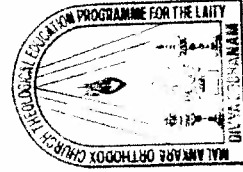


DIVYABODHANAM ENGLISH SERIES: No. 2

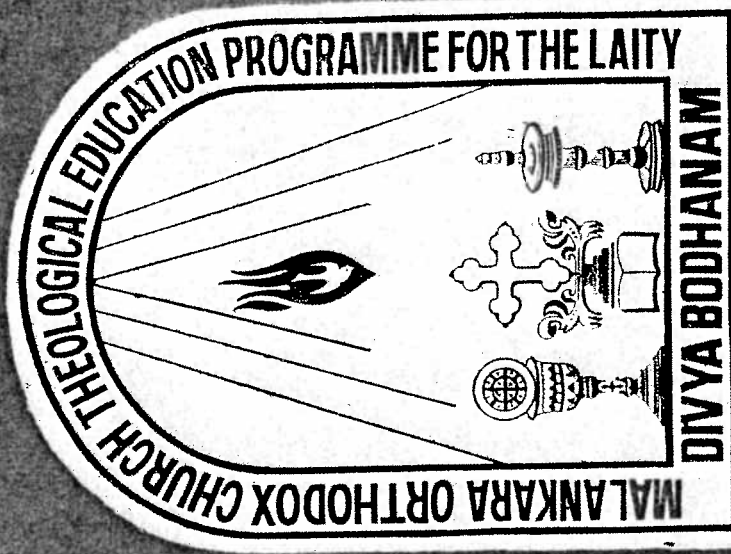
THE PEOPLE OF GOD

(Believers in the Indian Orthodox Church)

Fr. C. C. CHERIAN



Divyabodhanam Publications
Sophia Centre, Orthodox Seminary.
P. B. 98, Kottayam, 686001, S. India.
November, 1986



THE PEOPLE OF GOD

(Believers In The Indian Orthodox Church)

FR. C. C. CHERIAN

DIVYA BODHANAM SERIES
GROWING IN THE WISDOM OF GOD

2

This book is published by the generous contribution of
Rev. Fr. P. S. Samuel, New York, U.S.A.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD
(Believers in the Indian Orthodox Church)
A translation of the Malayalam book "Daivajanam"
By Fr. C. C. Cherian, B. Sc; B. D; B. Lib. Sc. G.S.T. (Dip.)

Translated by:
Prof. P. C. Varghese, C.M.S. College, Kottayam
and Prof. P. K. Mathai, C.M.S. College, Kottayam

Published by:
Divyabodhanam Publications, Sophia Centre
Orthodox Seminary, P.B. 98, Kottayam 686 001
Kerala, India.

Copyright reserved
First Published Nov. 1986

Number of Copies 4000

Printed at
The Ashram Press, Manganam, Kottayam - 18
Kerala, India.

Price Rs. 15.00

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 user's 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 self-less 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 as 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,

The Feast of the Dukhrono of
St. Thomas, 1986.

Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios
President, Divyabodhanam

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are immensely grateful to the Almighty God who enabled us to bring out this English version of "Divyabodhanam Growing in the wisdom of God" Series. We put all our trust in Him alone, who provides His unceasing mercies to this programme.

We record our homage to H. H. Basilius Mar Thoma Mathews I, the Catholics of the East who has been always gracious to us with whole-hearted encouragements for this programme. We cannot forget the leadership given by our President Dr. Paulose Mar Gregorios, Principal, Orthodox Seminary, Kottayam, who is mainly responsible for all the financial commitments to publish these books in this series.

Our deepfelt gratitude goes to Revd. Fr. P. S. Samuel, New York, U. S. A., who has generously helped us through a substantial donation towards the publication of this book.

We express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to Prof. P.C. Varghese and Prof. P. K. Mathai of C. M. S. College, Kottayam for their prompt and scholarly service in this translation of the Malayalam book "Daivajanam." Their earnest and timely services, despite their busy engagements are highly valued and have enabled us to publish this book in time.

