



# THE RADIANCE OF FAITH

(Orthodox Christian Apologetics)

Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Osthathios

**DIVYA BODHANAM SERIES**  
GROWING IN THE WISDOM OF GOD

**6**



DIVYABODHANAM SERIES: No. 6

# THE RADIANCE OF FAITH

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**METROPOLITAN  
GEEVARGHESE MAR Osthathios**

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**THE RADIANCE OF FAITH**  
(Orthodox Christian Apologetics)

A Translation of the Malayalam Book  
"Viswasa Deepthi"

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## Foreword

Him we declare to you, teaching every person in all wisdom, so that we may present every human person perfect and mature in Christ —St. Paul. Colossians 1:28

Trusting in the grace of God, we launch this English series: "Divyabodhanam—Growing in the Wisdom of God." This English adaptation of the Divyabodhanam series in Malayalam is meant for our lay people outside Kerala who are unable to use the Malayalam series.

This first series can only be on an experimental level. After the books have been used for some time, we hope to revise them in the light of users' comments. So please write to us quite frankly about how the series can be improved.

In our Orthodox tradition, we give only secondary importance to intellectual teaching. The most important thing is to participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church, in worship and prayer. We grow in divine wisdom as we separate ourselves from evil and grow more God-like.

The sacramental mysteries of the Church, like Baptism, Mooron (Holy Chrism) and Holy Qurbana are the means by which Christ wants us to grow in Him. Equally important is our life of selfless love and service to our fellow human beings. This study series can help you to grow closer to Christ, through worship prayer and the sacramental Mysteries and through a life of loving and compassionate service.

As you prayerfully study these lessons, and thereby know Christ more deeply, the Holy Spirit of God will guide you into all truth and into the great mystery of God's love and wisdom.

May the blessing of God abide upon you, embark on these studies and continue to grow in Divine Wisdom. May your life become a light amidst the darkness of evil, illuminated by the life-giving light of Christ.

New Delhi, 3-7-'86,  
Feast of St. Thomas.

Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios  
President, Divyabodhanam

## Preface

I am personally grateful to my student and colleague, Fr. Korah Varghese, now in Germany, for the financial help he has been generous enough to arrange for the publication of *Viswasa Deepthi* in English under the title *The Radiance of Faith*. Moreover, I am ever indebted to him and his family for the warm hospitality they have extended to me during my visits to Germany. Fr. Korah Varghese's services to our Church have always been quite valuable.

I must express my gratitude to Prof. D. Mathews for the great care with which he has translated *Viswasa Deepthi* into English. My thanks are also due to Dr. Paul C. Varghese for having edited the English translation. May God reward them.

*The Radiance of Faith* is only an introduction to apologetic theology. I hope it will be widely read and intensely studied in India and abroad.

Old Seminary,  
25-9-'91.

Geevarghese Mar Osthathios

**UNIT I**  
**ARGUMENTS IN DEFENCE OF**  
**CHRISTIAN BELIEFS**  
(Apologetics)

LESSON 1

**A PREFACE TO ARGUMENTS IN DEFENCE**  
**OF CHRISTIANITY**

- (1) *Untruth, half—truth and truth.*
- (2) *A reality rooted in paradox.*
- (3) *Imperfection and perfection.*

This lesson contains answers to questions raised against the true faith, a justification for upholding the true faith, and a defence intended to protect the true faith sifting it from false ideas advanced against it.

The working of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the defence of Christian faith. The Lord does not say that the Bible will guide us in all truth; on the other hand, He says: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth..." (Jn. 16:13). At the same time it is necessary that we should defend our faith on the basis of the Bible. "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known" (Jn. 1:18). "For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9). If we reject the basis of this revelation, then apologetics will not only degenerate into mere logic but will remain for ever in a state of flux.

It is necessary that we should accept with humility that we have not fully understood God's revelation of Himself,

even though we firmly believe that God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ. St. Paul says: "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone" (Col. 4:6). St. Peter too voices the same view. He says: "Always be prepared to make defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet. 3:15). Those who do not have the fruits of the Holy Spirit in them cannot engage themselves even in the defence of the true faith. We must do it in love and gentleness. We have to speak with humility even as the father of the child with a dumb spirit, who said to Jesus, "I believe, help my unbelief" (Mk. 9:24). We must have confidence in our belief and should at the same time have the conviction that our success depends on God's mercy.

### 1. Untruth, half-truth and truth

Today it is agreed that even scientific truth which is objective is subject to change. Even Einstein's theory of relativity has been questioned. The theory that an atom is indivisible has been given up. Even science has come round to the point of view that the objective approach is coloured or affected by the learner's subjectivity. In the same way, objectivity too is affected by subjectivity. That is to say, subjectivity and objectivity control each other. Since God combines in Himself both subjectivity and objectivity and is at the same time beyond subjectivity and objectivity, absolute truths are seen only in Him. To say that there is no God is an untruth; to say that we know God fully is a half-truth. Jesus says "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn. 4:6). This is an absolute truth that can be believed only by those who believe that Christ is perfect God and perfect man.

It is only by remaining within the hermeneutic or theological circle that we can establish the true faith. The basis of theology is faith in the Holy Trinity. For a person believing in the Holy Trinity atheism is untruth; belief in the one God

that is not a triune Godhead and belief in the triune Godhead without belief in Unity are half-truths. Belief in the Holy Trinity is, on the other hand, absolute truth. To say that Jehovah is the only God, or Christ is the only God or the Holy Spirit is the only God, is to express belief in a God that is not Trinity and so it is only a half-truth. Belief in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is belief in the Holy Trinity; that is to say, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit constitute Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity. So, faith in the triune God is faith in the absolute truth. The Holy Trinity includes the possibility of perfect, eternal action of love. God is the creator and the redeemer; He is also one who makes us perfect. These attributes of God not only reflect the three activities of God but also the similarities and differences in the personality and reality of the triune God.

## 2. A reality rooted in paradox

Jesus Christ is the supreme paradox, says Soren Kierkegaard, the 19th century existentialist. To say that the unbegotten God was begotten and the immortal God died militates against reason. But at the same time according to the inner vision of faith it is the supreme truth. To prove that Jesus Christ is a man no faith is needed. But to prove (and even understand) that Jesus Christ is both perfect man and perfect God in one and the same personality, faith and reason are necessary. When St. Paul prays, "...the God of my Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened..." (Eph. 1:17), he has in mind faith that goes on becoming stronger. A reality that is rooted in paradox is beyond reason, but not irrational. It is to be understood with the help of reasoning that has been consecrated by faith. In materialism, matter which is accessible to the five senses alone is real. But God that is real is beyond matter. It is not possible to realise or experience God through the five

senses. But we can get a vision of his work in the universe. God is beyond time, incomprehensible, and boundless or infinite and can be revealed only by Himself. Through our faith we have to accept God's revelation and believe in it. Belief in the existence of God is affirmative and disbelief in Him is negative.

Though belief is beyond reason, yet it is not against reason. The truth based on faith can be proved only by divine reasoning and by humility to accept in faith that which is revealed by God. Reason seeks after faith and faith seeks after reason due to the inward eye or sixth sense.

### 3. Imperfection and perfection

Some theologians argue that man can never know God perfectly. Some others say that, as God has revealed Himself perfectly, it is possible to know Him. The verse quoted from St. John (1:18) contains both these thoughts. We are given authoritative knowledge about God as God Himself came to our level through Jesus Christ. But our capacity is limited, and we have yet to grow towards perfect wisdom. For this, however, we are helped by the word of God and in faith by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that will make us understand the word of God and guide us to perfection. The Holy Spirit is the one that leads us in truth. Creation, Redemption and Consummation are the work of God through the Logos and the Holy Spirit.

### EXERCISE

1. Explain the nature and scope of apologetics, (i.e., the arguments defending the authenticity of the Christian faith).
2. How can we reconcile faith and reason?
3. What is the relation between the perfection of revelation and the imperfection of our understanding?

## LESSON 2

# THE NEED FOR AND IMPORTANCE OF APOLOGETICS

- (1) *Heresies.*
- (2) *A new approach for apologetics.*
- (3) *Strong faith and wide outlook are essential for the establishment of sound theology.*
- (4) *The importance of ecumenism in apologetics.*
- (5) *The credibility of the Christian faith.*

### 1. Heresies in the Church

Heresy originates along with irreverence. Hymenaeus and Alexander of the apostolic times are examples of those who turned away from the true faith because of ungodliness (1 Tim. 1:18). "Avoid such godless chatter, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will eat its way like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth by holding that the resurrection is past already. They are upsetting the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2: 16-18). What St. Peter has said about false prophets and those "who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who brought them" is that they will have the judgment very soon (2 Pet. 2: 1-13). Even in the first century there arose gnosticism and docetism, which say that Christ's body was not really human but like that of a phantom. The Christian Church rejected such heresies.

It is love of money that tempts many to keep away from the true faith (1 Tim. 6:10). Even today love of money keeps many away from the true faith. Many are tempted to desert their parental Church for the sake of jobs or for getting

American dollars. The words of St. Peter, "And in their greed they will exploit you with false words" (2 Pet. 2:3), are very true even today.

## 2. A new approach for apologetics

Every age needs arguments to defend the true faith that suits the age. The early Church used arguments necessary to convince the Jews that the prophecy regarding the Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The Church also used arguments to convince the Gentiles that Jesus had redeemed humanity from moral degradation. In the Middle Ages Thomas Aquinas and others adduced arguments to prove that Christianity is at the apex of supreme wisdom. So, a Christian theology was formulated; this was done on the basis of the popular philosophy of Aristotle. When Martin Luther started Reformation based on the Bible, the Roman Catholics made the same Bible the basis of their arguments to prove that their faith was right. In the early twentieth century Karl Barth and Emil Bruner developed a theology to refute the half-truth contained in liberalism. In recent times Rudolf Bultmann met the firm criticism of the Bible by his theory of demythologisation, and showed how the Bible could be acceptable to students of science. Bultmann was an existentialist.

We, who have reached almost the end of the twentieth century, should also have multi-dimensional viewpoints. The question how Christianity can make the rich and the poor share justly God's resources as one family is quite relevant in our times. We have to impress upon both Capitalism and Communism that Christianity can ensure freedom and social justice. Michael Gorbachev's Perestroika has already inaugurated democratic socialism. We have to prove that Jesus Christ can give hope, and strength to the modern youth living in despair, moral degradation and frustration, and bring about a change in them. We have to establish that the Churches that are fighting with one another and that have factions within them and are having a miserable, self-centred existence, can be made into one Holy

Catholic and Apostolic Church through the beneficent working of the Holy Spirit. We have to show in life that our Lord can give us men and groups with ideals in the place of the present false leaders whose deeds do not match with their words.

### 3. Firm faith and broad outlook—the basis of faith

Real Christian faith is based on fearlessness and love. Light has no fear of darkness. "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world" (Jn. 1:5-9). Certain charismatic movements in Kerala say that they have faith. But in them we see mainly narrow-mindedness and parochialism. They believe that those who have been liberated are the sons of light and that they should not even talk to those who live in darkness. Why should they be afraid of those who live in darkness? Have they no responsibility to bring those who are in darkness to light? Jesus Christ, who came in search of sinners and not the righteous, who was called the friend of tax-collectors and sinners, who asked the woman of Samaria at the well for water so that she could be brought to light from darkness, is not their model. The self-righteous leaders will not lead anyone to Christ. It is, however, a healthy trend that in recent times that some charismatic movements are open to others.

Mutual exchange of views based on dialogue and discussion is preferable to self-righteous proclamations. But an approach based on dialogue is possible only if one has strong faith and a broad outlook. A dialogue between religions and ideologies is helpful to bring out the truth. Both in the past and the present it has been the self-revealing word of God that has always led the people to Jesus Christ. "Test everything, hold fast what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). This sound principle ought to be acceptable to everyone. Conviction and openness (glasnost) are necessary for true dialogue.

#### 4. The importance of ecumenism in apologetics

It is the need of the present that there must be unity in creed. We must find out the creed that is acceptable to all Churches and that can be used by all alike. It must be a creed in keeping with the Bible, tradition and the history of the Church. In the ecumenical service conducted in Lima, the capital of Peru, in January 1982, the Nicene creed, leaving out the filioque ("And the Son" clause) was used. This is an important step. The 'filioque' used by the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church was left out. This means that the creed, accepted by the Byzantine Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Church, was used.

#### 5. The credibility of Christian faith

The credibility of Christian faith is discernible in the Bible, in the tradition of the Church and its continuity, in the touchstone of Christian experience, and in the existence and growth of the Church in history. The Christian faith is true because it has been growing from strength to strength in spite of the persecution suffered by the saints, the heresies that have raised their heads, the attack on it by successive Roman Emperors as well as atheists, and the disruption to the Church caused from within by those who are Christians only in name and not in faith. The continued existence of the Church itself is a proof of its inner strength and vitality.

The faith of some Christian denominations is based only on the Bible. They say that they have to believe whatever is recorded in the Bible. Those who have studied the modern Bible and its criticisms are fully conscious of the self-contradictions in the Bible, and do not say that the Bible alone is the basis of faith. Some examples of self-contradictions are seen in Mk. 2:26 and 1 Sam. 21:1, and Gen. 1:27, 2:7, 19, 22. Infallible Holy Spirit used fallible humans and so we have the precious treasure in earthen vessels.

But it is not right to say that the Bible is unimportant and that we must be satisfied with the Church and its traditions. As

the first witness of the Church the Bible deserves the greatest importance. The Bible is a part of the tradition of the Church. The Bible is God-inspired (2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Pet. 1:20). It should be taught by the Church, and our theology must be based on the Bible, though not limited by it.

The traditions of the Church are also essential for the credibility of faith. St. Paul has said, "So then, bretheren stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2. Thess. 2:15).

There may be superstitious people in the Church, but the faith of the Church is not superstitious. Any attempt to turn superstitions into the true faith will defeat the purposes of theology. Questions relating to faith have been answered from time to time, and this has resulted in the growth of theology. We have the example of how the heresy of Arius was defeated by the strong arguments of Athanasius and the Cappadocean fathers and of how the controversy helped the growth of theology. The views and ideas of Paul Tillich have been helpful for Christian theology to get its rightful place and honour even in this century among philosophers. The World Council of Churches is continuing with its studies of science and faith. As a result, secular science has begun to understand the necessity of theology. If biology is not related to and re-interpreted by theology, the studies about the human genes will remain incomplete and assume dangerous tendencies. For the full growth of man both biology and theology are necessary. To find answers to man's ultimate questions theology based on logical defence is needed.

### EXERCISE

1. How did the heretics weaken and strengthen the Christian faith at the same time?
2. What are the characteristic features of parochial apologetics? What is the right type of apologetics?
3. How can we prove the credibility of Christian faith in the modern age?

## LESSON 3

# APOLOGETICS BASED ON THE HOLY BIBLE

- (1) *The unique glory of the Bible*
- (2) *The logical defence of Christianity based on the Bible.*

### 1. The unique glory of the Holy Bible

The Holy Bible or its parts have been translated into more than 1100 languages and there is no other book that has been translated into so many languages. For centuries this has been the best-seller. Even though the Bible has been the subject of more criticism than any other religious book, its acceptability has been increasing. Many non-Christians learn, teach and value the Bible more than their own religious books. The letters of the alphabet for many languages came into being for the purpose of translating the Bible. We have an example in the Armenian language. In many languages the first book that was printed was the Bible or portions of the Bible. The latest miracle is that in the USSR and China, where the Bible was forbidden, it is again the best-seller.

The Holy Bible has been composed in the course of many years. The subject matter of the Bible is Jesus Christ, the only Lord and the only perfect revelation of God. The book was written at different times by all sorts of men among whom there were wise men like Solomon and Paul as well as illiterate people like Peter; it was written without any mutual understanding or consultation among them. Yet, there is a wonderful continuity in it. The reason is that all those who contributed to the Bible were guided by the Holy Spirit.

“All scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness”. (2 Tim. 3:16-17). There is no other book in the world about

which so many other books have been written. The place from where the French philosopher, Voltaire (1694-1778), made the critical observation that nobody would read the Bible a hundred years from his time, is now the central headquarters of the French Bible Society. There is no doubt that even the study of English literature is incomplete without a study of the English Bible.

The experience of the faithful convinces us that the word of God in the Bible has been a source of comfort and solace and that the Bible has been a companion for life to many, a source of strength to boys and girls, a source of inspiration to the youth and a tonic for the sick. The Holy Bible has been the greatest missionary ever since it came to be printed. Adoniram Andron translated the Bible into the German language and though he died in the ship the Burmese Bible continued the mission he started. Nestorian missionaries could not do so in China. The popularity of the Bible is because it gives hope for the aged and light for the blind; it guides the travellers, causes repentance in sinners, gives food to the hungry in spirit, and reveals God to the whole of humanity (Ps. 119, Jer. 31:31, 2 Pet. 1:19-21, Heb. 5; 12-14, Jn. 1:1). Back to the Bible is a slogan we must all heed.

In the context of the study of the credibility of the Bible one is amazed to see that the prophecy in the Old Testament has been fulfilled in the New Testament.

Some examples are given below:-

The birth of Jesus Christ	Is 7:14	Mt. 1:22
The place of his birth	Mic 5:2	Mt. 2:6
The price for which he was betrayed	Zech 11:13	Mt. 26:15
His sufferings	Is. 53	Jn. 12:38 1 Pet. 2:22 Lk. 22:37.
His cry from the cross	Ps. 22:1	Mt. 27:46
The casting of lots for his garments	Ps. 22:18	Mt. 27:35
His death	Is. 53:12	1 Cor. 15:3
His resurrection	Ps. 16:10	1 Cor. 15:4.

In the Old Testament there is a reference to or prediction about all the events that took place in the last phase of the Lord's life on earth. No other religious book contains any such prophecy and fulfilment thereof about any other person who has lived in this world, or about the founder of any other religion.

The archaeological discoveries made in this century have proved in a wonderful manner the authenticity of the Bible. The scrolls of the prophecy of Isiah found in 1947 at Kumran near the Dead Sea was 1000 years older than all other copies available upto that time. But yet there were not many differences between the scrolls discovered in Kumran and the rest. The famous Jewish archaeologist Nelson Glueck, has observed: "Archaeological discoveries have not proved any part of the Bible to be wrong" (Glueck Nelson: *Revers in the Desert* P. 31, quoted by Tittle Paul E. *Know Why You Believe*, Victor Books 1950 p. 79 S. P. Publications, Wheater).

## 2. The rational defence of Christianity based on the Bible

Because St. Matthews and the author of the Letter to the Hebrews wrote for the Jewish Christians, they quoted many portions from the Old Testament. But in the letters written by St. Paul to the Gentiles the quotations from the Old Testament are comparatively fewer. It is difficult to introduce apologetics to the modern man without first convincing him of the authenticity of the Bible. At the same time it is impossible to study theology without studying the Bible.

