the incarnation, that is, the union of the fully human with the fully divine in the person of Jesus. Jesus Christ alone brings about the reconciliation of humanity with God.
IV	Justification By Faith	Man cannot be justified before God through our own abilities; we are wholly reliant on Jesus Christ for reconciliation with God. (This is often described as the one article by which the "Lutheran church stands or falls".)
V	The Office of Preaching	Lutherans believe that to ensure that the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed throughout the world; Christ has established His office of the holy ministry.
VI	Of The New Obedience	Lutherans believe that good deeds of Christians are the fruits of faith and salvation, not a price paid for them.
VII	Of The Church	Lutherans believe that there is one holy Christian church, and it is found wherever the gospel is preached in its truth and purity and the sacraments are administered according to the gospel.
VIII	What The Church Is	Despite what hypocrisy may exist in the church (and among men), the Word and the Sacraments are always valid because they are instituted by Christ, no matter what the sins may be of the one who administers them.

IX	Of Baptism	Lutherans believe that Baptism is necessary, and that through Baptism is offered the grace of God. Children are baptized as an offering to them of God's grace.
X	Of the Lord's Supper	Lutherans believe that Christ's body and blood is truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine of the sacrament and reject those that teach otherwise.
XI	Of Confession	Lutherans believe that private absolution should remain in the church, though a believer does not need to enumerate all of his sins as it is impossible for a man to enumerate all of the sins for which he should be forgiven.
XII	Of Repentance	Repentance comes in two parts: in contrition for sins committed according to the Law and through faith offered through the Gospel. A believer can never be free from sin, nor live outside of the grace of God.
XIII	Of the Use of the Sacraments	The Sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist) are physical manifestations of God's Word and His commitment to us. The Sacraments are never just physical elements, but have God's word and promises bound to them.
XIV	Of Ecclesiastical Order	Lutherans allow only those who are "rightly called" to publicly preach or administer the Sacraments.
XV	Of Ecclesiastical Usages	Lutherans believe that church holidays, calendars and festivals are useful for religious observance, but that observance and ritual is not necessary for salvation. Human traditions (such as observances, fasts, and distinctions in eating meats) that are taught as a way to "merit" grace work in opposition to the Gospel.
XVI	Of Civil Affairs	Secular governments and vocations are considered to be part of God's natural orders; Christians are free to serve in government and the military and to engage in the business and vocations of the world. Laws are to be followed unless they are commandments to sin.

XVII	Of Christ's Return to Judgment	Lutherans believe that Christ will return to raise the dead and judge the world; the godly will be given everlasting joy, and the ungodly will be "tormented without end". This article rejects notions of a millennial kingdom before the resurrection of the dead.
XVIII	Of Free Will	Lutherans believe that we have free will in the realm of "civil righteousness" (or "things subject to reason"), but that we do not have free will in "spiritual righteousness". In other words, we are free to choose and act in every regard <i>except</i> for the choice of salvation. Faith is not the work of men, but of the Holy Spirit.
XIX	Of the Cause of Sin	Lutherans believe that sin is caused not by God but by "the will of the wicked", turning away from God.
XX	Of Good Works	The Lutheran notion of justification by faith does not somehow condemn good works; faith causes them to do good works as a sign of our justification (or salvation), not a requirement for salvation.
XXI	Of the Worship of the Saints	Lutherans keep the saints, not as saviours or intercessors to God, but rather as examples and inspirations to our own faith and life.

Abuses corrected

Article	Title	Description
XXII	Of Both Kinds In The Sacrament (Eucharist)	It is proper to offer communicants the consecrated bread <i>and</i> wine, not just the bread.
XXIII	Of the Marriage of Priests	Lutherans permit their clergy to enter the institution of marriage, for the reasons that the early Church bishops were married, that God blesses marriage as an order of creation, and because marriage and procreation is the natural outlet for human sexual desire.

XXIV	Of the Mass	Lutherans retain the practice of the Mass, but only as a public gathering for the purposes of community worship and the receiving of the Eucharist. Lutherans reject the practice of using the Mass as a "work" for both salvation and worldly (monetary) gain.
XXV	Of Confession	Lutherans uphold the need for confession and absolution, but reject the notion that Confession should induce guilt or anxiety to the Christian. Absolution is offered for all sin, not just sins that can be recounted in a confession, as it is impossible for a man to know all of his transgressions.
XXVI	Of the Distinction of Meats	Human traditions that hold fasting and special observances with dietary restrictions as a means of gaining the favor of God are contrary to the gospel. While fasting and other practices are useful spiritual practices, they do not justify man nor offer salvation.
XXVII	Of Monastic Vows	Man cannot achieve purity in community or isolation from the rest of the world, and perfection cannot be attained by any vow taken or actions of man alone.
XXVIII	Of Ecclesiastical Power	The only power given to priests or bishops is the power offered through Scripture to preach, teach and administer the sacraments. The powers given to the clergy in issues of government or the military are granted and respected only through civil means; they are not civil rulers of governments and the military by divine right.

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Ten Decisions; Bern 1528:

The reformists Calvin and Zwingli published ten key decisions of their faith in Switzerland, which are as under.