We are extremely thankful to Mr. Philip Kuruvilla, one of our senior students for his valuable and timely service by way of giving some finishing touches to all lessons in this book. Our sincere thanks go to Revd. P. T. Thomas and other staff of the Ashram Press, Mangalam for their prompt and neat printing.

For Divyabodhanam Central Committee

Fr. C. C. Cherian
(Co-ordinator and Registrar)

Feast of 'Koodos Etho'
November 2nd 1986.

INTRODUCTION

Active participation of all members is very essential for the success of any organisation. This is true in the Church also. For this active participation, members must be made conscious of their position, status, privileges, limitations and responsibilities. The title "The people of God," a Biblical term, is meant to represent all the faithful in the Church through which all "outside the flock" are to be brought inside. This mission can be fulfilled by the Church, only if her members, both ordained and non-ordained, are specially informed, trained and equipped to perform their duties. This study is aimed to achieve this goal.

The Church exists as a living organism, the Body of Christ, an extension of incarnation to continue the work of Jesus Christ in this world. The mission of Jesus is carried out by the Church as a whole. Each member of the Church has been called, appointed and sent by God to represent Jesus Christ and to do His mission in his or her respective life-situation. Thus every believer must be properly informed, trained and guided in the Church to perform his or her Christian mission in the world. For this, no member must remain ignorant (lay) in Christian faith and practice. Since the term "Laymen" is misleading and harmful, the term 'Believers' or The Faithful or 'Aymeny' (Mal) is preferred in this book. The Malayalam term "Almayar" is also rejected because it groups them as "Worldly". No Christian is 'of this World,' but a citizen of Heaven. It is true that the Church remains in this world, and in that sense, perhaps we may call the Church on the whole as 'Almayar,' and not the non-ordained members alone. The term 'clergy' is also replaced by the general term 'Ministers', because the former means 'Gods heritage' by which all other believers are apparently exempted from that privilege. Of course there are two sets of believers in the Church, one ordained ministers i.e. bishops, presbyters and deacons and the other non-ordained group of believers who also share the priesthood of Christ through their baptism. But

these two groups perform only a single mission or ministry of Jesus Christ. The harmony and oneness of these two groups are the basis for the strength and the growth of the Church.

We find one goal, one task, one life for the whole Church, for which the ordained and the non-ordained members work together in their respective roles. These roles are now defined differently by various Christian denominations like Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. Therefore, an attempt is made here to find out their role and participation in the Biblical, historical, traditional and Indian background and their relevance and application today.

This book is a simple attempt to draw attention of 'the people of God' to their privileges and responsibilities. If they are awakened from their frozen state, they will be more effective in their Christian witness in the world. May God the Father guide us unto all truth by the Power of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Feast of St. Gregorios of Parumala,
November 2nd 1986.

AUTHOR

CONTENTS

Page No.

FOREWORD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

UNIT - I

PARTICIPATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE AS REVEALED IN THE BIBLE

<i>Lesson</i> 1	Participation of the God's People —A general Introduction	9
<i>Lesson</i> 2	"People of God"—The Biblical basis	15
<i>Lesson</i> 3	The Royal Priesthood	19
<i>Lesson</i> 4	The Ministry of Jesus Christ— The basis of All Ministerial Functions	24
<i>Lesson</i> 5	The Apostolic Church Life - I	28
<i>Lesson</i> 6	The Apostolic Church Life - II	34

UNIT II

PARTICIPATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

<i>Lesson</i> 1	Life in the early Church - Relevance and peculiarities	40
<i>Lesson</i> 2	Names, Positions held, Privileges and Responsibilities of the Members of the early Church	45
<i>Lesson</i> 3	Life in the early Church: Minister - Believer Relationship	49
<i>Lesson</i> 4	Life in the early Church—Participation of believers in worship	54
<i>Lesson</i> 5	Life in the early Church—believers and the Administration of the Church.	59
<i>Lesson</i> 6	Disciplinary Actions Against the Believers	64

UNIT - III

PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD
IN THE INDIAN CHURCH

Page No.