The authenticity of the Bible is determined by the following facts:—

(a) What has been written was inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). The writers were God's holy men moved by the Holy Spirit. The hand-written manuscript of the second letter of Peter contains the phrase: "God's holy men inspired by the "Holy Spirit".

(b) The inner vision of the reader of the Bible is important. "The unspiritual mandoes not receive the gifts of the Spirit

of God, for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Saints are the proofs for the existence of God.

(c) Importance should be given to the eternal truths contained in the Bible rather than to names or historical references. For instance, the fact that Matthew 27:9 & 10 is quoted from Zechariah 11:12,13 and not from Jeremiah and is an error arising from a change in names need not concern us. Though the books in the Bible were written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit, yet we must realise that those men had their own limitations and that they might have unwittingly committed some mistakes. But these mistakes do not make any difference in the eternal truths that are contained in the Bible. We need not believe in the concept of literal inspiration either; this is because those who believe in literal inspiration will be in a quandary. "The written code kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6).

A portion or verse or verses from the Bible may be interpreted in more than one way. This has been so right from the time of St. Peter. St. Peter's observation regarding the letters of St. Paul bears testimony to this. St. Peter says: "There are some things in them, hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:17). As an instance of differing interpretations we may refer to those centred around the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity; when some say that the Bible teaches us the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity, others argue that the Bible does not teach so. Has humanity lost its sonship owing to sin? What the father of the prodigal son says is: "...this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Lk. 15:24). God's love for man does not diminish because of man's sin. "...He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt. 5:45). God is the eternal Father of his eternal Son, Jesus Christ. But he is also the Father of all those who have been created by Him and is particularly the Father of the redeemed and those born again.

Those who believe in the Bible literally may come to some wrong conclusions.

Those who hold on firmly to the Bible and the traditions of the Church and treat the Bible as part and parcel of these traditions can defend the true faith on the basis of the Bible. Thus the Fathers of the Church were able to prove that the traditional faith in the Trinity is Biblical. Though the word 'Trinity' is not in the Bible, yet adequate data could be found in the Holy Scripture.

Our aim is to have divine revelation; the Incarnation is its means; the Bible is its witness. The witness is given partially in the Old Testament and fully in the New Testament (Heb: 1:1—3). The gradually emerging expectation of the advent of the Messiah is there in the Old Testament. It is realised in the New Testament, in Jesus Christ. Due to the perfecting ministry of the Holy Spirit, Christianity is not merely the continuation of the Jewish faith, but is its fulfilment. Historically the New Testament is the particular fulfilment of the Old Testament. At the same time philosophically the New Testament is the answer given by God through Jesus Christ to meet the expectation of the whole of humanity, including the Jews and the Gentiles (Gal. 3:28).

### EXERCISE

1. Compare the authenticity of the Bible with that of other religious books.
2. What are the special characteristics of the apologetics based on the Bible and the traditions?

## LESSON 4

# APOSTOLIC FATHERS AND APOLOGETICS

1. *Who were the Apostolic Fathers?*
2. *Who were the Apologists?*
3. *Critical comments.*

### 1. Who were the Apostolic Fathers?

The Apostolic Fathers were the defenders of the faith; they lived around the second century.

#### (a) Mar Clemis of Rome

The letter written by Mar Clemis to James of Jerusalem is in the New Testament Apocrypha. Whether or not this letter was written by him has been debated by scholars. Mar Clemis's period was towards the end of the first century.

#### (b) Mar Ignatius of Antioch

His seven letters are very famous. He died a martyr in Rome. He is known as Ignatius the Fiery (Nurno). He lived during the beginning of the second century.

#### (c) Hermas

He wrote the book called "The Shepherd". In this book there are five visions, twelve mandates and ten parables. Hermas lived in the second half of the second century.

#### (d) Polycarpus of Smyrna

In his two letters Polycarpus condemned the heresy of Marcion and Valentine. He too lived in the second century.

**(e) Papias of Hiropolis**

Papias was the Bishop of Hiropolis in Asia Minor. He spread the false teaching that after the resurrection Jesus would establish a millennium in this world.

**(f) The author of the letter of Barnabas**

He may have been a man from Alexandria who lived by the end of the first century. He criticised animal sacrifice that was practised in the Jewish Church and established that the Books of Laws were suitable for Christianity.

**(g) The author of the letter of Diognitius**

The author may have been a believer who had lived in the second or third century. He made clear why the heathen religion and the Jewish religion were not acceptable. He argued that Christians were functioning as the soul of the world.

**(h) The author of "Didache"**

The author of "*Didache*" is anonymous. This is, however, regarded as the teachings of Christ that have come down through his twelve disciples. There are sixteen chapters in it. Chapters 1—6 describe the two ways: one of life and the other of death. Quotations from 'the Sermon on the Mount' are included in these chapters. Chapters 7—15 tell us about baptism, fasting, prayer, the Holy Eucharist, and our conduct towards prophets, bishops and deacons. Chapter 16 is about anti-Christ and the second coming of Christ.

About baptism it is stated in the book that it can be performed either through immersion in water or the sprinkling of water three times.

What is said about fasting is that Wednesdays and Fridays should be the days for fasting. Nothing is said about priests. However, there is mention about bishops and deacons. Prophets are described as high priests in the book; it is further stated that they are authorised to offer the Eucharist.

## 2. Who were the apologists?

The apologists were the Greek Fathers who lived between 120 and 200 A. D. and had joined the Christian Church from among non-Christian philosophers; they worked as the defenders of the Christian faith. All their teachings were not accepted as genuine by the Church. However, their arguments in defence of the true faith are very strong.

### (a) Aristidis

Aristidis was a Greek philosopher who strove to prove the existence and immortality of God. He claimed in philosophic language that the Christian teaching is superior to the truth taught by the Greeks and other non-Christians. Yet another claim of his was that in matters of love Christians followed God's commandments.

### (b) Justin Martyr

After having acquired a good deal of knowledge in the different systems of philosophy he became a Christian in 130 A. D. He wrote the First Apology (the arguments in defence of the true faith) when he was a student in Rome. He wrote the Second Apology in order to address the Roman Senate of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. He was the first person to make use of logical reasoning and faith in the writing of apologetics. In his book, "Dialogue with Trypho", he has described (i) the transient nature of the Old Testament, (ii) the unity of the logos and God in the Old Testament, and (iii) God's call to the Gentiles to take the place of the Jews and experience salvation. There was, however, a drawback in him in that he believed in the millenium. He died a martyr.

### (c) Tatian

Tatian was a Greek philosopher who became a Christian and a disciple of Justin Martyr in Rome. In the apology known as "Oration to the Greeks" he ruthlessly attacked the Greek civilization and exposed the evil side of it, while emphasising

the holiness and glory of the Christian Church. He wrote "Diatesaron" by putting together the four Gospels. However, Clemis of Alexandria and some others have pointed out a few heresies in his teachings.

**(d) Athenogorus:**

Athenogorus was the first to write a logical defence of the faith in the Trinity. He explained in detail the resurrection of the dead. He pictured marriage as a relationship that would not be broken even in death. In his "Apology" written in 177 A. D. to Marcus Aurelius he argued that Christian faith could not be identified with atheism, as described by its enemies.

**(e) Theophilos of Antioch:**

Theophilos of Antioch exhorted everyone to give up superstitious beliefs and accept the science of Christian creation. He distinguished between the logos that was God's intelligence and the logos that was outside working for creation. He was the first person to call God triad meaning thereby trinity (187 A. D)

**(f) Tertullian:**

Tertullian can be called the father of Western Churches. He was a man from Carthage in Africa. He became a Christian in Rome at the age of thirty-four. He wrote many books and apologies in Greek and Latin. One of his books was called "Apologeticum". In this he refuted the arguments advanced against the Christian Church. In another book he argued that the human soul was Christian from birth. He preached that the truth was entrusted to the Church and that the book of the Church was the Bible. He explained the faith in Trinity and refuted the heresy that the Father also had suffered agony. He happened to join a rebel group called Montanism. He made the mistake of propagating the notion that it was heredity that determined a child's soul. It may be pointed out here that the true belief is that every child is given a new soul by God. The Church holds to creationism over against traducianism-

### 3. Critical comments

In the books written by the apologists in the second and third centuries there were some theological inaccuracies. Similarly there were drawbacks in the books written by the apostolic fathers. It was only in the fourth and fifth centuries that mature perspectives on the Son, the Holy Spirit and the Trinity developed. Many thought that the Holy Spirit was only the connecting link between the Father and the Son and that it was the Spirit of the Father as well as the Spirit of the Son. There were some who thought that the Son was a little inferior to the Father.

Most of those who wrote apologetics did so enthusiastically with strong convictions because they had studied Greek philosophy and Greek rhetorics before becoming converts to Christianity which was more exalted than the philosophy and rhetorics that they had mastered. The minor deviations in faith that we see in them were the result of their inadequate knowledge of Christianity. Though they could easily detect distortions in their old religion, yet they were slow to appreciate the depth of the new.

They did not depend entirely on the written texts of the Old Testament and the New Testament. They gave much importance to reasoning. For explaining the Christian experience they used both reasoning and religious books. It was a time when many non-Christians were attracted on a large scale to Christianity because of the life of piety, dedication and self-sacrifice led by the Christians and of the heroic death courted by them. The intellectuals among them who thus joined the Church were in fact only writing about what they had heard and experienced in an attempt to bring others also to the Christian way of life.

Theologians also should be regarded as defenders of the faith of the Church. As Alan Richardson has said, "The most learned theologians of the Church like Origen, Augustine and Aquinas were also important apologists of the Church".

## EXERCISE

- (1) Read "Didache" and write a note on life in the early Christian Church.
- (2) What is the place of such works as "Didache" in India today? On what lines should similar works in India be written?

## LESSON 5

## ATHANASIUS vs. ARIUS

- (1) *The heresy of Arius.*
- (2) *The teachings of St. Athanasius.*
- (3) *The writings of St. Athanasius.*
- (4) *The theology of St. Athanasius.*

St. Athanasius (295-373) was a deacon under Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria. He was the theologian who contributed most to the discussions at the Council of Nicea. He suffered imprisonment and exile five times for the sake of defending the true faith. Arius, because of his heresy, was called the 'forerunner of Anti-Christ' by St. Athanasius, in his authoritative book on Christology under the title, "The Incarnation of the Logos".

## 1. The heresy of Arius

- (a) God alone is unbegotten, immortal; He is the First Cause. If Christ too is like Him, then they will be brothers.
- (b) Wisdom and the logos are not mere aspects of God's personality but constitute His omnipotence.
- (c) Before creating everything God created the logos, and it was the logos that created the world.

(d) There was a time when neither the logos nor the Son existed. "There was a then when the Son was not."

(e) Christ the Logos is not a perfect God but a perfect creation.

(f) Christ had a human body but did not have a human soul.

(g) The Holy Spirit was created by the logos.

If we accept the teachings of Arius, then we will have to believe that:

(a) the Father and the Son are not of the same essence,

(b) there would be no Holy Trinity,

(c) Jesus Christ is neither perfect God nor perfect man,

(d) the Incarnation is not that of God and Christ is half-man, half-god, or semi-god,

(e) worshipping Christ is worshipping one of God's creations,

(f) Jesus Christ was not able to reveal God's nature,

(g) there had been no redemption for humanity,

(h) spreading the Gospel of Christ is not as important as God's love that is for ever, and

(i) the Holy Spirit has been created by one of God's own creations.

In short we have to reject the truth of the Bible and the Church.

## 2. The teachings of St. Athanasius

The teachings of St. Athanasius may be summed up as follows:

(a) the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are of the same essence;

(b) Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man;

(c) Jesus Christ was not a servant, though he took the form of a servant; though by himself he was not poor, yet he made himself poor.

- (d) Christ is God's eternal high priest (Heb. 6:20) and the unique mediator between God and man (Heb. 8:6;9:15, 12:24; 1 Tim. 2:5); he is God's perfect image (Col. 1:15), first-born of all creation as well as responsible for all creation, truly begotten from the Father not made, and the first-born from the dead (Col. 1:18);
- (e) to save us from our sins, Christ the only holy one who had no sin, carried our sins for us, died for us and was resurrected for us; his sinless perfection is the witness of the Bible (Jn. 8:46; 8:29).
- (f) he was not adopted by the Father, but the Father adopted us in him;
- (g) the Incarnation and death for redemption are inseparable because redemption is possible only by the incarnation of God himself who died for our sins;
- (h) Even though the Trinity is a mystery, it is the supreme truth.

St. Athanasius can be called 'the Father of Orthodoxy'. Three persons in one Trinity or one essence (three hypostases and one ousia) is a teaching started by St. Athanasius. It was later completed by the Cappadocean Fathers (St. Basil the Great, Mar Gregorios of Nazianzus, and Mar Gregorios of Nisa). When the followers of Arius slightly changed his heresy by stating that the essence of the Son is similar to that of the Father, the Cappadocean Fathers firmly said that it was the same essence. Thus they confirmed the teachings of Athanasius and upheld the doctrine of the Unity in the Trinity and the Trinity in the Unity.

### 3. The writings of St. Athanasius.

(a) The three speeches of St. Athanasius against the heresy of Arius are well known. In them he refutes Arius's heresies on the basis of the Bible.

(b) His "Two Books against the Pagans" was written before the Council of Nicea met. The title was given by Jerome.

(c) His four letters to Bishop Serapian deal with the personality of the Holy Spirit, His divinity and emanation.

(d) A fourth set of his writings are of those about the Council of Nicea and its decrees.

(e) His apology against the heresy of Arius was written when he was in exile for having written in defence of the vocabulary used in the Nicene Creed which was not from the Bible. Even the word 'Trinity' is not in the Bible.

#### 4. Theology of St. Athanasius

Arius had questioned Christology and the faith in the Trinity. So, the theology of Athanasius who attacked Arius's heresy is mainly based on them. He based his arguments on the Bible in preference to philosophy. In his canon regarding the Bible the sixty-six books as of today were included. Arius's approach was Biblical and so Athanasius replied to him in the same coin.

The central theme of Athanasius was the doctrine of salvation. This doctrine would have been in danger, if the heresy of Arius had gained momentum. Athanasius found in the Incarnation and Crucifixion a single act of God in his attempt to redeem mankind; he refused to see them as two different actions. Athanasius taught about the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His emanation from God. If the Holy Spirit was not God, it would not be possible for human beings to become divine.

#### EXERCISE

- (1) Evaluate on the basis of the Bible, the teachings of Arius and those of St. Athanasius.
- (2) "The group known as Jehovah's Witnesses is teaching the heresy of Arius". Discuss.

## LESSON 6

# THE CAPPADOCEAN FATHERS AND AUGUSTINE

- (1) *St. Basil the Great (330-379).*
- (2) *St. Gregory the theologian of Nazianzus (329—389).*
- (3) *St. Gregory of Nissa (330-379).*
- (4) *Augustine of Hippo (354-430)*
- (5) *The teachings of Augustine that are to be revised.*

St. Basil the Great, Mar Gregorios of Nazianzus, and Mar Gregorios of Nissa are known as the Cappadocean Fathers, They are Fathers of the Eastern Churches, but they are accepted by the Western Church also because they were recognised as the Fathers of the Church by both the Eastern and Western Churches much before the division of the Church took place.

Augustine of Hippo is known as the Father of the Western Church, even though he belonged to the period before the division. The main reason for the division was the writings of St. Augustine. It is necessary that we know about these Fathers in some detail.

### 3. St. Basil the Great (330—379).

St. Basil was a highly devout and exceptionally intelligent person, a friend of the poor, a reformer of monastic orders and a great theologian who had removed the fangs of Arius's heresy. His book, "About the Holy Spirit", is even today an authoritative one. (It is a textbook prescribed for the Serampore B. D. examination). In the Second Universal Council held at Constantinople, two years after the death of St. Basil, the heresy of Arius was given its burial; this proves St. Basil's victory over Arius. Most of what is contained in the Nicene Creed has come from the writings of St. Athanasius and St. Basil.

He opposed all those who regarded the Holy Spirit as subordinate to the Son. His teachings insist that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are of the same essence or ousia, and so, they are equal to one another. St. Basil was the foremost among the three Fathers, who correctly interpreted the Trinity as the same in essence and as three persons. St. Basil argued against heresies that the Holy Spirit is connumerated with the Father and the Son and not subnumerated.

When the Cappadocean Fathers saw in the Father the Unity of the Trinity, Augustine found it in the essence. The teachings of Augustine later led to a wrong decision on the part of the Roman Catholic Church which at the Toledo Council (589) stated in the creed that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. This further resulted in the separation of the Eastern and Western Churches. The double procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son (filioque) is now being deleted by the Western Church also as it was an unwarranted later addition to the Nicene Creed.

## 2. St. Gregory, the theologian of Nazianzus (329—389).

St. Gregory was a great scholar, orator, monk and defender of the faith. He was appointed Bishop of Constantinople at the time of the Council. But in the same year, he resigned that post, went to Nazianzus, and later to his native place where he died.

His five orations about the Holy Spirit and other topics are famous apologies of the Orthodox faith. Like the other two Cappadocean Fathers, he was also a disciple of Origen. The 'Philocalia' was selected and compiled from the writings of Origen by him and Basilius. His writings against Appollinarianism and the large number of poems written by him have come down to us.

Like Origen he too showed competence in philosophical argumentation but never made the mistakes Origen made. In the interpretation of the Trinity, he has a very important place like the other two Fathers.

Baselius who was his contemporary and close friend and a highly respected person had died two years before him. The speech St. Gregory made on the occasion of the funeral of Baselius was indeed an exceptional one. The speech emphasised the greatness of St. Basil. Throughout his life he defended the faith against heresies, and emerged victorious. (The books written by His Grace Paulos Mar Gregorios are helpful for those who want to study the theology of St. Gregory of Naziansus (His *Joy of Freedom* has been translated into Malayalam by Dr. K. M. Tharakan).

### 3. St. Gregory of Nissa (330—379).

St. Gregory of Nissa was the younger brother of St. Basil. After studying Greek philosophy and rhetorics he joined a monastery, established by his brother. In the Universal Council (381) held at Constantinople, he eloquently pleaded for the adoption of the Creed of Nicea. Since he was a good speaker he preached the Gospel, going from one place to another. He attacked Unominus, who had accepted the heresy of Arius and opposed Apollinarius who had taught that Christ had in him Logos and not the human soul. Christ had human body, mind and soul.

In his well-known speeches for those who were initiated into the faith he established the doctrine of the Trinity. In the same series of talks he pointed out how the students of faith should be taught subjects like the Incarnation, redemption, baptism, eucharist, etc. He was the author of *The Life Story of Moses* as well as books containing the interpretations of Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount, and an apology for monastic life. The eternal birth of the Son and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit were described by him as distinct. He taught that as the second person of the Trinity was born from the Virgin Mary, she should be called 'the Mother of God'. Like Origen he too spread certain unacceptable ideas. For example, his idea that the evil spirits and the spirits of hell will ultimately return to God was not acceptable to the Church.