1. The holy Christian Church, whose only Head is Christ, is born of the Word of God, and abides in the same, and listens not to the voice of a stranger.
2. The Church of Christ makes no laws and commandments without the Word of God. Hence human traditions are no more binding on us than as far as they are founded in the Word of God.

3. Christ is the only wisdom, righteousness, redemption, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Hence it is a denial of Christ when we confess another ground of salvation and satisfaction.

4. The essential and corporal presence of the body and blood of Christ cannot be demonstrated from the Holy Scripture.

5. The mass as now in use, in which Christ is offered to God the Father for the sins of the living and the dead, is contrary to the Scripture, a blasphemy against the most holy sacrifice, passion, and death of Christ, and on account of its abuses an abomination before God.

6. As Christ alone died for us, so he is also to be adored as the only Mediator and Advocate between God the Father and the believers. Therefore it is contrary to the Word of God to propose and invoke other mediators.

7. Scripture knows nothing of a purgatory after this life. Hence all masses and other offices for the dead are useless.

8. The worship of images is contrary to Scripture. Therefore images should be abolished when they are set up as objects of adoration.

9. Matrimony is not forbidden in the Scripture to any class of men; but fornication and no chastity are forbidden to all.

10. Since, according to the Scripture, an open fornicator must be excommunicated, it follows that lack of chastity and impure celibacy are more pernicious to the clergy than to any other class.

Trend Council 1545 – 63:

This was an important council called by the Roman Catholic Church to counter the movement of Reformation. There were 22 assemblies in this. In seven parts, faith of the Church was explained and decisions were taken to uproot Protestant teachings. This did not succeed in reconciling the Protestants, but were good enough to bring about a better defined foundation and a more disciplined state of affairs within the Roman Church and its traditions. Further, in this council, the term 'we' in the Nicene Creed of Faith was modified as 'I believe'.

In 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary. In 1869, he called the 1st Vatican Council and formulated a constitution about the Church of Christ. Here, he made the 'infallibility' of Pope a proclamation of faith. The 2nd Vatican council called by Pope John XXIII achieved broad and new concepts in theology.

Questions:

1. What is wrong with Filioque?
2. Orthodox Churches of the East are not accepting the Chalcedon dogma of faith. Why?
3. How do you evaluate Protestant creeds of faith based on what are given in the text?

Lesson 6

Views of Orthodox Churches of the East about Christian Creeds of Faith

Role of Councils in our Church Life # Formulation of Dogmas of Faith # Applicability of Creeds of Faith # Creeds of Faith and Church Life

Role of Councils in our Church Life:

In the history of Christian Church, there was only one council where the whole Church had representation. This was the Jerusalem council during the time of Apostles in AD 50 (Acts 15). The reason to say so was that all the Apostles had attended this. Yet, Church tradition had not placed this among the Universal or Ecumenical councils. Traditions hold that the council of Nicaea in AD 325 has been the first Universal council of Churches. However, the fact is that here, there were representations only from the then Roman Empire. Other Churches of Persia, Armenia, Georgia or India were not represented at Nicaea; one John Episcopa who was available within the Roman Empire then for some other reason was said to have attended this council as perhaps the only one from outside the empire. Therefore, it has to be understood that Nicaea council did not have any wide or universal representation. But the decisions taken at the council of Nicaea in AD 325 was accepted by all Churches across the world in due course of time and thus this council happened to be accepted as the first universal council. Moreover, as this council was summoned by the Roman Emperor, it can claim jurisdiction over his area of governance only and to that extent, this had been limited to be a regional council. Indeed, all further councils too suffer from this lacuna that though some of them are accepted universal, they have been regional in the practical sense.

Orthodox Churches of the East do not hold any view like a Universal Pastor or an Ecumenical Patriarch. Any Episcopa is Episcopa for a regional Church. A regional Church indeed happens to be possessing Catholic characteristics in all aspects. But its jurisdictional limitations can be determined and maintained. The concepts of Universal Church and Universal Pastor are creations of Empire centred Churches of Rome and Constantinople. Such conceptualisation does not match the theological views of the Churches of the East. In fact, true realisation of universality of Church lies within the Holy Qurbana where all those who are living and those who have departed join in communion with Holy Trinity. This is exactly the 'council' of the Church in its reality where representation is total. Mostly, the Emperors had called up councils to ensure peace and harmony for their effective governance of the empire. Their goal was unity within the empire rather than unity within the Church. Yet, such councils had constructive contributions towards maintaining life within the Church in true faith. Subsequent to those universal councils, Roman Church and Byzantine Churches met through their councils and took various decisions on matters pertaining to Filioque, Icons, Purgatory, leavened bread for Holy Qurbana, Status of the Pope and so on. Though the Churches of the East had not participated in any of these councils, they could by themselves take proper decisions on these matters which were more or less in line with those of the Byzantine Churches, indicating that councils are not that much crucial for our Church life and ministry. May be, councils are needed under certain peculiar circumstances here and there.