- Lesson 1 Participation of the People of God: certain Principles in Orthodox Church. 69
- Lesson 2 Participation of the People of God in the Malankara Orthodox Church-1—A General survey. 75
- Lesson 3 Participation of the People of God in the Malankara Orthodox Church -2 Before 16th Century. 78
- Lesson 4 Participation of the People of God in the Malankara Orthodox Church - 3 Diampar Synod. 84
- Lesson 5 Participation of the People of God in the Malankara Orthodox Church -4 17th—19th centuries. 89
- Lesson 6 Participation of the People of God in the Malankara Orthodox Church -5 20th century. 94

UNIT IV

PARTICIPATION BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD
TODAY AND TOMORROW

- Lesson 1 Mission Fields for the Faithful - 1 Family. 99
- Lesson 2 Mission Fields for the Faithful - 2. 104
- Lesson 3 Mission Fields for the Faithful -3 Social service, political outlook, Education, Art, Culture, Literature etc. 110
- Lesson 4 The Church and women — A General Survey 116
- Lesson 5 Women's Participation in the modern Church Life. 123
- Lesson 6 Training for the Faithful 129

UNIT I

PARTICIPATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE
AS REVEALED IN THE BIBLE

LESSON I

PARTICIPATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE
A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Old and new Israel!

Clarification of certain terms :

Almajar, Laity, Priest, Clergy

Some different view points :

Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox.

OLD AND NEW ISRAEL

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

Israelites were known as God's people. They were a chosen people, a liberated people and a priestly nation under covenant with God. They thought all these to be their own special rights and privileges. Thus not only did they misunderstand the divine liberation to be a mundane liberation, but also boasted and acted, as if they were the only ones eligible for that liberation. So God rejected them and chose the Church as the new Israel. Today the Christian church is known as God's people, inviting all humanity into her fold. Christians are a chosen set of people specially called and separated, not to boast, but to continue the glorious saving mission

of Jesus Christ with all humility and openness. Unlike the Jews, Christians are to imbibe the spirit of Christ's incarnation, i.e. to prepare all people unto Salvation and continue this work untiringly.

The Church exists in the world as the body of Christ. Various organs of this body work in different ways but with a collective singular purpose in strict obedience to the instructions from the invisible head, Christ. Even from the early days of Christianity it has been the practice for the Christian ministers, especially Bishops on the strength of Apostolic succession and in God's own plan, to supervise and control the activities of the Church as her visible head. Subject to these supervisions, there are the faithful also working in the Lord's vineyard. The role of the ordained ministry in the Church may be compared to that of the brain and the central nervous system in the human body. If this controlling system ceases to function, naturally, organs of the body will fail to work even if life remains in the body. It is the main duty of the minister to educate and train the believers in such a way that they would be ambassadors of Christ in whatever field they are.

CLARIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN TERMS

(a) "Almayar": This Malayalam word, derives from the Syriac word "Olmoyo", and means 'of the world.' No baptised Christian is supposed to be a worldly person and hence using the word "Almayar" to represent the believers is wrong in a sense. Every baptised person has a heritage of God and has an eternal citizenship in heaven. But in the sense that the Church functions in the world, all the members of the Church (including the ministers) are 'Almayar'. So it is unfair and against the tradition of the Church to dub a major section as second rate members under the label, "Almayar" (There is no harm perhaps in calling them in Malayalam "Aymeny" -from the Syriac word 'Haimme' meaning 'the Faithful' or 'the Believers').

(b) "The Laity": This term originates from a Greek word, 'laos' which has the general meaning 'people.' The word 'laity'

has been used to mean (1) 'God's people in a wider sense - to include ministers and the believers. (2) to differentiate between rulers and the ruled, the latter being termed laity and (3) a lay person, having no specialised knowledge. None of these meaning is wholly acceptable, while "The Faithful" or 'Believers' (or 'Aimeny') seems to be a more suitable term to denote the members of the Church.