#### 4. St. Augustine of Hippo (354—430)

About St. Augustine the New Catholic Encyclopaedia has this to say: "Western theology would not have been what it is today but for the superior intelligence and deep spiritual insight of St. Augustine". He was the Bishop of Hippo in Africa; so the circumstances which led him to the conclusion that the whole of humanity is steeped in sin can easily be understood. For nine years he believed in the Manichean heresy that taught matter was evil. He lived in sin with a woman for fifteen years and was the father of a child by her, He was a slave to sexual desire, before his conversion. Hence his over-emphasis on the Fall.

His autobiography called *Confession* and his twenty books published under the title, *City of God* bear testimony to his vast scholarship and deep faith. His famous work, *De Trinitate* is divided in to fifteen books. It is accepted even today as the essence of Western teaching on the Trinity. His views on the fall of Adam, original sin, pre-destination, grace as the only way to salvation, etc. are half-truths formulated to attack the opposing half-truths of the British monk Pelagius (410). His view that the children who die before their baptism will go to children's hell is unacceptable. So also is his pronouncement that the sexual union of husband and wife is sinful and that children are born in sin.

#### 5. Augustine's teachings that are to be revised

(a) Augustine says that by the fall of Adam humanity has become steeped in sin. The Eastern Churches say that by the fall of Adam, the image of God in man is only distorted and not lost. Augustine teaches that it is the sexual desire of the parents that account for man's sinful birth. This is not true. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews says "Let marriage be held in honour among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will Judge the immoral and adulterous" (Heb. 13:4). The verse, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5),

means that her conception happened when she was in a state of sin. Baptism is for washing away that sin. Adam's sin shows the universality of sin and is not proof of sin in birth. Baptism is to make us part and parcel of Christ and not just to wash away original sin. Parents are co-creators with God. So the so-called original sin is not in the sexual union of the wedded couple, but in the birth in a world tainted by the Fall. The universality of sin is acceptable, but not the teaching that man is a lump of sin.

(b) Augustine teaches that the Unity of the Holy Trinity is in its essence. The Eastern Churches teach that the Unity of the Trinity is in the Father. The sentence in the Bible that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father is meaningful according to the teachings of the Eastern Churches (Jn. 15:26).

(c) Augustine teaches that grace is the only means to salvation. But St. Paul says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). St. James says that "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead" (Jas. 2:26). When Augustine says about 'irresistible grace', does he mean that man's actions and reactions have no meaning? Grace, faith and acts are the gifts of God, but at the same time true man's active participation is also essential for salvation. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

(d) **Pre-destination.** According to St. Augustine, only those who are pre-destined to attain salvation will do so; others will suffer deserving punishment. This teaching has been accepted by Calvin also. But if there is truth in this teaching, how can we say that by evangelization we can lead everyone to salvation? This will not agree with Christian theology but only with the idea of *kismet* in Islam.

## EXERCISE

1. Give a brief account of the important teachings of St. Athanasius and the Cappadocean Fathers.
2. Is the Cappadocean theology strong enough—to effect changes in the Western Churches, the foundation of which has been laid by St. Augustine?

## UNIT 2

## ORIENTAL CHURCHES AND EASTERN CHURCHES

## LESSON 1

### WHAT IS ORTHODOX FAITH?

- (1) *Which are the divisions of the Church?*
- (2) *What is meant by orthodoxy?*
- (3) *How does orthodoxy develop?*

#### 1. Which are the divisions of the Church?

The first division within the Church was caused by the controversy over the person of Christ. The controversy arose between the Roman Catholic Church and the Byzantine Churches on the one hand and the Oriental Churches on the other hand. The former had accepted the Council of Chalcedon of 451 A. D. whereas the Oriental Churches had not accepted the Council. (There is no difficulty for the Churches to reinterpret the Chalcedonian definition of Christology and come to an agreement. Read Dr. V. C. Samuel's book: *Council of Chalcedon, Re-examined*, C. L. S., Madras, 77).

The cause of the second division was the difference of views about the procession of the Holy Spirit. Later in A. D. 1054, the differences occasioned a split between the Roman Catholic Church and the Byzantine Churches. As a result of the split, the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated each other. (Here again the filioque clause need not be a major hurdle. The Western Churches have started to omit filioque).

Yet another split was occasioned in the Roman Catholic Church because of modernization. Pope Leo X excommunicated Martin Luther in 1531 A. D. The Byzantine Churches and the Oriental Churches are Orthodox Churches. Theologically, Churches are divided into three main groups: Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Churches, and Protestant Churches.

In the Roman Catholic Church the Pope in his position as St. Peter's successor is thought of as the supreme authority and universal head of the Church, and is regarded as infallible. The Church adheres itself to the Bible, tradition and canons, and treats them as the foundation on which the Church rests. However, the Roman Catholic Church has its own views on immaculate conception, belief in Purgatory and the doctrine of transubstantiation of the Eucharist.

The above doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church were questioned by the Protestant groups. They believed that each believer had got authority direct from the Lord and that the freedom of the individual was more important than that of the society. They gave supremacy and eternal infallibility to the Bible and taught that only what was told in the Bible was the truth, and that wherever the word of God was spoken, there was the Church. They were for a democratic set-up based on the decision of the majority. They argued that missionary work was a necessary way of life. They taught that the Apostolic succession and priesthood were not necessary. Invocation of the saints, prayers for the departed and the intercession of the saints were regarded as wrong practices.

The Orthodox Churches consider that all the Apostles have equal rights; the Church as a whole is more important than the individuals. The Church is complete only when the Bishops and the laymen come together. The activities of the Church are intended both for the clergy and the laity alike. It is the Church that is supreme. But a national Church has autonomy for its own administrative set-up. Laymen, priests and bishops are subordinate to the Synod of the Church. Emphasis is on worship and spiritual life. The Orthodox Churches have the freedom to assimilate the local culture and make changes from time to time in their manner of worship, choice of mother tongue as the language of worship, and administrative set-up. The Orthodox Churches both invoke the saints for their intercession and pray for the saints and the departed one to the Lord.

## 2. What is meant by orthodoxy?

Literally 'orthos' means 'straight' or 'correct' and 'doxo' means 'praise.' 'Orthodoxy' therefore means true glorification of God, that is, true faith. Orthodoxy refuses to have any truck with heresies. Schisms are, however, not as abhorrent as heresies. Schism comes mainly under discipline and heresy under dogma.

In the early Church the word 'Catholic' was used in the sense of Orthodox. The meaning of the word, 'Catholic,' however, is 'universal', or ecumenical.

Orthodoxy is the true faith of the true Church. The Eastern Churches claim to be perfect in their faith. But for the reunion of the Churches, it is necessary to prove that this claim is true. Even within the Orthodox Churches true Orthodoxy is yet to grow towards perfection because divine perfection is only in God. "We have to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Church". The Nicene Creed, being the touchstone of Orthodoxy, cannot be given up or diluted. In the same way, Biblical evidence or basis is also the touchstone of the truth of the Church. The history of the Church tells us that in the third, fourth and fifth centuries there were strong currents

of heresy. Then orthodoxy was properly defined and the heresies were condemned. But in this period of reunion, orthodoxy and orthopraxis are necessary (praxis=acts).

### 3. How does orthodoxy evolve?

In the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches held at New Delhi in 1961 the Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches also enrolled themselves as members. Since then, the voice of the Orthodox Churches has been heard more in the Commission of Faith and Order. The BEM documents regarding baptism, eucharist and ministry which were accepted by the Commission in 1982 in Lima clearly carry the voice of orthodoxy. Moreover, it was a step in the right direction to have commenced a renewed study of the Nicene Creed. The Orthodox delegates who have been making theological contributions to the Council have in effect given the Council a new shape and set-up. Yet, the Orthodox Churches have been indifferent to the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. The delegates of the Orthodox Churches actively participated in the meeting of the Commission in 1980 and in San Antonio in 1988. This gave rise to the expectation that the Orthodox Churches would in future imbibe necessary evangelistic ardour. It was in 1870 that the Russian Orthodox Church formed for the first time a missionary society and set apart one Sunday as mission Sunday for prayer and collection of contributions. Also, with the permission of the Synod, branches of the Society were organised in fifty-three dioceses in course of time. The Malankara Orthodox Church has also developed missionary zeal over the last few decades with the initiative taken by Mar Gregorios of Parumala in 1891 and Patros Osthathios in 1927. The Mission Board was formed by the Holy Synod only in 1979.

If we develop a missionary consciousness without ignoring worship, orthodoxy will be able to give its contribution to the other Churches and to the world more than ever before. Orthodox Churches should have a three-sided development; they should develop internally; they should reach out to the other Churches; they should reach out to the world. This development

would take place simultaneously; it is a sign of life and of growth. The slogan that we will keep our faith lighted, and hand it down from generation to generation is only one side of the development. We have to ask ourselves whether the Orthodox Churches have shown the right attitude in their approach to other Churches and the non-Christian world. A common criticism of the Orthodox Churches is that they keep aloof and are without any ecumenical vision and missionary zeal.

Instead of treating these critics with contempt, the Orthodox Churches should learn to correct themselves. A life of prayer is necessary for all type of growth. Orthodoxy should not be static or sterile; it must be dynamic.

### EXERCISE

1. Is orthodoxy limited to only one Church or is it noticeable in all divided Churches? Explain with examples.
2. What are the important divisions of the Christian Church? Elucidate the important causes of these divisions.
3. What is meant by orthodoxy? What do we have to do in our Church to reach perfection?

### LESSON 2

#### THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON

- (1) *What does the Chalcedonian creed say?*
- (2) *Why has it been defined so?*
- (3) *Criticism.*
- (4) *A new definition based on compromise.*

The Chalcedonian Council was not accepted by the Malankara Church and the other Oriental Orthodox Churches like the

Coptic Church, the Syrian Church of Antioch, the Armenian Church and the Ethiopian Church. The Council was a victory for Pope Leo of Rome. But it brought about a big schism in the Church. The Christology of Antioch, which was not as deep as the Alexandrian Christology, succeeded there. Nothing more was said at this Council than what was said for Christ at Nicea in 325 A.D.

### 1. What does the Chalcedonian creed say?

The representatives of Pope Leo, imposed the Pope's proclamation known as Tome upon the Fathers of the Church at the Chalcedonian Council. The proclamation says:

"We then following the Holy Fathers all with one accord teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and at the same time truly man with a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to his Godhead and consubstantial with us according to his manhood, in all things like unto us apart from sin, begotten both before all ages of the Father according to his Godhead and in the last days born of Mary the Virgin, the *theotokos* for us and our salvation, according to his manhood, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, being made known *in two natures without confusion, without conversion, without division, without separation*, (*asugehutos, atreptos, adiairetos, achoristos*), the distinction of natures having been in no way abolished through the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and meeting in one person and one hypostasis. This Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son, the divine logos and the Lord. It was as it was told by prophets from the beginning, taught by Jesus Christ himself and proclaimed by the creed of the Holy Fathers".

### 2. Why has it been defined so ?

The four negative terms in the above-quoted definition are an attack on certain heresies. 'Without confusion' is used to oppose the teachings of Eutychus because he had taught that

the manhood of Christ was fused with his Godhead. 'Without conversion' is used against Appollonarius who taught that in place of 'nous' of Christ there was Logos. 'Without division' and 'without separation' are the terms used against the teachings of Nestorius.

### 3. Criticism.

The term 'in two natures', however creates problems and is not acceptable. It is very close to the heresy of Nestorius. In fact the terms, 'without division', and 'without separation', used against the heresy of Nestorius have become meaningless. Moreover, it is incomprehensible that two natures exist in one person. Nestorius had taught that when Christ slept he was man and when he stilled the sea and the storm, he was God; this teaching itself meant that there was division of personality in the same person. It is incomprehensible when it is said that when Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus he was man and when he raised Lazarus from the dead he was God. The incomprehensibility can be removed if we say "from two natures" instead of "in two natures". This is what the Alexandrian Fathers have said. Oriental Orthodox Churches too teach us that Christ's is a single personality formed by the union of perfect Godhead and perfect manhood. In the words of St. Cyril of Alexandria Jesus is 'one incarnate nature of God the Word.'

### 4. A new compromise definition

A few theologians from the Roman Catholic Church and some from the Oriental Orthodox Churches joined together and made a study of this subject in Vienna from 7th to 11th September 1971. The writer of this book was also in that group. In the wake of their study, they came out with a mutually accepted statement that did not mention the theory of the two natures. The relevant portion of the statement is reproduced below:

"We find a common basis in the Apostolic tradition and in the creed shaped and affirmed in Nicea and Constantinople..

We accept the decisions, and teachings on dogmas and doctrines arrived at in Nicea (325) Constantinople (381), and Ephesus (431). We all agree that both the Nestorian and Eutychian positions about Jesus Christ should be rejected. We have endeavoured to have a deeper understanding of the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Christologies which have separated us until now.

"We believe that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the Son incarnate, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity. His divinity was not separated from his humanity for a single moment, not even for the twinkling of an eye. His humanity is one with his divinity without commixture, without confusion, without division, without separation. We in our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ regard his mystery as inexhaustible and ineffable and, for the human mind, never fully comprehensible or expressible".

We may expect that the Roman Catholic Church will adopt this approach in the future. Similarly, even though the theologians of the Greek Church did not participate in this, we hope that the Greek Church also will accept this. Both these Churches cannot ignore the arguments of the Oriental Churches. They know that there was sufficient reason for the Oriental Churches not to participate in the Chalcedonian Council. There is already an official dialogue going on between theologians of both these traditions that agree that there is no difference in Christology.

### EXERCISE

1. Describe the heresies in the fourth and fifth centuries.
2. Bring out the weakness in the argument concerning two natures in the light of the Chalcedonian Creed.
3. Defend 'the four negatives' using the phrase "from two natures" instead of "in two natures",

## LESSON 3

### UPTO THE SECOND NICEA

- (1) *The Second Council of Constantinople.*
- (2) *The Third Council of Constantinople.*
- (3) *The Second Council of Nicea.*
- (4) *Suggestions for reunion.*

The Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Churches recognise four more Councils, namely, the Second Council of Chalcedon (451), the Second Council of Constantinople (553), the Third Council of Constantinople (681) and the Second Council of Nicea (787). The Oriental Orthodox Churches do not recognise these four Councils. In addition to these four, the Roman Catholic Church recognises fourteen Councils more. Thus they recognise twenty-one Councils in all. But all Churches agree that the first three Councils are more important than the rest because they are truly ecumenical.

#### **1. The Second Council of Constantinople (553)**

This Council was summoned by Emperor Justinian. The three chapters written by Theodore of Mopsustea, Theoderite of Sirus and Ibbas of Edessa were meant to oppose the view of St. Cyril of Alexandria. The Emperor summoned this Council having been persuaded by the Alexandrians. The three chapters and the legal records were condemned and the three writers were anathematized. Of the one hundred and sixty-five Bishops who signed this, the majority were members of the Eastern Churches. But the then Pope, Vigilius, was very adamant that he would not anathematize Theodore of Mopsustea. Finally he had to accept the decision of the Council. There was not even a single canon passed in this Council.

## 2. The Third Council of Constantinople (680-681)

This was summoned by Emperor Constantine IV to oppose the teaching known as monothelism, which teaches that Jesus Christ had only one will. The Council dismissed Makarios, the Patriarch of Antioch and Honorius, the Pope of Rome, who was dead by then, on the basis of their allegiance to this teaching. Almost all the Bishops who participated in this Council were the Bishops under the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch.

This Council came to the conclusion that there was no physical unity between the two will powers of Jesus and that there was only a moral unity between them. Their conclusions question the single personality of the incarnation. As man's will was completely submissive to God's will, instead of saying one will or two wills, it should have been said the divine human will of Jesus Christ who was perfect man and perfect God. The decision of this Council was only a half-truth.

There was no canon passed in this Council. This was only a repetition of the Council of Chalcedon.

## 3. The Second Council of Nicea (787)

In keeping with the wishes of Patriarch Trasiat of Constantinople, Empress Irene summoned this Council in the Sophia Church of Nicea. The decision of this Council was in favour of using pictures, icons and images. It was also decided that supreme worship or *latria* was only for God but that partial honour or veneration could be given to saints through icons and that partial honour accorded to saints was ultimately honour done to God. Those who had said that icons were not needed were anathematized. All Bishops who participated in the Council signed the decree.

A decision in favour of the use of icons was already taken in the Synod of Hiera in 786. Though a Synod met in the Apostolic Church of Constantinople, soldiers disrupted it.

Twenty-two canons regarding discipline were passed in this Council. Accepting money for ordination was prohibited. Priests were not permitted to leave the diocese without the permission of the Bishop of the diocese. Priests should lead a simple life. Ladies should not stay in the palaces of Bishops.

Oriental Churches had not participated in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh Councils and so the decisions of those Councils are not binding on the Oriental Churches. In the fourth Council there was only one difference of opinion between "in two natures" and "from two natures". So without the use of the controversial phrase 'in two natures' the fourth Council could have arrived at unity in faith, but it did not.

#### **4. Suggestions for reunion:**

(a) No change is necessary in the number of recognised Councils; that is to say, the Oriental Churches will have three, the Greek Churches will have seven and the Roman Catholic Church will have twenty-one.

(b) If there is another Universal Council, the Churches will have the freedom to refer to it as the fourth or the eighth or the twenty-second Council.

(c) Pronouncing anathemas on each other should be avoided. The Oriental Churches should not anathematize Pope Leo; the Greek and Roman Churches should not anathematize Dioscoros.

(d) There should not be any compulsion from one Church to another to recognise as saints the Fathers who had been anathematized by the other side. Thus Pope Leo is saint only for the R. C. C. and Dioscoros is saint only for the Oriental Churches.

(e) There must be unity in faith, ministry and sacraments. The argument that the Pope alone is the symbol of unity should be given up.

(f) Autonomy and autocephaly should be permitted to the reunited Churches.

(g) As Peter has a place among the twelve disciples the Pope should be given the place of first among equals among the regional or national heads of Churches.

### EXERCISE

1. Comment on the decisions taken concerning the use of icons in the Second Council of Nicea.
2. Evaluate the possibility of the reunion of Churches.

### LESSON 4

## THE SPLIT BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

- (1) *Causes of the split.*
- (2) *The possibility of reunion.*

The split in the Church took place in 1054. A delegation representing Pope Leo IX went to Constantinople under the leadership of Cardinal Humbert. It was to bring the powerful Patriarch Michael Serularius under the control of the Pope. But the attempt was not successful. The Pope in the meantime had died, and it was Humbert who wrote the order excommunicating the Patriarch. He left the order on the altar of the Sophia Cathedral and fled for Rome. The Patriarch immediately called a meeting of the Council and excommunicated Cardinal Humbert and the delegates sent by the Pope.

#### 1. Causes of the split :

The split was occasioned by the following causes:—

- (a) Humbert who was very much interested in the supremacy of the Pope excommunicated the Patriarch.