It has been practically seen that Churches can sustain themselves without any universal council; Churches of the East did not have any universal council since AD 431 for close to sixteen centuries; Byzantine Churches never had universal councils for the last twelve centuries (after AD 787) and the Eastern Chaldean Church has been so surviving all the last sixteen centuries (since AD 381). All these Churches have been living within their true faith all these centuries without universal councils. Again, the Church grew and expanded during the early centuries without such universal councils prior to AD 325. Whatever be the number of universal councils, the Creed of Faith formulated during Nicaea and Constantinople councils remain intact that nothing is added or nothing is removed; this surely questions the concept of unavoidability of councils. In other words, the sustenance of the Church does not depend on the councils called by those who are living in the visible side of the Church to discuss some of their contemporary issues; but such a sustenance is based on those members of the Church living in the past, present and future in communion with each other or in other words, in the Holy Qurbana.

Formulation of Dogmas of Faith:

“What is truth?” (John 18:38). This is that question of Pilate to Christ for which he did not get an answer. But Christians have the answer from Christ, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Christ has taught us many dogmas but the essence of such dogmas in their wholeness is not easy to comprehend, which he alone knows. However hard we try to learn them, we can assimilate just a part of it; we never touch it in its wholeness. We often proclaim ‘only Son of God’, ‘light from light’, ‘born of God’, ‘having the same essence as Father’, ‘equal to Father in essence’, ‘born from Mary’, ‘God who suffered’, ‘God who died’, ‘God who rose from dead’ and so on in our creed of faith which are all scriptural, no doubt. Yet, the core of what we proclaim here remains unknown. However, we protect these as the sum total of our dogmas. In other words, truth is something that cannot be expressed in words; it is a being. It can be understood, at least partially, through our experience. Therefore whatever be the Creed of Faith formulated through councils, the statements contained are relative that the true inner sense behind them cannot be fully revealed.

It is not that the councils of Churches are not to be assembled regionally or including many regions to discuss and take appropriate decisions when issues and disputes come up on the doctrines related to faith of the Church. Very often, many of such issues would be local or regional. Thus the discussions and conclusions may not affect the Church as a whole universally. What happens during such deliberations are based on short discussions in the assembly and the conclusions are recorded as brief summaries. These words can be interpreted differently in different contexts because the suggestions come from various persons which would have found acceptance in general. In any creed of faith, this sort of a formulation is what takes place; as such it has to be understood that limitations are always there.

Applicability of Creeds of Faith:

Any creed or doctrine becomes applicable only to those who are related to them and are participants thereof. Others are under no obligation to follow those doctrines. Those who have not been participants in such deliberations are free to accept them if they so desire and if so, such doctrines or amendments are made applicable to them also. Right from the Covenant between Jehovah and Israel, all subsequent creeds formulated can be seen in this manner. In the light of these, the decisions taken at the Council of Jerusalem in AD 50, though applicable to the Church of

Galatia in the first place, can be considered to be implemented at other Churches also because the findings have common principles related to Christian faith as a whole. In the strict and direct sense, whatever decisions were taken at universal councils of Constantinople or Ephesus is applicable only to those Churches within the Roman Empire who only had representation. But the basic principle formulated there in relation to various faith related doctrines can be accepted by Churches outside the empire also and then would be applicable to such Churches too. In other words, the findings of a council or the doctrines formulated cannot be imposed on any Church. But once such doctrines formulated are finding acceptance in general what is revealed is the truth in such doctrines as well as the role Holy Spirit had in arriving at such findings. In the absence of such common acceptance, what is inferred is the need to reconsider such decisions. Lack of adequate theological knowledge may result in denying creeds of faith already worked out. Under such circumstances, proper theological interpretations would help to clarify the position that the formulated creed can be accepted. In short, unless the whole Church find acceptance, creeds or doctrines formulated cannot be said to be applicable unilaterally to the whole Church. Whatever be the doctrines formulated, the essence thereof is fulfilled only within the wisdom of Triune God and therefore, it is the Triune God reveals them to mankind.

Creeds of Faith and Church Life:

“Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law” (Romans 2:14).

Here, St Paul points out that the importance for doctrines of faith in spiritual life is only relative. The doctrines would have been framed with good words, but more than their influence, what is more crucial to nurture a man in his life of faith is the divine inspiration that is inherent in him. Creeds of faith are guidelines provided for us that we do not cross over the boundary lines of our Church life. But they are not the ultimate goals. We can live in communion with God in our Church life; for this, the creeds of faith are helpful to keep us in such a specified order. Probably, the doctrines of faith can be said to be akin to the covering shell of a pupa in the life cycle that any individual can be made to experience the sum and substance of these doctrines in the spiritual life.

Our goal in life is to earn eternal life. To experience this eternal life, we have to be transformed as a new creation. The doctrines of faith play the role of a catalytic agent here. The doctrines of faith inspired by Holy Spirit provide us with confidence and right direction. However, more important in our spiritual life is to live in communion with God to grow in eternal life rather than getting extra conscious of doctrines.

Questions:

1. In our Church life, what roles do the councils play?
2. What are the limitations in formulating creeds of faith?
3. How significant are the creeds of faith in our spiritual life?