(c) "Priest": Christ alone is the only one High priest in the Christian Church. The priesthood of Christ is shared by all members through baptism, by which every Christian is incorporated into the body of Christ. The Church altogether holds the priesthood. Individual members are only sharing and participating in this priesthood, and no single member is a priest in himself. The term Priest (Eng), Hiericus (Gk), *Kohno* (Syr) or Purohithan (Mal) is not used with regard to any single Christian leader in the New Testament. Even when the Jewish priests joined the Christian Church (Acts. 6:7) they were not called priests. The Jewish priestly orders were not accepted in early Church though they had some influence in the Christian ministry in later centuries.

The "Elders" among Jews were not ordained men, but were rulers of the people. Christian Elders were also meant for that purpose. Bishops (Episkopoi-Gk), Elders (Kaseeso-Syr. and Presbyteroi-Gk) were almost synonyms, and were interchangeable terms in the first century. They were appointed 'rulers' of the community at every place, while Christ alone was called "High Priest." Among Jewish Christians, the term 'Elder' was quite common, while among the Gentile Christians, where St. Paul went, the term 'Episkopoi' (Bishop) was more familiar than 'Elder.' Some people argue that 'Elder' was the name of the office while 'Episkopos' or 'Supervision' was the function of that office. The Greek Word 'Presbyteros' (Elder) is usually mistranslated as 'priest'. Therefore, in Christian communities, normally no single person is a 'priest' but all share the Priesthood of Christ and by that capacity participates in the Eucharistic sacrifice actively and effectively. This Bishop, Presbyter, Deacon system has been established by Christ as an

extension of the Apostleship through valid ordination, by which every minister receives an indelible character. 'Minister' is an approved term in the New Testament Church. In the Orthodox Churches, the term 'Priest' or 'Purohithan' can be used for a Christian minister, with a special emphasis that he represents Jesus Christ, as well as a Priestly Community at every Eucharistic assembly. Some Malayalam terms used to call our ministers are "pattakkaran" (Ordained to rule), 'Vaidikan' (scriptural scholar) 'Acharyan' (Teacher) "Acher" (Father) "Kaseesa" (Elder) etc.

(d) "Clergy": This term is derived from the Greek word 'Kleros' which means 'inheritance of God', 'heritage of God', or 'God's Lot.' Every Christian enters the kingdom of God and becomes a 'son of God' and shares God's heritage or inheritance through baptism, and thus becomes the 'kleros' and is thereby eligible to be called the 'Clergy' in a sense. Hence this term 'clergy' cannot be exclusively used for the ministers alone.

In short, the terms 'laity' and 'clergy' represent one and the same community, i. e. all the baptised members of the Christian church. The Roman Catholic approach to distinguish between these two terms to represent two sets of people, is a deviation from the facts as we have seen.

SOME DIFFERENT VIEW POINTS

(a) Protestant approach: There are certain Protestant (sectarian) denominations who teach that all the members of the Church are individual priests and hence there is no need for any special priests or the office of priesthood. The Christian tradition has been highly distorted by this type of teaching. Bishops, Elders, and Deacons had been appointed and authorised by Apostles themselves for performing various duties in the church. As we saw, they represent Christ in Eucharistic community. A Congregation without such priestly authorities cannot be considered as a Church at all. It is important to note that, there is no common sacramental celebration performed by these ministers alone; participation of the

'Believers' is inevitable. All the functions are to be performed by the two sections together. This has been the practice from the very beginning. Ministers and the believers share and benefit alike from the sacramental practices and from the faith. According to the teaching of certain reformist denominations, priestly status of a person remains only during the period he is in service, as appointed by the believers; removal from office renders the priestly status also defunct. They do not consider 'ordination' as a sacrament by which an indelible character is given to the ordained, just as a person becomes a permanent Christian through baptism.