(b) Patriarch Serularius was one who believed that the Patriarch of Constantinople and not the Pope of Rome should be given the position of first among equals because the capital had shifted from Rome to Constantinople. Moreover, Patriarch Serularius was powerful and popular. So, when he excommunicated Humbert and the delegates sent by the Pope, he had no difficulty in getting the wholehearted support of the Eastern Churches.

(c) Pope Leo IX tried to bring the Byzantine Church to the fold of Latin culture; this also gave rise to protest.

(d) The split was inevitable; for the unity of the Western Church depended on the supremacy of the head of the Church whereas the Eastern Churches believed in the collegiality of the Apostles as the basis of its unity.

(e) The Orthodox ethos of the Eastern Churches which was mystic and the nature of the Western Church which was legalistic could not co-exist. Neither the Popes nor the Patriarchs could make them see eye to eye with each other.

(f) The Eastern Churches believe that the addition of the filioque clause to the Creed was a deviation from the true faith.

(g) When the Turks attacked Constantinople neither the Pope nor the Emperor came to its rescue.

## 2. The possibility of reunion

In ordinary circumstances the possibility of a reunion of the West and the East is remote. Yet, a beginning has been made in the twentieth century. In January 1963, Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch, Athanegorus, embraced each other at Jerusalem. This was a step in the right direction. In the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) members of the Orthodox Church were invited to attend as observers.

The decision taken at the Orthodox Consultation at Rhodes in 1964 was that a theological-cum-ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church should be held in the wake of the

Second Vatican. The Second Vatican expressed its regret over the split in 1054.

(a) In the W. C. C. meeting held at Delhi in 1961 the Greek Orthodox theologian Prof. Nikos Nissiotis raised the issue of schism and pointed out that schism affected both the parties involved in it. But it is naive to argue that the Greek Church should merge with the Western Church or the Western Church with the Greek Church. Such an argument is a denial of the achievements of the Second Vatican. Reunion should not be a going back but a march forward.

(b) Perfection is in the whole Church, which is the body of Christ. Perfection is inherent in the Eucharist of all the Churches, which uphold the true faith, ministry and sacraments by the working of the Holy Spirit. It is not there in the divided Church. So, prayer for reunion, study and attempt should continue under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

(c) The Pope should not arrogate to himself supremacy. Disinterested studies have established that the global authority, infallibility and supremacy claimed by the Pope are not based on the Bible, and were not available to him in the early Church. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church continues to make these claims.

(d) The bilateral and multi-lateral dialogue among the Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches should continue. The leadership and opportunities given by the World Council of Churches should be fully made use of.

(e) The Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches remain apart not only because of theological differences but also because of many other non-theological issues and practices. Most important of them are the political, financial, cultural, and racial differences. These differences will also have to be settled.

These differences have become diminished since the Second Vatican Council. If theologians hold frank and sincere dis-

ussions, there is every possibility of making amends and becoming united. The prayer 'O Lord unite us as Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, by the means Thou hast' must be sincerely said by all.

### EXERCISE

1. What were the causes of the split that took place in the Church in 1054?
2. Suggest the changes necessary for both the East and the West to become united.

### LESSON 5

## THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES AND THE BYZANTINE CHURCHES

- (1) *Similarities between the Oriental Churches and the Byzantine Churches.*
- (2) *Differences.*
- (3) *Obstacles to reunion*

What is known as Constantinople was Byzantium. It was Constantine I who renamed it Constantinople. Now the city is known as Istanbul. The Churches related to Constantinople, from the time Emperor Justinian died in 565 to the time when the Turks captured Constantinople, are known as the Byzantine Churches.

The Russian Church is a daughter of the Greek Orthodox Church, and therefore, it is not much different from the Greek Orthodox Church, in faith and worship.

Both the Oriental Churches and the Byzantine Churches are known by the general name of Eastern Churches.

### Oriental Churches

Ethiopian Church	90,00,000
Coptic Church	25,00,000
Armenian Church	16,00,000
Malankara Church	16,00,000
Syrian Church	1,30,000

### Byzantine Churches

Russian Church	5,40,00,003
Rumanian Church	1,63,00,000
Greek Church	1,00,00,000
Yugoslavian Church	70,00,000
Bulgarian Church	65,00,000
Georgian Church	7,50,000
Melchite Church	6,05,000
Albanian Church	2,55,000

From all these Churches people have joined the Roman Catholic Church, and remain in it as Uniats (Oriental and Byzantine Churches that acknowledge Pope's supremacy but retain their own liturgy etc.).

#### 1. Similarities between the Oriental Churches and the Byzantine Churches

Besides the characteristics common to all the Orthodox Churches given elsewhere, the following may also be recorded here:—

The Orthodox Churches are not under the supreme authority of single heads; on the other hand, each one of the Orthodox Churches has several regional heads who constitute a synod having collective responsibility.

The belief in the Orthodox Churches is that the assembly where the Bishop or the Vicar is offering the Eucharist is not a mere part of the Church but is the whole Church.

The laity is given full representation in the administration of the Church.

## 2. Differences

There is a theological polarization among the Orthodox Churches on the basis of those who have accepted the Chalcedonian decisions and those who have not. The studies and discussions held by the two groups in Arhuse (1964), in Bristol (1967), in Geneva (1970) and in Addis Ababa (1971) have yielded common grounds. And the statement published by them says: "We recognise in each other the common Orthodox faith of the Church...." "We fully accept the essential faith in Christ...." "We see the necessity of going ahead together"

At the discussion in Geneva in 1970 three issues on which there was no identity of views were pointed out.

(a) Are the Councils charismatic or authoritarian in the life of the Churches?

(b) How can the anathema pronounced on Fathers like Leo, Dioscorus and Severus be removed?

(c) How should the administration of Churches at the regional as well as global levels be carried on?

A proper study has not been conducted yet about what administrative adjustments should be made in the United Church. Since discussions so far held have been unofficial, permission should be given for an official discussion followed by a study in depth of all the relevant issues. This has started with the R.C.C. Recently the Greek and Oriental Churches have also arrived at an agreed Theological Statement.

The Greek Churches are insistent that all the seven Councils, since they are interconnected, shall be recognised. But the Oriental Churches are not prepared to agree with the Greek Churches; the latter insist on recognition being accorded only to their Councils.

## 3. Obstacles to reunion

(a) The Oriental Churches had suffered persecution at the hands of the Malkite Byzantine Churches. Because of the

persecution many believers left the Christian faith and joined Islam. So, there is no great enthusiasm for a reunion.

(b) There is only very little evangelistic zeal in both the groups. They are contented with their own traditions, and therefore, are not keen for a reunion.

(c) The Greek Church, which is highly conservative, has always been a stumbling block for a reunion.

(d) The Malankara Church regards the question of a reunion as unimportant because it is of no practical value due to the absence of Byzantine Churches in India.

However, as unity is God's will, attempts for effecting a reunion should continue.

### EXERCISE

1. What are the achievements and failures of the Byzantine Orthodox Churches ?
2. Make an objective assessment of the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

### LESSON 6

## DIALOGUES AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF A REUNION OF MANKIND

- (1) *Arguments against dialogues.*
- (2) *The importance of dialogues.*
- (3) *Logos theology and dialogues.*
- (4) *Rules of dialogues.*

Engaging in dialogues is a new approach in the evangelistic and ecumenical efforts of the Churches for a reunion of the Churches.

## 1. Arguments against dialogues

(a) The majority of the people who used to think on evangelical lines attending the W. C. C. Assembly in Nairobi in 1975 were against dialogues. Their argument was that since our Lord enjoined upon us to 'preach' and 'teach', we have no right to alter his mandate and engage in dialogues. They asked whether even the word 'dialogue' was in the Bible.

(b) They wondered what dialogue was possible between truth and untruth. They said that there was no relationship between light and darkness.

(c) They feared that dialogues would result in the creation of a new syncretism—a mixture of good ideas from all religions. Moreover, there would be discussions on many basic tenets leading to adjustments in matters of faith.

(d) Further, they asked whether it was possible to have a sincere dialogue between those who believed that Jesus Christ was the perfect manifestation of God and those who believed that perfect manifestation was impossible in history.

(e) They wondered whether other religious groups would doubt their sincerity, when they started dialogues.

(f) The task before them was to spread the Gospel; the earlier missionaries had not used 'dialogues' for the spreading of the Gospel.

(g) Dialogues, they believed, never helped win over people to Christianity. But speeches and sermons often did.

## 2. The importance of dialogues

The dialogue introduced by Socrates in B.C. 4th Century is known as 'Socratic method of study'. Our Lord silenced the Pharisees and Sadducees by dialogue (Mt. 22). The conversation with the Samaritan woman was also a dialogue. Lydia and the jailer were brought to baptism by Paul not by speech, but by dialogue.

“Test everything; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). So, we must hear about other religions. “Let your speech always be gracious seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6). Here Paul is talking about the importance of answers in dialogue.

Truth need not be afraid of dialogue. Reason is a gift of God to us and to others. It is a part of the image of God. The image of God has been distorted by the Fall, yet it has not been lost: it has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made (Rom. 1:19,20). Karl Barth says that the inscrutable ways of God became clear to the rational faculty of those who accept revelation and faith as true. According to Thomas Aquinas, God can be seen by everybody with the help of reason. To reconcile these two positions of Barth and Aquinas, dialogue is necessary. Though God is seen by the inner eye of faith, yet to open this inner eye reason is necessary. That is to say, through reason theologians must help others in the opening of their inner eye. There should be dialogues with all, even with atheists.

It is a fact that the word, ‘dialogue’ is not in the Bible. Even though words and phrases like ‘Trinity’, ‘Unity with God in essence’ etc. are not in the Bible, yet ideas and sentences confirming the truth enshrined in them are there in the Bible. Similarly, the idea of dialogue is contained in the Bible.

Dialogue is not between darkness and light. It is between bright light and brighter light. “The light shines in darkness and darkness has not overcome it” (Jn. 1:5). Even if dialogue is with darkness, it will not conquer the light. Truth will emerge victorious in the end.

### 3. Logos theology and dialogue

“The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world” (Jn.1:9). Before the Incarnation, Logos had been working as reason and light. Even after the Incarnation, Logos the Christ has been working as God wherever there has been truth,

goodness and beauty. Where there is God's reasoning and where there is quest for God, there God the Logos is active. The infinite mystery and meaning of God is that all should come to the Incarnate Logos which is perfect truth, goodness and beauty. The mystery of God's will is "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10). For this, the right type of dialogue, an attitude of love, holy life, respect for the opposite point of view, and openness are essential. Openness of dialogue need not shake right convictions.

What is logical is not against Logos but in favour of it. "In the beginning was the Word (Logos) and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... (Jn. 1:1—14). Logos, the Word and thought exist as long as God exists. Jesus Christ is not one God among many. He is the second in the Trinity, "the true God and eternal life" (1 Jn. 5:20). So all truths are related to Christ. Dialogue will lead us from the plurality of truth unto its unity, from imperfection to perfection. We should not think that Christ is not working in other ideologies and other religions. "For from him and through him and to him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). We must be able to distinguish between truth, and untruth as indicated earlier. "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9). Our faith in that perfect revelation should enable us to get rid of our intolerance of dialogue. We must praise God and humble ourselves before him for getting that grace to know the absolute truth.

#### 4. Rules of dialogue

In a handout of the W. C. C. published in May 1982 twelve rules are given to make dialogue successful.

- (a) *Inter-relatedness.* Social, spiritual, political, moral, and psychological ideas are related to one another.
- (b) *Advocacy.* We should be able to plead for the poor.
- (c) *Peace-making.* The aim of dialogue is to establish peace.
- (d) *Value reversal.* The souls of the poor, the exploited, and the weak are valuable to God.

(e) *Cultural integrity.* Dialogue should be based on the identity and integrity of the cultures of the groups involved.

(f) *Theological integrity.* Even though it is not possible to interpret all the mysteries of the Gospel, yet the essential unity of views on the Gospel should be borne in mind.

(g) *Humility.* This is humility that one must have when one is incapable of comprehending the truth fully.

(h) *Humanity.* Humanity should become manifest in mutual respect, love and kindness.

(i) *Ecumenicity.* By ecumenicity is meant a universal vision of seeing the whole world as one family rising above race, colour and creed.

(j) *Inclusiveness.* Dialogue should guide us to oneness including all and keeping none apart.

(k) *Clarity.* Dialogue should be clear, matter-of-fact and precise.

(l) *Appropriateness.* Dialogue should focus attention on the central point and avoid beating about the bush.

If we follow these twelve rules in dialogues, our inner eye will be opened to truth which in turn will guide us in our daily life to a fuller understanding of Truth.

To bring back the Hindus who had embraced Buddhism Sri Sankaracharya used not only speeches but also dialogues. Dialogue requires more preparation than speech. A man who knows only one side, while participating in a dialogue, will fail. It is not at all Christian to blame others without showing respect to them, to speak ill of their religion and condemn their faith as untrue. St. Paul led the Athenians to Christ with the remark, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious" (Acts 17:22). He referred to their religious books too. Some scoffed at him, but many waited to hear his speech again. We must be ready for both types of reaction.

## EXERCISE

1. State how you will conduct a dialogue with a member of the Greek Orthodox Church on Christology.
2. Say how you will conduct a dialogue with a Hindu friend on the unique, all-inclusive Christ.

## UNIT 3

## THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

## LESSON 1

**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH BEFORE  
AND AFTER THE SECOND VATICAN**

- (1) *The Roman Catholic Church before the Council of Trent.*
- (2) *The First Vatican.*
- (3) *The Second Vatican.*
- (4) *On the path of progress.*

The Roman Catholic Church gives comparatively more importance to laws, discipline and unity than to biblical theology. They think that Councils are essential for the existence of the Church. A remarkable thing is that there were centuries in which no Councils were held. The Orthodox Churches never held any ecumenical Council after the three accepted by the Oriental Churches and the seven accepted by the Byzantine Church also. Moreover, these Churches believe that for the Council to be universal the presence of the Roman Catholic Church is also necessary. In their opinion the Councils are not as important as the Holy Eucharist and the Word of God.

## The Councils of the Roman Catholic Church

<i>Number</i>	<i>Person who summoned</i>	<i>Name of the Council</i>	<i>Year</i>
8	Emperor Basil I	Adrian Pope II	869—870
9	Calystus Pope II	I Lateran Council	1123
10	Innocent II	II Lateran Council	1139
11	Alexander III	III Lateran Council	1177
12	Innocent III	IV Lateran Council	1215
13	Innocent IV	I Layons	1245
14	Gregory X	II Layons	1271
15	Clement V	Vienna	1311
16	Gregory XII	Constans	1414—1418
17	Ugene IV	Florence	1431—1437
18	Julian II	V Lateran	1512—1517
19	Paul III	Trent	1545—1547
20	Pius IX	I Vatican	1869—1870
21	John XXIII	II Vatican	1962—1965

The Council of Trent that helped the Church in starting counter-reformation and the Second Vatican Council that helped the Church in modernization are the most important faith-up-dating Councils.

### 1. The Roman Catholic Church before the Council of Trent

In the period preceding the Council of Trent false teachings were used as a means of exploitation. The sale of certificates of indulgence is an instance. The Dominican monk Johan Tetzel spoke encouragingly of the sale of certificates of indulgence. The sale was a means of collecting money for the construction of St. Peter's Church. The believers were told that as soon as the money fell into the box, the soul of the person for whom the money was given would jump out from purgatory. Martin Luther wrote ninety-five Theses against the sale of the certificates of indulgence and other evils. In 1517 he nailed his famous Theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg University where he was working as a professor. The protest of Martin Luther led many Catholics to the Protestant faith and created

a commotion in the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Urban II gave plenary indulgence to those who died in the Crusades. This also became a tainted source of income. Luther protested against this too.

The Inquisition that had been in existence in Spain and other places from the 13th century to the beginning of the 19th century (1814) plunged many into grief. The Inquisition must have put at least two thousand people to death. These killings make this period a dark age in history. The Council of Trent confirmed again the Creed of Nicea and Constantinople, fixed the sacraments as seven, declared that the Bible and tradition were equally important for establishing the faith, and prepared the catechism. Thus there was a revival in the Church which resisted Protestantism.

## **2. The First Vatican Council**

Even though the Protestant and Orthodox Churches had been invited as observers to attend the First Vatican Council, they chose to stay away.

(a) This Council met mainly to establish the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope. It was agreed at this Council that the Pope's ex-cathedra declaration on faith and morals would be infallible.

(b) Some tried to make a dogma out of the belief about the bodily Assumption of Virgin Mary. But this did not succeed till 1950.

This Council was responsible for the emotional separation of the members of the Orthodox Churches and the Protestants from the Roman Catholic Church.

## **3. The Second Vatican Council**

The Second Vatican Council was held so that there would be a new Pentecost in the Church and the Churches would become more united. Another important purpose was to clarify the views of the Church on the question of injustice and atrocities prevailing in the world. The Council was summoned by Pope

**John XXIII.** It was an event which threw open the windows of the Vatican and let in fresh air. The sudden demise of this good Pope before the completion of the Council was a great loss. He had summoned it with good intention, having been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Not only the Roman Catholic Church but the whole Christian World benefited by the Second Vatican. He expired on 3rd June 1963 soon after the first stage of the Council.

In the four stages of the Council ten subjects were taken up for study:

- (a) Theology—the Bible, tradition, faith and morality.
- (b) Bishops and the administration of dioceses.
- (c) Discipline of the clergy and the people.
- (d) Monks and nuns.
- (e) Bye-laws for the holy sacraments.
- (f) The Holy Eucharist.
- (g) Studies and Seminaries.
- (h) The Eastern Churches.
- (i) Missionary or evangelical work.
- (j) Evangelical work of the laity and media of communication of ideas.

Constitutions were drafted in respect of four subjects, namely, the Church, God's revelation, the Holy Eucharist and the Church in the modern world. Nine decrees and three statements were issued. There was no ex-cathedra declaration.

#### **(4) On the path of progress**

The four constitutions mentioned above helped the Church very much in modernising itself and coming on to the path of progress.

#### **(a) Dogmatic constitution in respect of the Church**

The following subjects were considered before decisions were arrived at:

(i) what the Church is compared to in the Holy Bible and the mystery, that is the Church;

(ii) the place of the priests and bishops in the Church, the joint responsibility of the bishops, and the position of the bishops vis-a-vis that of the Pope;

(iii) the re-dedication of married deacons;

(iv) the royal priesthood of believers and their relationship to the order of priesthood;

(v) gifts of grace existing in the Church;

(vi) the Churches that keep aloof and other religions;

(vii) the balance between equality and authority;

(viii) concern for the poor and the exploited and those suffering social injustice;

(ix) the responsibility of the Church for evangelical work;

(x) the Church and secular governments;

(xi) the position of the Mother of God as a mediator.

Through the Second Vatican Council the Roman Catholic Church has moved closer to the Orthodox faith and traditions.

**(b) Constitution in respect of revelation**

This constitution deals with the following:

(i) revelation itself;

(ii) the handing on of divine revelation;

(iii) the Holy Bible;

(iv) the Old Testament;

(v) the New Testament;

(vi) the place of the Bible in the life of the Church.

This Council found the Bible and theology as two separate sources. But the Orthodox Churches find them both as one.

**(c) Constitution in respect of the Holy Eucharist**

The following decisions were incorporated:—

- (i) service should be in the mother tongue;
- (ii) it must be simple;
- (iii) it must include the local customs;
- (iv) service should be so designed as to imbue the society with good ideas;
- (v) if needed, body and blood may be given separately;
- (vi) prayers said with the help of the rosary should be reformed.

The above decisions show progressive thinking.

**(d) Constitution in respect of the Church in the modern world**

This is the most popular constitution. The subjects included in this are: atheism, Marxism, Communism, world poverty, the role of the Church in the field of culture, Christian humanism, equality of all men, the importance of working in harmony with all good people, the role of religion in the modern urban culture, the greatness of married life, family life, evils of abortion, the dangers of the race for armament, atomic weapons, population explosion, aid for the underdeveloped nations, and international authority.

## EXERCISE

1. What were the changes that were brought about in the Roman Catholic Church as a result of the Reformation of the 16th century?
2. Evaluate the achievements of the Second Vatican Council.

## LESSON 2

**THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

1. *The Biblical evidence.*
2. *The first Creed.*
3. *The Roman tradition till 1000 A. D.*
4. *The teachings of St. Augustine on the Trinity.*
5. *Begotten from 'The Holy Spirit' should be added if 'proceeding from Father and the Son' is added.*
6. *The Son is not the Father.*
7. *The Trinity is not quadruple.*

In the Creed of the Council at Constantinople (381) it is said, "proceeded from the Father and who with the Father, and the Son is worshipped and glorified". The Western Churches added 'from the Son' and so it became "proceeded from the Father and the Son". This addition in Latin is 'filioque'. The theologians of the East and the West who have bestowed serious attention on this published a book called *The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ* in 1981. This addition, however, is not acceptable for the following reasons.

**1. The Biblical evidence**

(a) In the Gospel according to St. John it is said: "But when the Counsellor comes, whom I shall send you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me". (Jn. 15:26). This verse makes it clear that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. Therefore, it is wrong to interpret that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son. The source is the Father.

(b) That the source is the Father is also clear from the verse, ".....and he will give you another Counsellor, to be with you for ever" (Jn. 14:16). So it is not 'from the Father

and the Son'. The Son is also described as Counsellor in the Bible (I Jn. 2:1).

## **2. The First Creed**

Nobody has the right to change the decisions taken in the First Council at Constantinople.

The Council held at Toledo in Spain made this addition for the first time in 589. No ecumenical council has accepted the addition. No local council can change the decision of an ecumenical council.

## **3. The Roman tradition till 1000 A. D.**

In Rome till 1000 A. D. this addition was not used. When it was accepted in Rome in 1054 it led to the separation of the Eastern Church from the Western Church. Scholars think that this addition was accepted by the Western Church with the meaning "through the Son".

## **4. The teachings of St. Augustine on the Trinity**

St. Augustine found the Unity in the Trinity not in the Father but in the common essence. This teaching on the Trinity was the reason why "from the Son" was added. In his treatise on Trinity Augustine has said "the Holy Spirit originally proceeded from the Father alone". So, it is difficult to say that St. Augustine would have agreed to this addition, made after his death.

## **5. "Begotten from the Holy Spirit" should be added**

If we say that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son we have to say that the Son was begotten by the Father "and the Holy Spirit". So, it is wrong to say that the Holy Spirit proceeded 'from the Son' (filioque).

## **6. The Son is not the Father**

If we say that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, then there is no difference between the Father

and the Son. Thus the Son is also the Father. The Eastern Fathers say that only the Father is the creator and he created through the Son. The father consummates through the Holy Spirit. The first among equals is the Father alone. If we accept the addition, 'proceeded from the Son', then there is no place for the Father as *primus inter pares*.

### Trinity is not quadruple

#### 7. The

If we make the essence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit the source of all the three, then the Trinity will become quadruple. The Cappadocean Fathers say that there is only one essence and that there are three persons. But the Unity in the Trinity is not found in the essence but in God the Father. St. Augustine has made essence the source. The Western Church does not now insist on its former position; it is ready to omit the addition. If an order is issued that this addition can be omitted then the problem will be solved. The Creed for the Ecumenical Liturgy of Baptism, the Eucharist Ministry Document of Lima (1982) or Faith and Order Commission of the W. C. C., does not include the *filioque* clause.

### EXERCISE

- (1) Write a note on the history of the addition of "from the Son" (*filioque*).
- (2) What is the justification for saying that the addition should be omitted?

## LESSON 3

## MARIOLOGY AND THE DOCTRINE OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

- (1) *The 'Mother' in the Bible.*
- (2) *The doctrine of Immaculate Conception.*
- (3) *The Orthodox faith.*

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Jesus Christ and the 'Mother' together saved the world. But the Orthodox Church does not hold this belief, though it too accepts the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM). This Orthodox view is based on the Bible and agrees with the tradition of the ancient Church. The Protestant groups regard the Virgin Mary only as an ordinary woman.

The following chart shows the respective positions of the Churches:

<i>The Roman Catholic Church</i>	<i>The Protestant Churches</i>	<i>The Orthodox Churches</i>
(a) Mother of God	The Mother of Christ	The Mother who brought forth God (Theotokos)
(b) Belief in the doctrine of Immaculate Conception.	No such belief	No such belief
(c) The Mother is absolutely sinless	Only Christ is absolutely sinless	The Mother was sanctified at the time of Annunciation

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| (d) The BVM was set apart before birth; so she is free from actual sin and original sin. | The Mother is also included in the fallen generation of Adam | She was born like us, but she got the grace of becoming God's Mother because she lived a holy life. |
| (e) She has a part in the act of redemption  | Christ himself did the work of redemption                    | As the Mother of the Saviour she is a major means of salvation. Christ did the act all by himself.  |
| (f) For one Lord's prayer 'Hail Mary' should be repeated ten times                       | Only Lord's prayer   | Lord's prayer said once is followed by 'Hail Mary' only once. Not always.                           |
| (g) Dogmatic belief in bodily Assumption of the Mother.                                  | No belief in bodily Assumption.                              | There is a tradition about Assumption but there is no dogmatic faith.                               |
| (h) The belief that the BVM is with the Trinity in heaven                                | No such belief   | The belief that at the time of the Second Coming of Christ she will also rise up.                   |
| (i) The Mother, a perpetual Virgin.  | The belief that she had other children beside Christ.        | The belief that she was a virgin for ever.  |

### (1). The 'Mother' in the Bible

(a) The special status of the Mother can be seen in the New Testament and it is undeniable. More than that in Genesis 3:15, known as protoevangelion, there is a special prophecy about the Mother. "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel". This, however, does not prove immaculate conception. The verse means that the devil is opposed to the Lord, his Mother, the Church, etc.

(b) "Behold a young woman shall conceive and bear a son" (Is. 7:14). This prophecy was fulfilled in the Virgin Mary (Mt. 1:22f).

(c) "Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 1:20). The use of 'wife' shows that betrothal was over and Joseph and Mary were therefore husband and wife.

(d) "And why is this granted me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk. 1:43). These words of Elizabeth are the basis of the Orthodox faith in the 'Mother of God' (Theotokos). The Council of Ephesus passed its verdict against Nestorius who referred to the Virgin Mary as just 'Mother of Christ'. So, we should not say just 'Mother of Christ' but God-bearer or Theotokos. Theotokos does not mean mother of God the Father but the bearer of the Son. Cyril of Alexandria defended it to prove that Christ was God even in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

(e) Even before his time Jesus Christ transformed water into wine, yielding to the intercession of his mother. This incident proves the power of intercession of the Mother (Jn. 2:1-11).

(f) We can reasonably well assume from the Lord's action of entrusting Mother Mary to John just before his death on the cross (Jn. 19:25-27) that she had no other Son. The words of Christ, "Here is your mother", were spoken by him not only to John but also to each and every Christian. The Mother of our Lord is the mother of every Christian.

She is also like the Church whose womb bears all of us and remains ever a virgin.

(g) 'And a sword will pierce through your own soul also' (Lk 2:35). This prophecy of Simeon was fulfilled in the Mother who was standing at the foot of the cross at the time of the death of her only son.

(h) That the Mother had a special status is clear from the fact she is particularly mentioned as one who waited for the Holy Spirit along with the disciples. It is said, "All those with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and *Mary the mother of Jesus*, and with his brothers" (Acts 1:14).

## 2. The doctrine of Immaculate Conception

Before the First Vatican in 1854, Pope Pius IX declared Immaculate Conception as a dogma. According to this dogma, the BVM, from the time she was conceived, was immune from all taint of original sin.

The Orthodox Churches do not accept this doctrine for the following reasons:

(a) If the Mother had been absolutely sinless, without ever being tainted by original sin, God, the Son, could not have assumed our 'fallen nature'. If so, our redemption has not taken place. "He could not redeem that which he did not assume". If the Mother had had a special status, then he would not have assumed our nature. If so, our nature would not have been redeemed through Christ. On the other hand, if the Virgin Mary had been the daughter of the first Eve, then sanctification was essential.

(b) St. Thomas Aquinas and the Dominican monks were opposed to this doctrine. According to Aquinas if the Mother was sinless, then salvation by the Incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ would be for all except the Mother; that is to say, Jesus would not be the Saviour of all. "It remains therefore that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified after animation" *Summa Theologica*, III, 27, art. 2).

(c) If God's Mother could be saved from original sin before her animation in the womb then others could also be saved in the same manner. That is to say, the Incarnation of the Lord would not have been necessary.

(d) If Theotokos had no original sin, her parents also should be free from sin. If they were born saints, then their fore-fathers also should be sinless. In the last analysis even the fall of Adam would not have been there.

(e) If we say that the Mother became the right vessel for the Incarnation because she led a particularly holy life, then she too shared the original sin. If there was no inclination to commit sins, that she did not commit sins would not be a special merit of hers in being the right vessel for the Incarnation.

(f) Archangel Gabriel, who went to Mary, addressed her thus: "Hail, O favoured one the Lord is with you!" (Lk. 1:28). Grace is given to those who do not deserve it on merit. For those who deserve wages will be given wages and not free gift. (In Greek grace is 'Charis' and in Syriac 'Thybuso'). Since the Mother was also one among the fallen humanity, grace was necessary for her. It is wrong to pray "O, Mother, who is full of goodness". In prayer we must say as it is said in the Bible, "Hail, O favoured one". Nobody is full of goodness. Only God is perfect goodness.

The doctrine of Immaculate Conception originated with a Franciscan theologian by the name of Duns Scotus (1224-1306). Many Roman Catholic liberal thinkers of today agree that this was a teaching wrongly accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, because they did not give serious consideration to the fall of Adam. Many Roman Catholic theologians have realized the mistake, but do not speak out as it was declared a dogma ex-cathedra.

But the Roman Catholics do not show much enthusiasm in defending this teaching. The infallibility of the Pope will not stand, if the dogma declared by the Pope is treated as wrong. And this is also a reason why the teaching is still retained.

### 3. The Orthodox faith

Father George Florosky taught that the Mother's redemption was completed only when a drop of blood from the Cross fell on her as she was standing at the foot of the Cross.

It was St. Augustine who gave the theory of original sin an important place in theology. The term 'original sin' is not in the Bible. Whether the Bible teaches about original sin or not is debatable. The Orthodox Churches do not accept the belief propagated by St. Augustine that children who die unbaptized would not go to heaven. According to I Cor. 7:14 children are holy in the holiness of their Christian parents.

But the sin of Adam or original sin is a pointer to the universality of sin and the tendency of all human beings to commit sins. The Orthodox Churches teach that even if the BVM had original sin, it was removed at the time of Annunciation. The question also remains how original sin washed away in baptism can continue?

The Protestant belief that the Mother is important only as "a bag in which seeds were kept" and the Roman Catholic line of thinking which makes much of devotion to the Mother in preference to devotion to Christ are both wrong.

The Orthodox teaching is Biblical and based on the tradition of the early Church. The Mother is given the first place among saints. But there is no tendency to instal her along with the Trinity. The Orthodox believers make intercessional prayer to the Mother and also pray for the Mother.

### EXERCISE

1. Find out the Biblical basis of Mariology.
2. Why is the doctrine of Immaculate Conception erroneous?

## LESSON 4

**THE INFALLIBILITY AND SUPREMACY OF THE POPE**

- (1) *Is the Pope's infallibility Biblical ?*
- (2) *Is the Pope's supremacy Biblical?*
- (3) *Perfection of the Holy Spirit and the growing infallibility of the Church.*
- (4) *The inadequacy of definitions.*
- (5) *Gallicanism.*

The infallibility and supremacy of the Pope became part of the dogmatic faith of the Roman Catholic Church in the First Vatican Council. The proposition before the Council was that since the Pope was the pastor of all Christians, all ex cathedra declarations regarding the faith and morals of the universal Church coming from his Apostolic supremacy, are infallible. When the matter was put to vote, 451 were in favour of it; 88 were against it and 62 were neutral. When votes were taken a second time, 533 were in favour, 2 were against and the rest were neutral.

Even though the Church did not accept the proposition according to the constitution passed on that day, yet as the Pope's ex cathedra official declaration, it could not be reformed.

**1. Is the infallibility of the Pope Biblical?**

The Bible does not say whether the Church or Peter or the Pope enjoys infallibility. The Church is guided in all truth by the Holy Spirit. In the Bible there is no mention about any man who is infallible, except the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As regards St. Peter, it so happened that he denied Christ three times. On the day of the Pentecost he was used by the Holy Spirit. But he stood condemned. St. Paul says, "But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face because he

stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11). Peter is seen among those who withdrew in fear of the circumcision group. St. Paul finds fault with Peter that he was not straightforward about the truth of the Gospel (Gal. 2:14).

It is not stated in the Bible that St. Peter sat on any throne and issued any proclamations of faith. In the Council of Jerusalem it was James who announced the decision of the Council (Acts 15:13—21).

## 2. Is the supremacy of the Pope Biblical?

(a) Peter had no supremacy. If one of the disciples had been made the head of the rest, then there would not have been a dispute at the time of the last supper over the question, which of them was to be regarded as the greatest" (Lk. 22:24).

(b) The authority to bind and loose was given to Peter as well as to all other disciples (Mt 18:18).

(c) The Lord says that there will be twelve thrones for them and not one throne for Peter and eleven thrones under him for others (Mt. 19:28, Lk. 22:30).

(d) Nowhere in the Bible is it mentioned that Peter had any authority over the other disciples" (Mt. 16:17—19, Lk. 22:31f and Jn. 21:15—17).

(e) There is no Biblical evidence to prove that Peter had any supremacy; nor is there any reference to his having done anything to exercise supreme authority.

(f) In the New Testament in the four places where a list of the twelve disciples is given, Peter's name is given first. This is perhaps because of his initiative and smartness or because of his seniority in age.

(g) St. Peter calls himself 'a fellow elder' 'among the elders' (1 Peter 5:1).

Whatever special authority Peter had is enjoyed by the heads of all the Churches. In fact it is vested in every episcopa. The reason is that an episcopa is the symbol of the sacramental presence of Jesus Christ.

Mar Ignatius of Antioch (who lived towards the end of the first century and at the beginning of the second century) has said that where there is an episcopa there is a Church. In each regional Church the head of the Church has got some powers as the head of the Holy Synod. It is not absolute power over all Christians. So the Pope has no supremacy over Churches other than the Roman Catholic Church.

### **3. Perfection of the Holy Spirit and the growing infallibility of the Church**

God alone is perfect. The perfection of the Trinity is complete only in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In John 16:13 there is the promise of Christ that the Holy Spirit will lead us in all truth. But the Roman Catholic Church interprets the verse as though the promise had already been fulfilled. There is perfection alike in the past, the present and the future only for the triune God. In the imperfection of history which is sinful, imperfect and relative, there is possibility as well as necessity for increasing perfection. The Bible, history and reason do not help us to prove the infallibility of either the Bible or of Peter or of the Pope.

Perfection of the Church in history is not equal to perfection of God in eternity. "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face: Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully. . . ." (I Cor. 13:12). "But when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away" (I Cor. 13:10). Eschatological infallibility and perfection are not there even for the Church in history. But we are sure that the Holy Spirit will lead us to perfection as the Holy Spirit is the Lord and guide to the Church.

If we examine the history of the Church, we see that the false teachings were included in the ex cathedra pronouncements of the so-called infallible Popes. The doctrine of Immaculate Conception is an example. So, it is shown by the Popes themselves that it is wrong to claim infallibility. The Roman Catholic Church which had declared bodily assumption of the

BVM as a dogma cannot answer the question whether the Mother will have resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ. The Orthodox faith is that she will be resurrected.

Once there is a schism in the Church, the divided groups are separated on the strength of a portion of the perfect truth inherent in the Church. They are not like the heretics leaving the Church on the basis of false teachings. So, in any reunion the groups coming together should make an effort to recognise the truth on both sides. The Holy Spirit, that is the infallible teacher, is ever at work to unite the truths told by Peter, Paul, John and the other Apostles.

The Roman Catholic Church that teaches the infallibility of the Pope, the Protestant Church that teaches the infallibility of the Bible and the Orthodox Churches that teach the infallibility of the Universal Church should be guided to accept the absolute infallibility of the Holy Spirit as well as the ambiguity of all the infallibilities.

#### 4. The inadequacy of definitions

As agreed by the theologians on both sides, in the unofficial consultations at Vienna, conducted by the Pro Orienta of the Roman Catholic Church, the mystery of the Incarnation cannot be defined in words. Words have been inadequate not only in their use in the *ex cathedra* declarations regarding faith made by the Pope, but also in the expression of the absolute truths formulated at the Universal Councils. An example can be found in what is said about Dioscoros and Severius in the Sixth Council; they are described as persons who have been condemned by God and the true faith of Severius is described as mad and wicked.

Prof. Demosconidaris of the Greek Orthodox Church has agreed that the later Councils did not have the perfection which the first two Councils had. The proof of their perfection consists in the fact that they have been accepted by the Universal Church and not in the perfection of the definition. As the Russian theologian Komiakov, has said, faith is proved

infallible when the Holy Spirit has made the Universal Church accept it. The Pope's declaration alone does not suffice; nor can the bishops and the descendants of the Apostles pronounce something to be eternal truth. Faith is infallible only when it is accepted by the Universal Church. "I thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience, as did my fathers, when I remember you constantly in my prayers. . . . I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eurice and now, I am sure dwells in you" (II Tim. 1:3,5). It is the whole body of believers that protects and defends faith. As the Holy Spirit is ever at work in the Church, the material body of Christ, the journey from limitations to perfection will continue for ever.

The Second Vatican has made it clear that the declaration of the Pope about the faith of the Universal Church, made under the collective responsibility of the Council alone, will be infallible. Here is an indication that the infallibility of the Pope is derived from the infallibility of the Church.

## 5. Gallicanism

Upto the 8th century France had its own independent Gallican liturgy. But later it was brought under the Roman supremacy.

Gallicanism had three special characteristics:

- (a) the freedom of the Emperors of France in worldly things;
- (b) the supremacy of the Ecumenical Council over the Pope;
- (c) the combined fight of the King and the Clergy of France against the unjust, so-called canonical intervention of the Pope.

Until the supreme authority; the universal jurisdiction and the infallibility of the Pope are discarded, there is no possibility of a union of the RCC with the other Churches. Gallicanism agrees with the Orthodox idea of giving freedom to the national Churches. Even the Roman Catholics in China are demanding

national freedom. The supremacy of a single Church over the other Churches will lead to dictatorship or autocracy.

### EXERCISE

- (1) Find out whether there is any basis in the Bible for the Papal claims of supremacy?
- (2) What are the arguments for and against the infallibility of the Pope?
- (3) Make a critical study of the infallibility of the Pope.

### LESSON 5

## WHAT IS THE JUSTIFICATION FOR A HIERARCHICAL SET UP?

- (1) *The Biblical evidence*
- (2) *Hierarchy modelled on the Trinity*
- (3) *Who is greater?*
- (4) *A practical approach.*

The Pope is at the top. Below him is the Curia (the Papal Court); then there are the arch bishops and bishops. This is the set-up of the Roman Catholic Church. Upto the Second Vatican the participation of laymen in the administration of the Church was minimal.

**1. The Biblical evidence.** In the Old Testament times there were high priests (2 Kings 22:418). They had collective responsibility. They followed the practice of organising the priests by lot (see 1 Chron. 24). In addition to the high priest there were also priests of the second order (2 Kings 23:4).

Upto to the time of David, the Levites were assigned the duty of carrying the tabernacle and some items of furniture (1 Chron. 23:26). In the Old Testament period the hierarchy was under the high priest. But Aaron unlike the Pope was not an absolute high priest having vast powers. Annas and Caiaphas were high priests with authority in Jerusalem but there is no evidence to show that they had authority to rule over the Jews.

In the New Testament the first place is given to the twelve Apostles. "And God has appointed in the Church first Apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles" (1 Cor. 12:28). Nowhere is it seen that Peter was the first among the disciples. When one of the Apostles, namely, Judas Iscariot, turned aside from his apostleship, the number was again made twelve (Acts. 1:15—26). Paul was also appointed an apostle. (Gal. 1:1). In the New Testament Christ's position alone is unique; the Apostles have equal status and enjoy collective responsibility. They are "members of the household of God built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20).

It is seen in the New Testament that the priests were at first called episcopas (Acts 20:17,28). In the pastoral letters there are oblique references to three designations, namely, episcopa, priest and deacon. But in Timothy 3:1—13 there is only mention of two offices, namely, episcopa and deacon. There is no concept of monarchical episcopacy in the New Testament. The teaching is, however, clear; it says that Christ is the only foundation of the Church. "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). There is not even a single verse in the Bible that says that Peter is the only foundation.

## **2. An administrative set-up modelled on the Holy Trinity**

The Church is a home, a brotherhood in the Kingdom of God and a classless society. An administrative set-up in which all are under a single monarch is against the grain of the Church. The system of administration followed by the Emperors

of Rome came to be adopted by the Church as a result of the impact of the times. In the prayer of the Lord the unity of the Church is seen on the basis of the Holy Trinity (John 17:21). So, in the Christian set-up what is required is collective responsibility.

### 3. Who is greater?

Jesus Christ is the second person in the Trinity and the Head of the Church. He came to this world to serve and not to be served (Mk. 10:45). After washing the feet of the disciples Jesus said, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet you also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn. 13:14). "And Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all'" (Mk. 10:41-44). So, it is clear that the most important quality is the spirit of service out of love. After the establishment of democracy the autocracy of the father in a family has come to an end; the true head of the family is one who suffers, serves and brings up his children by giving them respect, love and discipline.

### 4. A practical approach

What is needed in the Church is an administrative set-up in which the Synod shares collective responsibility. The President of the Synod will be the seniormost person. He should have no right to veto the decision of the Synod. The Synod should be able to say ".....it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us," (Acts. 15:28). Under no circumstances should it be "the Holy Spirit and me".

The national episcopal Synod of the national Churches, should not take decisions and impose them on the people without consulting them and their representatives. In all dioceses and

in the national Churches there should be managing committees consisting of the laymen, the clergy and the bishops.

The Pope, the Patriarch and the Catholicos should not have the power of vetoing decisions taken by the Holy Synod of the Church. The President of the Synod, namely, the Pope, the Patriarch, or the Catholicos or the Arch Bishop should have only the position of first among equals. (*primus inter pares*).

At all levels—parishes, dioceses, the national Churches, and the Universal Church—there should be a system of administration based on collective responsibility.

### EXERCISE

1. What is meant by pyramidal hierarchy?
2. Explain the advantages of collegial hierarchy.
3. What is meant by collective responsibility?
4. How can democracy and episcopacy be combined?

### LESSON 6

## PURGATORY AND ETERNAL HELL

- (1) *What is meant by purgatory?*
- (2) *Is there a special place known as purgatory?*
- (3) *Three views on life after death.*
- (4) *How did the teaching about purgatory originate?*

### 1. What is meant by purgatory?

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that there is a place of liberation, a place of purification known as purgatory where

the souls of those who died in grace but had lived in imperfection, of those who had committed only venial sins in their earthly life, of those who were forgiven their deadly sins and of those who had not suffered earthly punishment for their sins in the world go for purification and wait till the Day of Judgment when they enter heaven.

Eternal hell is the place where the souls of those who have not been forgiven their sins go. This place is known as 'Gehanna' in Hebrew and 'Tartarus' in Greek. (Mt. 5:22, 29; 10:28; 18:8, 23:15..). Scholars say that the teaching in the New Testament about Gehanna is about a place outside Jerusalem where the waste matter was thrown into perpetual fire. In the same way as in Gehanna the fire in hell is also never extinguished. What eternal fire and undying worms denote is eternal suffering.

## 2. Is there a place known as purgatory?

The only portion in the Old Testament which may be referred to in support of the argument for the existence of purgatory is in 2 Macc, 12:39-45 (The Book of Maccabees is included in apocryphal books, that belong to the period between the Old Testament times and the New Testament times.) This is included in the Hebrew Bible. What is stated here is that prayers were said and gifts were offered for all the dead soldiers and not that these prayers and gifts were intended for the good of those who had gone to purgatory.

In the New Testament there is not even a single verse drawing a distinction between purgatory and eternal hell. In 2 Tim. 1:18 the prayer for the dead Onesiphorus is regarded as proof of praying for dead persons. However, this cannot be regarded as a proof of the existence of purgatory. According to the Roman Catholic Church, 1 Cor 3:10-15 contains proof that there is purgatory. But the words: "it will be revealed with fire" cannot be interpreted to refer to any particular place of purification. What is said here is that on the foundation of Jesus Christ what is to be built by any man should

be done with gold, silver and precious stones and not with straw. This means that a man's achievements in this world should be lasting. In Mk. 3:29 it is said, "... but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin..." It means that there are sins which will be forgiven and sins which will not be forgiven. But for this there is no need for a purgatory.

### **3. Three views on life after death**

The verse, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12), can be truly construed as a statement about life after death.

#### **(i) Eternal hell and eternal heaven**

Both eternal hell and eternal heaven are clearly suggested in Mat. 25:46: "And they will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life" (also see Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:29; Mt. 12:32). Many other religions also teach the concept of eternal hell and eternal heaven. This teaching is welcomed by all as it acts as an impetus for leading a good life in this world.

When we think rationally or philosophically, we may find the concept of eternal hell lacking in natural justice in so far as all sinners - those who have committed minor sins and those who have committed heinous sins - alike go to hell. The Orthodox Church does not make the concept a central theme of its teaching. What is taught is that we should lead a good life not out of the fear of going to hell but out of love of God and the grief inherent in the denial of God's love.

#### **(ii) In the end all will attain salvation (universalism)**

The verses in the Bible, viz. Phil. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:18-20; 4:6, 2 Pet. 3:9-10 etc., support the view that in the end all will attain salvation. When we lay emphasis on the power of love and not on the ultimate importance of human freedom, we will arrive at the teaching that all will in the end attain salvation.

The teaching implies that the Holy Spirit that guided the prodigal son to self-realization will also be at work even after one's death, and there is hope that every sinner will finally repent and become converted to a good life. The Protestant theologian, Karl Barth, teaches that God's love will slowly empty the hell and save all from hell. Origen teaches that even Satan will be saved in the end. (This teaching, however, is not accepted by the Church).

The belief that in the end everyone will attain salvation is more acceptable than a belief in both purgatory and eternal hell at the same time. There is no one who has not committed deadly sins: also there is no one who has fully repented of all his sins. So, it is only more reasonable to send the souls to purgatory for purification than to send them to eternal damnation in hell. The Russian Orthodox thinkers like Bulguchov are inclined to think of hell as a place of purification rather than as a place of eternal damnation.

It may be said that this belief will lead men to commit sins freely; for salvation is assured in the end. But the fact is that a person who sincerely loves God cannot sin and cause pain to Him. Does the life-boat in the ship give an excuse for anyone to jump into the ocean?

### (iii) **Eternal life is only in Jesus Christ**

The third view on life after death is that there is eternal life only in Jesus Christ and that those who do not believe in him disintegrate into nothingness.

Everlasting redemption is the gift of Jesus Christ. It is not man's birth-right because he has been created in God's image. Man is of the earth; he is mortal and will perish. Those who believe in eternal life as a gift of Jesus Christ will get everlasting redemption while others will perish for ever. This theory is called the Annihilation Theory of St. John.

The above belief is defective in so far as that it rejects the glory of God's image in which man has been created. However,

the central position that salvation is only in Jesus Christ is acceptable.

That eternal salvation is a gift of Jesus Christ is clear from the following verses: Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8, 8:32; Eph. 2:4-8; I Jn. 4:9-10.

Belief in Jesus Christ as the Saviour fills man with love of God and makes him realise that his living in sins will be painful to the Lord. He will, therefore, accept the free gift of redemption by leading a virtuous life.

#### **4. How did the teaching about purgatory originate?**

The justification for praying for the departed is seen in the principle that there should be prayers for all those who had died in Christ. We cannot say that there is no need for praying for the dead because no one dies in a perfectly sinless state. Perhaps the concept of purgatory has its origin in the desire for making money. The inclusion of laziness and miserliness in the list of deadly sins was also done to get more money through the sale of certificates of indulgence.

The Roman Catholic Church tries to prove the existence of purgatory by giving a new interpretation to I Jn. 5:16 which recommends prayer for the remission of sins. The interpretation is that the prayer here is prayer for liberation from purgatory. In fact the verse is only a call to keep away from mortal sin. The verse reads: "If any one sees his brother committing what is not mortal sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin which is mortal. I do not say that one is to pray for that. All wrong doing is sin but there is sin which is not mortal". Heaven is the reward of virtues and hell is the punishment of sin. Reward and punishment are the two sides of justice. If there is no heaven or hell, then there is no God who is administering justice. If hell is eternal, that means that God's mercy and love are not capable of leading all to repentance. The possibility of eternal punishment is suggested so as to express the

idea of unlimited freedom of action. What is required is to regard the whole of hell as purgatory. To send a few to hell and eternal damnation and others to purgatory may be an excuse to satisfy the desire for making money.

### EXERCISE

(1) What are the reasons for the Roman Catholic teaching that purgatory is a place of purification for the dead?

(2) Examine the three views on life after death and explain how they will affect one's every day life.

(3) What should the Orthodox Church learn from the Roman Catholic Church and what should the Roman Catholic Church learn from the Orthodox Church?

## UNIT 4

# PROTESTANT GROUPS

## LESSON 1

### LUTHERANISM—AUGSBURG CONFESSION

- (1) *What is Lutheranism?*
- (2) *Reaction towards the Roman Catholic faith?*
- (3) *Justification by faith (sola fidei)*
- (4) *Opposition to priesthood.*

#### 1. What is Lutheranism?

Martin Luther (1483—1546) was a whirlwind that swept over the Roman Catholic Church of Germany in the 16th century. The whirlwind went past in an eddy of half truths in which originated Protestantism, which was a correction to the Roman Catholic malpractices. The basic tenets of Lutheranism are:

- (a) justification by faith;
- (b) the freedom of the individual;
- (c) the authority of the Bible;
- (d) priesthood of the members of the Church as a royal race;
- (e) particular dislike towards priesthood based on the importance of prophecy;
- (f) resentment towards the concept of the infallibility of the Pope, the sale of indulgence, purgatory etc!
- (g) personal relationship with Christ;
- (h) the necessity of attaining perfect salvation in this world itself.

Besides the above tenets, the Apostolic Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed are also accepted as basic Creeds by the Lutherans. In respect of its faith, Lutheranism stands between the Roman Catholic faith and Calvinism.

There is belief in consubstantiation instead of transubstantiation of the elements in the Holy Eucharist, But this does not mean that consubstantiation distinguishes from the general presence of Christ. The Lutherans believe that there is total depravity in man's fall; they, however, do not believe that some are predestined for heaven and some for hell.

Philipp Melanchthon (1497—1560) was a humanist and theologian who worked as the right-hand man of Luther. He played a significant role in writing many important documents and in translating the Holy Bible into the German language. 'Loci Communes' published by him in 1521, contains the basic beliefs of Protestant Reformation.

(a) He was responsible for the episcopacy in some countries in the Lutheran Church.

(b) He strongly objected to the arguments of Zwingli that the Eucharist was only a memorial. To please the Calvins, however, he suggested the idea that the 'real presence' in the Eucharist need not be emphasised.

(c) He argued in favour of co-existence with the Roman Catholic Church, ignoring some of its tenets and faith.

## 2. Reaction towards the Roman Catholic faith

The Lutherans taught

(a) justification by faith to defeat justification by work;

(b) the responsibility of each individual and personal conscientious action over against blind faith in the teaching of the Church,

(c) individual freedom, vis-a-vis the discipline and solidarity of the Church;

(d) the infallibility of the Bible over against the infallibility of the Pope;

(e) the supremacy of Christian freedom, and priesthood of the members of the Church as a royal priesthood instead of the supremacy of the Pope and special priesthood

(f) opposition to prayers for the departed in addition to opposition to the sale of indulgence;

(g) the need for preaching the Gospel instead of priestly functions;

(h) direct relationship with Christ as against Apostolic succession for the validity of the ministry in the Church.

It is said that Martin Luther had thrown away the baby along with the bath water. The loss of private confession is an example of this. Though Luther conducted private confessions till his death, Lutheranism stopped it; now counselling has taken its place. Though Luther drew attention to the errors of the Roman Catholic Church, yet he could not give it a comprehensive theology.

Augsburg Confession could not succeed in bringing about a coalescence of priesthood and prophecy, direct prayers and the intercession of saints, the freedom of Christians and the unity of the Church, authority of the Bible and of tradition, justification by faith and the need for action, confession before the priest and direct prayer of repentance.

### 3. Justification only by faith (*sola fidei*)

The teaching of Luther gives rise to the wrong impression that faith without action is enough. Luther misunderstood the Book of James and called it mere straw. St. Paul has never taught justification by faith as an independent concept; he has said, "For by Grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). This means that faith alone is not enough for salvation. Yet in another context Paul has observed, "Work out your own

salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12,13).

James points out that the faith of Abraham was accompanied by action. "Was not Abraham our Father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works and the faith was completed by works" (Jas. 2:21,22). "You believe that God is one; you do well, even the demons believe and shudder" (Jas. 2:19). But by their faith the demons are not justified. Paul's intention in teaching that work in obedience to rules and canons of the Church does not alone ensure salvation is to show that salvation is not just a reward or remuneration for the work. This does not however, mean that work based on faith is not necessary. The doctrine of "faith alone" made Luther blind to issues of social justice.

Orthodox Churches teach salvation by Grace. Both faith and work are by Grace "But by the Grace of God, I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). "They are justified by his Grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24). This is more meaningful than saying 'justified by faith'. Faith and work originate from Grace, and sacraments are the means of Grace.

#### 4. Opposition to priesthood

Luther's resentment towards priesthood was because of his misunderstandings about priesthood. He opposed the practice of the Roman Catholic Church giving only bread in the Eucharist; he opposed the practice of compulsory ascetic life for the priests. Administering the Eucharist in private is also resented in Augsburg Confession. All these protests led to the abandoning of private confession instead of rectifying its drawbacks and to a fight against celibacy instead of the evils to which it is prone. Luther's opposition should have been against the evils inherent in these practices and not against the practices as such. Luther's opposition to the Pope was the cause of his opposition to special priesthood. He failed to understand

rightly the idea of special priesthood which originated with Jesus Christ who said to his disciples: "As the Father has sent me, ever so I send you" and "breathed on them" saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn. 2:21—23). The words of Christ show the meaning of special priesthood perpetuating His fulfilled priesthood. The priesthood of the laity is not special, but general.

Today special priesthood and general priesthood are given to even those who are not Levites. If there is no special priesthood, there is no general priesthood and if there is no general priesthood there is no special priesthood. Both are complementary to each other.

### EXERCISE

- (1) What are the causes of the Protestant Reformation set in motion by Martin Luther?
- (2) Evaluate the merits and demerits of the Reformation.
- (3) Explain the types of Reformation needed for each Church today.

### LESSON 2

## CALVINISM AND THE PRESBYTERIAN FAITH

- (1) *Calvinism.*
- (2) *Presbyterianism.*
- (3) *Criticism.*

**John Calvin (1509-1564)** was a French theologian and reformer. At the age of 24 he left the Roman Catholic Church and became a leader of the Reformation Movement. Luther and Calvin played

a key role in Reformation, in fact they were the architects of Reformation; in the 16th century.

## 1. Calvinism

Calvinism is the theological system of Calvin.

(a) Calvinism teaches that the Bible alone is the foundation for the faith of the Church;

(b) justification is only by faith, not necessarily accompanied by good deeds. But more than Lutheranism Calvinism also teaches the following:-

(i) Persons once saved are always saved. Salvation is for all times.

(ii) The teaching that salvation is certain is correct.

(iii) Some are predestined for heaven and some for hell.

(iv) By the witness of the Holy Spirit not only can we know the infallibility and authority of the Bible but also which books are canonical.

(v) Since man is fallen he cannot save himself; even his desires and actions are sinful. Those who are in Christ will be attracted by Grace instead of by lust. The sins of Christians are easily forgiven by the Grace of Christ, and that Grace will not be lost.

(vi) The Holy Eucharist is only evidence of God's Grace. Calvin's teaching about the Eucharist stands midway between the teaching of Luther and that of Zwingli.

## 2. Presbyterianism (a form of Church government by elders)

Those who have accepted the teaching of Calvin are generally known as members of the Reformed Churches. Karl Barth was a member of this group. The characteristic features of these Churches are:-

(a) Each parish is administered by a pastor with the help of a set of selected presbyters. The elders of the different parishes together constitute the synod. Pastors and elders in

equal numbers constitute the general assembly. This is the supreme body; for the members of the assembly are elected by the people.

(b) There are those who teach that the Apostolic succession continues through the presbyters, but there are also others who do not attach any importance to this belief.

(c) Differences of opinion exist as to whether the elders who help in the administration of the Church are ordained or not.

(d) The Holy Eucharist is not compulsory.

(e) Even though many presbyters today believe that episcopal administration is recommended in the New Testaments yet the earlier belief of the presbyters was opposed to it.

There are about 12 million presbyterians in the world. It is recognised as a national Church only in Scotland. There the state does not interfere in spiritual matters. It was John Knox who effected Reformation in Scotland. The Presbyterian Church in India has joined the Church of South India and the Church of North India.

### 3. Criticism

Though Calvin put his fingers on the errors of the Roman Catholic Church, yet he did not formulate a perfect theology. Calvin's book, 'Institutes of the Christian Religion,' is a systematic account of Biblical teaching and is followed by the Presbyterian Churches and other Protestant Churches. Calvin had a temperament totally different from that of Luther. In the opinion of some historians he was ruthless and dictatorial in his administration in Geneva.

#### (a) Double predestination

Calvin's concept of double predestination is an erroneous teaching. Mat. 20:23, Jn. 10:29, and Rom. 8:28-30 cannot be regarded as evidence showing that some are predestined for hell and others for heaven. If there is predestination then man and his deeds have nothing to do with the place he goes to after

death. Why should we evangelize if only the elect will be saved?

When Paul says, "I am what I am by the grace of God," he does not mean that he has no share in meriting heaven or hell. "By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I have delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:20). It cannot be said that it is God's predestination alone that works here. On the Day of Judgement those on his left will be sent by the Son of Man into the eternal fire and those his right to the Eternal Kingdom (Mt. 25:31f). in accordance with their deeds. Hell is defined here as the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his messengers. God's home is prepared for those who are virtuous; punishments and blessings are awarded on the basis of merits achieved through the exercise of free will.

Karl Barth, the most enthusiastic spokesman of Calvin, in the 20th century has amended the Calvinistic position on predestination and free will. According to him, the forsaken one is Jesus Christ alone and not the whole of human race. The human race has been selected to exercise free will. It was Jesus who cried "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46). The concept of Calvinistic predestination distorts the divine scheme.

Next we may consider the teaching that a person once saved is saved for ever. In Psalm 51:12 David is seen praying to God, "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation". This means that David had the joy of salvation previously, but he missed it by his sin, and that God may gave him back that joy of salvation again by forgiving his sins. David's prayer goes to prove that the concept of everlasting salvation is erroneous.

In 2 Corinthians 10:1-13 St. Paul says that all those who had been liberated from slavery in Egypt did not reach the promised land and that those who experienced salvation once should be cautious enough not to fall into sin again (2 Cor. 10:1-13).

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews also says: "it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened. . . if they then commit apostasy" (Heb. 6:1—6).

Judas Iscariot, who committed apostasy by betraying Christ, having yielded to the temptation of 30 pieces of silver coins, might earlier have been enlightened, but perished (Jn. 17:12). St. Paul says: "the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs" (1 Tim. 6:10). All this means that those who had experienced salvation perished later. The Lord says, "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Mk. 13:13). So, can anyone say that a person who has been redeemed once has been redeemed for all times to come?

What St. Paul says is: "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Phil. 3:12). That is to say, he does not say that he has been saved, but says that he goes ahead on the path of redemption.

The verse, "If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:14-15). This passage does not say that a man's work has no place in the scheme of redemption. What is meant is that salvation is the gift of God and so all will be saved in the end. If we interpret the verse to mean that only a few will be saved, it may mean that God is partial.

#### **(b) Assurance of salvation**

Calvin's teaching is that those who are saved will have the assurance of salvation out of joy. This is a half-truth. This should be treated as the experience of an individual and not as a decree. All the judgement is entrusted to the Son. We have no right to judge ourselves or others; we do not have the competence. We are called to witness to the saviour and not to be judges.

**(c) Is the 'good' outside Christ 'evil'?**

Calvin sees evil in what is considered good in other religions, and also in those Christians who claim for themselves righteousness. This position cannot be regarded as right even to establish that everything is received by God's Grace.

When we realise that all goodness is derived from the only begotten God and the Holy Spirit, we find that what is good in other religions also is really good. When St. John says, "The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world" (Jn. 1:9), we realise that Jesus Christ has been working in other men and religions too. St. Paul says, "For from him and through him and to him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). He adds: "...his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Rom. 1:20). So, God can be seen by all through His creation. The image of God that man received at the time of creation has become disfigured by sin, but it is not completely lost. So, there is good in the midst of evil everywhere in the universe.

**Zwingli (1484—1531)**

Calvin and Zwingli were better inspired and influenced by humanism than Luther. The Protestantism that was developed in Zurich (in Switzerland) also evolved itself into Presbyterianism. Icons and portraits from Churches were removed; monks were persuaded to get married.

**EXERCISE**

1. Compare the teachings of Calvin and Luther.
2. Explain the evils of double predestination.

## LESSON 3

**ANABAPTISTS AND BAPTIST GROUPS**

- (1) *What did they teach?*
- (2) *Their early leaders.*
- (3) *Persecutions.*
- (4) *Child baptism is God's will and Biblical.*

**1. What did they teach?**

Anabaptists are radical Protestant sects of the Reformation. They are more extreme in their views, intolerant and radical than other Reformed Churches described in the previous lessons. They completely ignored the tradition, development and theology of the Church. Luther, Calvin and Zwingli were not so radical, but continued the practice of infant baptism. But the Anabaptists denied the validity of infant baptism and rebaptised adult converts. This is why they got the name, 'anabaptists' (or rebaptists).

Since the 4th century there have been persons who have argued that when heretics are welcomed back into the Church, they should be baptised. But the insistence on rebaptising those who had the benefit of infant baptism came up only in the 16th century.

The teachings of the Anabaptists are as follows:

- (a) infant baptism is not clearly mentioned in the Bible, and therefore it is wrong;
- (b) faith baptism is right; baptism is not a sacrament;
- (c) the members of ancient Churches who are rebaptised are ipso facto separated from their Churches and they should have fellowship with the group that has rebaptised them;
- (d) the Holy Eucharist is not a sacrament, but only a memorial service;

(e) formal worship is not necessary; just a simple fellowship of prayer is what is needed;

(f) the Church should be always like the New Testament Church; the Holy Spirit has given the gift of prophecy as in the first century;

(g) it is not theology but the Sermon on the Mount that is important;

(h) Christians should not participate in wars;

(i) drunkards and smokers must be sent out of the Church;

(j) marriage is permissible, but everyone should lead a simple life like that of monks;

(k) Jesus will come soon and will reign gloriously for a millennium;

Apart from the above teachings, there were other teachings followed by some sections of the Anabaptists. Their teachings also insist that Jesus was not God, but only a leader, that a belief in the Trinity is baseless, and that property should be possessed in common by the community.

## 2. Their early leaders

*Conrad Grebel* (1498—1526) and *Felix Marz* were the early leaders of the Anabaptists. Grebel having travelled in Basel, Vienna and Paris returned home and clashed with Zwingli. In 1523 he and Marz dissociated themselves from Zwingli. Grebel formed an organisation and called it the *Swiss Brethren*. In 1524 the Community gave up the practice of infant baptism, and conducted the Eucharist in a simple form without the help of the liturgy. The members actively went about propagating their views and won Christians over to the Brethren Church.

A Catholic preacher, *Belthasar Hubmaier* joined the community and accepted the concept of adult baptism in 1525. He attracted many people to the group. The practice of washing the feet of the believers while celebrating the Eucharist was begun. Many others who joined the group spread this faith in Switzerland, Austria and South East Germany.

### 3. Persecutions

The Roman Catholics, the Lutherans and the Zwinglians hated the new teachings. The Anabaptists were described as heretics by other Churches. Hundreds of them were killed; some were beheaded some others were thrown into fire or water.

One of the reasons for this was that they gave leadership to the Peasants' War in 1524—25. The leader of the war was Thomas Munzer, an Anabaptist, who believed in the establishment of a godly communistic state. These Anabaptists lived mainly in cities. Many of them were poor and practised polygamy.

The Roman Catholic Priest, Menno Simons (1496—1561), joined the group in 1536; his speeches and writings helped him organise a sect called Mennonites. They believe in pacifism; they are against war and are devoted to social work.

The Anabaptists as a denomination declined after the 16th century. The Baptists, the Pentecosts and the members of the Church of God, the Assembly of God and the Brethren Church are all various brands of modern Anabaptists.

### 4. Infant baptism is God's will and Biblical

As a preparation for this lesson everyone who knows Malayalam, may read the following books :

- (i) "*The Three Dogmas*", by Geevarghese Mar Osthathios
- (ii) "*Infant Baptism in the Light of the Bible*" by K. N. Daniel
- (iii) "*Infant Baptism in Christian Faith*"  
by Paulose Mar Gregorios
- (iv) "*Annamma and the Pastor*"  
by Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Anchal
- (v) "*From Water and the Spirit*" by Rev. Fr. T. J. Joshua

The New Testament scholars like Oscar Cullman and Jeremias have proved in the light of what is said in the New Testament that infant baptism is right. Those who argue that infant baptism is wrong have been persuaded to believe so on their

reliance on the Bible as the only authority. (Read Chapter on the Bible and tradition in Unit No. 5). It is established there that we should also rely on tradition.

(a) The Anabaptists say that Mk. 16:16 is against infant baptism. But here nothing is said about children; what is said is only about adults. That is to say, the passage is not against infant baptism. Verse 15 in chapter 16 reads, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved (Mk. 16:15). It is only the verse that follows that says, "He who believes, and is baptised will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). Those who listen to preaching are grown-up people. Those among them who believe will receive baptism and be saved. But those who do not receive baptism, even after listening to the Gospel will be condemned. This is what is emphasized here. It is worth mentioning that Mk. 16:9—20 is a later addition to the Bible. 'Will be condemned' is certainly not one about infants.

(b) "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the Kingdom of God" (Mk. 10:14). Jesus had said this to his disciples. Infant baptism is intended to help the children reach the Lord. Otherwise we are hindering them.

(c) Jesus answered "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5). This implies that children should be baptized so that they are ever ready to enter the Kingdom of God. Infants are worthy to be members of the Church.

(d) On the day of the Pentecost St. Peter in the fullness of his spirit said, "For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him" (Acts 2:39). In some versions of the Bible the term, 'your sons', is used. But the word used in Greek is 'Tekna' which means 'children'. So, children should be baptized so that they receive the Holy Spirit.

(e) Children can receive blessings; the faith of others will be of help in this. "And when Elizabeth heard the greetings of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 1:41). When mothers brought their Children to the Lord, he blessed them (Mt. 19:13—15, Mk. 10:13—16; Lk. 9:46—48). If children did not have the capacity to receive blessings, Christ would not have blessed them. Those who forbid infant baptism are like the disciples who forbade the children being taken to Christ. Christ loved infants more than the adults.

(f) The practice among the Israelites was to have the children circumcised. "He that is eight days old among you shall be circumcised" (Gen 17:12). Only after circumcision was a child admitted into Judaism. Infant baptism in Christianity is a similar practice. Christ would have condemned it, if he had not approved of infant baptism. There is nothing against infant baptism in the New Testament. In Col. 2:11 we read "In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ buried with him in baptism.

(g) Jesus accepted circumcision and baptism in order to fulfil all righteousness. John's is not the baptism that we receive (read Acts 19:1—7). John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus. St. Paul had circumcision in order to become a Jew and received baptism to be with Christ (Phil. 3:5; Acts 9:18). Circumcision was only for men; this was because women did not have the same status as men among the Jews. But in Christ there is no difference between male and female, and so, baptism, the fulfilment of circumcision, is given to both men and women. As recorded in Acts 15 it was decided at the Council of Jerusalem that there was no need of circumcision for the Gentiles before they were baptised; the Jews and the Gentiles need receive only baptism.

(h) If we go through the whole of the New Testament, we do not have a single instant where only the adults, excluding

the children, in a family are baptised, and the children received baptism after they had grown up and their faith was confirmed. That is to say, there is no evidence in the Bible to show that we should wait till we attain maturity to be baptized as it is done by the Anabaptists. In other words, the Baptist practice is against the Bible practice of the whole household being baptized.

(i) In the New Testament we are told about five households having been baptized. Perhaps there were other families too. In the absence of children the husband and wife of each family would have been referred to as 'both of them' or 'couples' instead of as 'families'. So, we have to infer that the families included children also. Whatever it be, it is difficult to prove that all the five families were without children. Among the Jews the family is thought of as a unit. It may be recalled that for the crime of Achan, the son of Zerah, his sons and daughters also were punished (Josh 7:24—25). Those, who argue that the children of those five families were kept apart and only the adults in the families were baptized, perhaps do not know that the family was treated as one unit among the Jews. The following are the references to the families that were baptized:—

(i) Acts 16:15 "And when she was baptized with her household" (Lydia and her family),

(ii) Acts 16:33 "And he was baptized at once, with all his family" (the jailer and his family).

(iii) Acts 10:48 "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" and Acts 11:14; "He will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household" (Cornelius and his family).

(iv) Acts 18:8 "Crispus the ruler of the Synagogue believed in the Lord together with all his household and were baptized".

(v) 1 Cor. 1:16: "I did baptize also the household of Stephanas".

Children also have a share in the faith of their parents; so, they deserve baptism.

**(j) God's grace first and then faith**

"I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me" (Is. 45:4). "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (Jn. 15:16). "But when he who had set me apart before I was born and had called me through his grace was pleased to reveal his Son to me..." (Gal. 1:15). "For God is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). All the above verses refer to God's Grace. The argument, that this grace will not be given to children before they become confirmed in their faith is meaningless.

**(k) It is not a question whether faith comes before or after baptism**

In Samaria, the Holy Spirit was received by the people after they were baptized (Act 8:16, 17). At the home of Cornelius the Holy Spirit fell on all before they were baptized (Acts 10: 44-47). This reveals a great truth. Faith and sacraments are necessary. But there is no unchangeable rule that faith must precede sacraments. For children the gift of Grace and sacraments come first and then faith follows.

**(l) The children of Christians are specially blessed and holy**

"For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). According to this principle, the children of Christians have a right to be baptized.

**(m) The faith of the Church passes on to its members**

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic "My son, your sins are forgiven" (Mk. 2:5; Mt. 9:2). A child is blessed through the faith of its parents and its godfather. This is called 'vicarious faith'.

**(n) Children were members of the Church:**

In I Jn. 2:12, 13 John addresses little children, fathers and young men: "I am writing to you little children because your sins are forgiven for his sake". This indicates that little children had been baptized.

(o) The tomb-stones over the graves of children who had been baptized and died later in the third century, clearly state that they had been baptized. For example, one tomb-stone reads thus "I, Zosimus, the believer among believers, aged two years, one month, and 23 days, rest here". This epitaph belonged to 200 A.D. or so.

Polycarpus who became a martyr said to his persecutors: "For the last eighty-six years I have been serving my Lord. So far he has not done any harm to me. Then how can I today blaspheme him, my saviour?" He died in A.D. 167 or 168. That is to say, he was born in about 80 A.D and he was able to serve the Lord for about 86 years, having been baptized as a child and having become a Christian.

(p) Many famous theologians like Iraneus, Origen, Tertullian, Hippolytus and Cyprian, have written in defence of infant baptism. In modern times some baptists baptize five year olds as they would not come to the Assembly if d'scriminated against.

Our failure consists in our indifference to the proper upbringing of the children that have been baptized. Hence, the Orthodox Church has a service initiation with the first Confession when the baptized child is about 12.

**EXERCISE**

- (1) What are the drawbacks of the teaching that the Bible alone should be our authority?
- (2) Explain the significance of 2 Thess. 2:15.
- (3) Prove that infant baptism is in accordance with the Bible.

## LESSON 4

# JOHN WESLEY AND METHODISM

- (1) *John Wesley (1703-1792)*
- (2) *Reasons for the growth of Methodism.*
- (3) *Basis of faith in Methodism.*
- (4) *Emphasis on daily living.*
- (5) *An assessment*
- (6) *Modern Methodism.*

### 1. John Wesley (1703-1791)

John Wesley was the fifteenth son of the Rev. Samuel Wesley who had nineteen children. The eighteenth son, Charles Wesley was a great musician and poet. He had composed 4430 songs.

They grew up in an atmosphere of religious debates on issues like Armenianism, that started with Calvin's doctrine of double predestination. Armenianism taught that Jesus Christ came not for the chosen few but for all, and everyone should earn the grace of God. The Wesleys who were members of the Anglican Church went round and made revival speeches for eighteen years. John Wesley alone travelled hundreds of miles and made about 4000 speeches. The evangelical preaching of John Wesley began one day in 1738 after he had experienced God in his heart and became repentant. In this he was influenced by the Moravian Church, established by Count Zinzendorf. This is called Wesley's heart-warming experience.

John Wesley's brother, Charles Wesley, was not happy to give up his membership of the Anglican Church. He did not approve of his brother's action of ordaining two priests while the latter was in America. All the same, John Wesley and Charles Wesley travelled all over the British islands and organised Methodist Societies. In 1784 they founded the Methodist Church

with the co-operation of a hundred preachers. But John Wesley used to say repeatedly till his death, "I will live and die as a member of the Church of England". He said, "Church or no Church, we must engage ourselves in the work of saving souls". As he was forbidden to speak from the Anglican pulpits, he said, "The world is my parish." Thomas a Kempis, the author of *Imitation of Christ*, and another famous preacher, George Whitefield, exercised great influence on John Wesley.

When John Wesley spoke, the audience were so affected as to wail aloud or faint. His appointing class leaders for receiving weekly collections from members of the Church, helped much in bringing about spiritual fellowship. These fellowships had their feasts of love as in the Moravian Church. A key role was played by lay preachers in the growth of Methodism. By the 19th century Methodism became established not only in England and America but also in several parts of the world.

## 2. Reasons for the spread of Methodism

As the Baptist Church grew in the South of America the Methodist Church grew in the North of America.

(a) Unlike Calvinism which taught that only a few were selected by God Methodism spoke about God's love of all. It said that Christ had died for all, risen from the dead and opened the door of salvation and that everybody should attain redemption through the exercise of free will,

(b) The zeal of preachers spreading the Gospel all over the world helped the growth of Methodism.

(c) The Gospel, that was preached in the villages where people had newly settled, gave them comfort and solace.

(d) Very ordinary lay preachers taught simple faith in the language of the common people.

(e) After the revolt in the thirteen American colonies Methodism acquired greater strength.

(f) Many revival preachers helped the growth of Methodism.

(g) Even though they had not taken vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, many leaders took to an ascetic way of life and underwent sufferings for the sake of the Church.

(h) The circuit plan formulated by Wesley in England was more suitable to America.

(i) The discipline of orders and arrangements pertaining to annual conferences, districts and circuits enhanced the strength of the movement.

(j) Class leaders toiled hard to make the people become convinced of their faith.

(k) In the Churches established in foreign countries, seminaries were started to train national leaders to whom authority was gradually handed over.

(l) The weekly contribution of one penny by every member made its financial position sound.

(m) Methodism made an earnest attempt to achieve unity among all Methodist groups, and succeeded considerably. (The Indian unit of the American Methodist Church has not joined either the CSI or the CNI).

(n) Discipline, righteous living and adequate arrangements helped the growth of the Church.

(15) The songs of Charles Wesley helped the spread of Methodism.

### 3. Basis of faith in Methodism

The Methodist faith has certain errors. Some of them are given below.

(a) The Holy Eucharist is only a commemoration of the Lord's death. So, there is no faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

(b) One is not reborn in baptism; on the other hand, baptism is only a sign of the rebirth that has already happened to a Christian.

(c) Since there is no purgatory, there is no reason why prayers for the dead should be said.

The Methodist faith has its strong points too. Some of them are as follows:

(a) Jesus Christ revealed his love for all because he died for all.

(b) Justification by faith is not on the basis of destination. It is a new birth resulting from our acceptance of salvation. In our life we should keep on renewing the experience of new birth that will destroy our sinful nature.

(c) Those who are God's witnesses through the Holy Spirit are also the children of God. This is not the assurance of salvation that Calvin has taught.

(d) Justification by faith is only the first step towards sanctification and perfection which one attains by living a virtuous life with the help of the Holy Spirit. Justification by faith inside us helps us overcome evil and live a life of holiness.

#### **4. Emphasis on daily living:**

Daily living was given more importance than theology by Wesley. So, he formulated the following instructions:-

(a) All Methodists should have love of God at heart.

(b) In addition to the festivals of the Anglican Church, there should be feasts of love.

(c) 'Vigil night' which was a practice of the Moravian Church, was adopted and 'vigil nights' were held to enable the members to sing together and share their experiences.

(d) The Armenian Methodists were allowed to modify the Thirty-nine Articles of Faith of the Church of England and use them. But no special Creed was used for worship.

#### **5. An assessment**

There are more than 18 million Methodists all over the world. Next to the Baptists, the Methodists constitute the

biggest Protestant Church in America. The Church is so rich that they are running many hospitals and educational institutions in Africa, Asia, Pacific Islands and Latin America.

#### **Drawbacks of the Methodist Church from the Orthodox point of view**

(a) The Church has no historical Apostolic blessing and succession which is essential for the unity of the Church.

(b) There is no definite theology regarding the sacraments. Even though Wesley was the son of a priest in the Anglican Church, he was not aware of the fact that the Holy Sacraments helped one to attain grace. This happened because the Methodists gave more importance to the proclamation of God's words.

(c) The Methodists do not believe in the communion of the saints (i.e., prayers for the departed, asking for their intercession, and believing that they pray for us). This is due to lack of ecclesial way of Bible learning. They give importance only to the duties of the living. (The Church of the living and the departed is truly one.)

(d) Methodism has not evolved itself from social service to social justice. The Methodists accepted social service as an ideal in 1892. Recently they have begun to think in terms of social justice as all the other Churches have started to do.

#### **6. Modern Methodism**

Almost all the Methodist Churches all over the world are affiliated to the World Methodist Conference which has about 18 million recognised members.

Since 1836 they have been conducting ordinations accompanied by blessings. Among the Modern Methodists there are Churches with or without Bishops. The main groups are the Methodist Free Churches and the Wesleyan Methodists. But some of them have joined together and formed the United Methodist Church. There are also independent Methodist Churches in many places.

In America itself there are ten seminaries. Many of them are universities. The Leonard Theological Seminary in Jabalpure belongs to the Methodists.

### EXERCISE

- (1) Mention the merits and demerits of the Methodist Church established by John Wesley.
- (2) What lessons can we learn from the Methodists?

### LESSON 5

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY LIBERALISM

- (1) *What is liberalism?*
- (2) *Frederich Daniel Schleiermacher (1768-1834)*
- (3) *Albert Ritchel (1822-1889)*
- (4) *Criticism..*

#### 1. What is liberalism?

What is called liberalism is a movement that is highly critical of the Creed of the Church, its dogmas and the Bible. The liberals give supreme importance to reasoning. They question the veracity of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, the Miracles, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Second Coming.

Liberalism reached its highest point in the 19th century in the wake of the European Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment.

Some of the liberals even argued that Jesus Christ was not a historical person. Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* is an answer to the argument. The liberals did not see the Incarnation of Christ as the supreme revelation of

God. On the other hand, Christ was the best of the good men and the greatest of the great men that lived in history. According to them, there was no such thing as irrevocable dogmas of the Church. They replaced the authority of the dogma by the authority of reasoning. They did not accept the principle that the reasoning of man was also impaired by the Fall. In their view nature and reasoning took the place of Thomas Aquinas's nature and supernatural grace. Their beliefs are also only half truths. They do not understand that nature too is the grace of God and it is not possible to restrict God's grace within the confines of nature and reasoning.

## 2. Frederich Daniel Schleiermacher (1768-1834)

After having learned the philosophy of Plato, Spinoza and Immanuel Kant, Frederich Daniel Schleiermacher became Head of the Department of Theology in the University of Berlin and served there from 1810 to 1834. He is known as the patriarch of liberalism. He became famous for his works. (i) *The Christian Faith*, (ii) *Speeches on Religion*, and (iii) *Soliloquies*. Many liberal thinkers used to treat him as a conservative. Those thinkers said that religion and religious teachings should be completely discarded. He gave a fitting reply to their arguments. He told them that they too accepted the faith behind the dogmas that they had discarded.

In his view intuitions derived from reliance on the feeling of dependence on God are more important than the doctrines of belief formulated through reasoning and logic. Repentance, the joy of forgiveness, courage gained by relying on God, and similar other feelings constitute the essence of religion. Most of the religions are only different stages of the true religion. Monotheistic religions are of a high order. The climax of religious quest is to reach the path of redemption shown to us by Jesus Christ. Dogmatic theology is only an outline of contemporary experiences and is not everlasting. Since Jesus Christ's reliance on God alone was cent per cent, the redemption earned through him alone is perfect. The uniqueness of Christ

is seen in his sinless perfection. Since the Roman Catholics go to Christ through the Church and the Protestants go to the Church through Christ, either of the two ways may be accepted to get an integrated view of the world, soul and God, provided one's own soul and dependence on God become unified.

Both man and nature rely on God; that is why all are inter-related. Even though there is no place for the angel or Satan in the Christian theology, in the Christian language they have a place. The world is imperfect, and therefore, reliance on God is also imperfect. What we call original sin is the sin that had existed before any sin had been committed. Everyone has redemption because of Christ's status as a prophet, priest and king. Rebirth, repentance and justification, are obtained from Christ. It is not the laws that consecrate, but love. The unity of the Church is the Holy Spirit. He discarded Christology from above for a Christology from below

### 3. Albert Ritchel (1822-1889)

In the second half of the 19th century there was a school of thought that Jesus Christ was not perfect God or perfect man, but he was a great teacher and an ascetic who taught moral principles and spoke about the Kingdom of God. Ritchel resented dogmas. By his instigation Adolf Don Harnack (1851-1930) wrote the history of dogmas and pointed out their defects.

### 4. Criticism

The Second World War severely affected liberalism. The reason was that it demonstrated that man was liable to sin.

Karl Barth's interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans in 1922 was a bombshell that fell on liberalism. According to him,

(a) man by nature is not good and is liable to sin;

(b) salvation is impossible without God's help; God Himself saved the world through Christ, eliminating the gulf between God and man;

- (c) justification is by faith;
- (d) the Word of God is irrevocable;
- (e) the Word of God is not affected by higher criticism.

Liberalism speaks of a Christianity without the Incarnation. Even Emil Bruner says that "God can be known only through God"

If we believe on the basis of reasoning that there will be no other man greater than Jesus Christ, we have also to believe that he is the Incarnation of God. Man who is going through the processes of evolution cannot say that there will be no greater man. If Jesus Christ is not the only perfect revelation of God, it is not possible that he is the sinless, perfect saviour of the world or the redeemer.

There is no perfection in the one God who is not the Trinity and in the gods of the polytheists. Only in the Triune God is there infinite love, sublimity and limitless reality.

Liberation does not believe in the resurrection of Christ, the second coming of Christ and in a new heaven and new earth. As a result, the Christian concept of hope beomes meaningless here.

### EXERCISE

- (1) What are the drawbacks of liberalism based only on reason? How can they be remedied?
- (2) How can liberalism and orthodoxy be reconciled in this scientific age?

## LESSON 6

# THE MODERN EVANGELICALS

### 1. Their mistakes

- (a) *Hatred of tradition*
- (b) *Misunderstanding about the Bible verging on bibliolatry.*
- (c) *Contempt for the Church, priesthood and sacraments.*
- (d) *Non-acceptance of the importance of Apostolic laying on of hands in the historical continuity of the historical Church.*
- (e) *Refusal to believe in the fellowship with the departed*
- (f) *The belief that it is God's will to establish a new Church and join a new Church with no continuity with the one historical Church.*

### 2. The good side of the Evangelicals

The Evangelicals to some extent may be treated as the followers of the Anabaptists. They are described as fundamentalists and conservatives who literally believe in the Bible and make it the only basis of faith. The modern Evangelicals comprise many sects such as the Anabaptists (including the Pentecostal Churches, Baptists, Brethren and Mennonites) the Disciples of Christ, the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church, the Quakers, the Salvation Army, the Full Gospels, the Bible Christians, the Sectarian Churches of the Southern States of the U. S. A., the Charismatic groups and Jehovah's Witnesses. The Rev. Dr. David Barret says in the *World Christian Encyclopedia* that the Evangelicals are more than half of the Protestant groups. The Evangelicals run the Hindustan Bible Institute in Madras, the Bible Institute in Allahabad, the Union Biblical Seminary in Pune and many other Bible Schools in India itself. They also spread the Gospel over the radio. They have an organisation for college students known as the Inter-University Christian Fellowship. There are many revival preachers who

have become millionaires by organising people through T.V. Programmes under the name of 'Electronic Church'. Many universities are also run by the Evangelicals.

### 3. Their mistakes

#### (a) *Resentment against tradition*

They do not heed the words of St. Paul who has said, "So thou brethren stand firm and hold to the traditions which you are taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thess. 2:15). They do not make the greatness of tradition, described in Section 66 of the book, *The Holy Spirit* written by St. Basil, a subject of their study. Tradition is the handing down of life's experiences from generation to generation.

St. Paul says, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8). "Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it" (Heb. 2:1). From this it is clear that everything that is heard is not written down. John says, that if everything about Jesus were written down, "I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (Jn. 21:25). So, it is foolish to depend on what is written alone.

Making the sign of the cross, saying the prayer facing the east, dipping three times in a single baptism, details of the Holy Chrism, etc. belong to tradition. The Evangelicals do not accept these practices, but question traditions while they themselves keep up some traditional practices. For instance, they still follow the traditional practices of beating drums, clapping the hands and sitting in a circle and praying.

#### (b) *Misunderstanding about the Bible*

They treat the Bible as a book of science, They accept word by word the story of creation given in the Book of Genesis. So, they attack the theory of evolution. They refuse to believe that the description seen in Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 and

that in Genesis 2:4—25, do not agree. In the first description animals are said to have been created before the creation of man. In the second description animals are said to have been created after the creation of Adam. The Evangelicals do not know that the Bible is God's revelation and contains spiritual teachings about God, man and the world.

The Holy Spirit guides us towards the truth. But the Evangelicals believe that the Bible guides us into all the truth. The infallibility of God cannot be attributed to the Bible or to those who claim to have the gift of vision. Today there is no single Church that is perfect in the perfection of the Holy Spirit. This explains the imperfection of present-day interpretations.

“For now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood” (1 Cor. 13:12). This truth is applicable to Churches as well as to individuals.

We must be able to see at once the completeness and incompleteness of the Bible. In Revelation 22:19f the reference is not to all the books in the Bible, but to the Book of Revelation alone; the incompleteness of the Book is suggested in Jn. 21:25 Col. 4:16 and Jn. 16:12.

God's words are perfect but man's words are not. In the Bible we have the words of man also. “Now concerning the unmarried I have no command of the Lord but I give my opinion (1 Cor. 7:25). Here we read the words of man.

(c) *Contempt for the Church priesthood and sacraments*

When importance is given to individuals, there is contempt for the Church, priesthood and sacraments. “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16). “It was to prove at the present times that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:26).

It was Martin Luther who by quoting a few verses like the above gave excessive importance to individuals and faith. But he and his followers ignored the importance given to the Church in the following verses:-

“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

“And if he refuses to listen even to the Church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector” (Mat 18: 17). And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the Church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1 : 22-23). “This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church” (Eph. 5:32).

“Peace be with you, as the Father has sent me even so I sent you”. By saying these words, Jesus Christ breathed on them and gave them the power to forgive the sins and to retain the sins. Jesus was ordaining them and perpetuating his priesthood and status as a prophet and king. There is thus a special priesthood in the Church. This action is completed by sending the Holy Spirit later. “Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Tim 1:6). When St. Paul says this, he means that there is a gift of grace through ordination or the laying on of hands.

Episcopa (overseers), elders and deacons are three positions noted in the Bible. “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers* to care for the Church” (Acts 20:28). “And on the following day Paul went in with us to James and the *elders* were present” (Acts 21:18). “It is he who has made us competent to be *ministers* of a new covenant” (2 Cor 3:6).

We read; “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the Church”. (Acts 20:17). But later we see that Paul addressed these elders as overseers meaning thereby that there was no clear distinction between the elders and the

overseers. "And they prayed and laid their hands upon them" (Acts 6:6). This shows that there was the practice of laying on of hands.

When our Lord established the Eucharist, he said that it was for the forgiveness of sins. In the final message in Mt.28:17-20, Jesus said, "Make disciples of all nations baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (28:19). He was setting apart the Church from the world by that great mystery. "Mysterium" in Greek, 'mystery' in English, and 'marmam' in Malayalam are the same as "sacramentum" as used in the Latin Vulgate Bible. So, 'sacraments' is a Biblical word.

In John Chapter 6 Jesus says: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (Jn. 6:53)- The Evangelicals' interpretation is that this verse is not about the Eucharist. They say so because they are not aware of the uniqueness of the Gospel and because they have preconceived notions. This portion is about the real food and drink which is the Holy Eucharist. "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (Jn 6:63). This passage clearly shows the spirituality of the real food.

(d) *Non—acceptance*

The Evangelicals do not accept the importance of the Apostolic laying on of hands in the historical continuity of the historical Church. Instead their emphasis is on witnessing Christ. There should be a continuity in the Church that is guided by the Holy Spirit. In Acts 15:24 we have a reference to the complaint of the Apostles and elders. "Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instruction it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord to choose men and send them to you..." (Acts 15:24). Again it is seen, "Now when the Apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God. They sent to them Peter and John" (Acts 8:14). Also,

we read, "Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:3).

It seems that according to the Evangelicals the Holy Spirit left the Church in the first century itself and till their arrival the Church was in Babylonian slavery, and so, the Holy Spirit has not been working continuously. They do not see the relevance of the Lord's assurance that the towers of hell will not overcome it. The ancient Churches do not teach that there were no blemishes or hersey in the Church. On the other hand, they teach that the Holy Spirit is working continuously for the purification of the Church.

The Orthodox Churches do not teach that the gift of grace is available only through the laying on of hands of the Pope. We get grace through all the Apostles. It is St. Paul who says, "Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Tim 1:6).

It is childish to say that the Church should go back to the first century. The Church is of the times; also, it rises above time. Perfection of the Church is vital and regenerating. The architect and maker of it is the Holy Spirit. No one will say that a grown-up man should be breast-fed like a child.

(e) *Refusal to believe in the fellowship of the departed*

The Evangelical's refusal to believe in the fellowship of the departed is because of the emphasis they lay on their own traditions and because of their reluctance to read the Bible with an open heart.

(i) They do not understand the truth that the souls of the departed are not far away from us and that they can see and understand our needs. It is said that at the time of the transfiguration of the Lord, Moses and Elijah appeared before him. They talked about the death of the Lord that was going to happen. The phrase "so great a cloud of witnesses" used in Heb. 12:1 is about the souls of the departed. The verse makes it clear that they are always with us and watch over us. They are beyond the limits of time and space.

(ii) "Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night within his temple" (Rev. 7:15)

(iii) "So whether we are at home or away we make it our aim to please him" (2. Cor, 5:9)

(iv) "For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead that though judged in the flesh like men they might live in the spirit like God" (1 Pet. 4:6). We can reasonably believe that those who offer intercession in this world for others will continue in the other world. So, our requesting them to pray for us is only in accordance with the Bible.

Without the grace of God spirits also cannot do anything (Jn 15:5). God's grace is essential for us to worship Him, to please Him and to grow into perfection after we have attained freedom from sin. So, it is our duty to pray to God that God's grace should be given to the departed. When the departed worship day and night, they are perhaps praying for us all the time. So, we should pray for them.

(f) *Refusal to believe that it is God's will to make a new Church*

We have to witness the Lord through the unity of the members of the Churches. We must get sanctified in the unity of the Church, must remedy the deficiencies of the Church and must do something constructive. The new Churches must understand this truth and rectify their mistakes in faith. We should work so that they may come back to the ancient Church.

#### 4. The good side of the Evangelicals

(a) Their noble zeal and hard work in spreading the Gospel are enough to put the ancient Churches to shame.

(b) There are many among them who set apart correctly the tithe and help the evangelists and other workers of the Church. The Brethern Church in Kerala alone has about one thousand assemblies to carry on evangelical work.

(c) The person-centred Evangelicalism is slowly giving way, thanks to Ronald J. Sides and others who keep on calling upon

the rich men of the Church to lead a simple life and to work for social justice.

(d) Though the International Council of Christian Churches of Meelntrie which is opposed to the W.C.C, is also an Evangelical Church, there are many Evangelical Churches that have become members of the W.C.C.

(e) They make an earnest attempt to challenge secularism, a product of materialism which has given rise to the European phenomenon of Post—Christian era.

(f) Evangelical conservatism is helpful to a certain extent in checking the current of liberalism.

(g) They believe in personal communion with Jesus Christ and in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

(h) Their insistence on temperance and prohibition makes good what was wanting in the ancient Churches.

(i) While the number of students in the seminaries of the Roman Catholic and Liberal Churches is declining, the increasing number of students in the seminaries of the Evangelicals shows the growing strength of the Evangelicals.

### EXERCISE

(1) Evaluate the merits and demerits of the modern Evangelicals.

(2) What kind of ecumenism is possible between the ancient Churches and the Evangelical groups?





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