(b) Roman Catholic Position: Such a disregard towards ministers by the reformist groups is an extreme reaction to the Roman Catholic attitude that the Pope with his own apostolic authority as successor to Peter can, by mere consecration, elevate a person to priesthood even without election, approval or acceptance by God's people. The Roman Catholic thinking that Christ entrusted "the whole" to Peter alone and not to the college of apostles, apparently degrades believers to a lower position as mere 'laymen' while upgrading ministers to a sort of "Godliness." The Second Vatican Council (1964) tried to satisfy the 'laymen' of the Roman Catholic Church by underlining their importance in missionary and charitable work even while attributing no priestly glory to them.

(c) Orthodox Viewpoint: In the Orthodox Churches Ministers-Believers relationship is quite healthy, harmonious and balanced; there is no relevance for either the Reformist or the Roman Catholic approach. All reformation came out from the Roman Catholic Church, and all Orthodox Churches remain unaffected by Protestantism, since there is nothing to protest in true orthodoxy. Ministers and Believers are together called God's people and their mission is one and the same. Subsequent to selection by the Church, candidates for ministry are trained and ordained by Bishops who have inherited the authority of apostles. The priesthood so acquired by valid ordination by Bishops, is permanent and is unaffected by any decision by the believers alone. Ministers are responsible on a permanent basis to lead the believers in their religious activities.

Thus the most salient feature of the Orthodox Church is the collective participation of the minister and the believers in the whole life of the Church.

There have been a few unfortunate instances of strained relationships between the ministers and the believers since the 16th century, mainly due to foreign influences, both Protestant and Roman. In order to regain the real Orthodox tradition in India we have to study Biblical facts, the historical evidences in the Church, past Orthodox tradition and the life of pre Sixteenth century "St. Thomas Christians" in India. A healthy and spiritually enriched understanding, recognition and relationship between the Ministers and the Believers are highly essential for the real growth of the Church and fulfilment of her mission. This book aims at this goal.

QUESTIONS

1. Bring out the defects involved in the usage of the terms "Almayar", "Priests", "Laity" and "Clergy" for any separate group of people in the Church.
2. "There is only a single mission for the Church and it is the one involving the minister and the believers." Discuss.
3. Clarify the approaches adopted by Roman, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Churches regarding Minister - Believer relationship.

LESSON 2

"PEOPLE OF GOD" — THE BIBLICAL BASIS

*The calling and the assembling
In the Old Testament
In the New Testament
New Testament Priesthood
Clergy and Laity in the Bible*

God created man in His own image and likeness, and entrusted him with the responsibility of looking after all of creation on His behalf. In paradise he was elevated to the position of a mediator and high priest, acting as a representative of God before all creations, and at the same time, as a representative of all creations before God. But in his evil attempt to raise himself to God's level, not only did he lose his mediatorship but also got degraded to the level of a mere creature 'man', subject to death and disintegration. There developed a thick *curtain of sin* or alienation between God and man. In the process of losing the divinely granted priestly status, man became selfish, stubborn and estranged from God.

THE CALLING AND THE ASSEMBLING

In the Old Testament we come across God's special selection to re-establish man's original status of priestly responsibility. The whole of Israelite history is an account of this election. This special selection converges on 'The High Priest', Jesus Christ, through several historical stages- a separated Jewish tribe, the selected dynasty of David, then a selected Levite clan, then a priestly family, then the son of David, leading to the perfection of priesthood in Jesus Christ.

What we see in the New Testament is the great calling of God to make the whole of mankind imbibe the glorious high-priesthood of Jesus Christ and reinstall them as mediators between God and His creation. The Church of the day must acknowledge this priestly status and become effective means and media to express the will of God and to fulfill His mission in the world. The Old Testament is the preparation for fulfilling this target, while the New Testament describes the fulfilment of this preparation. While the selection in the Old Testament points towards the real high priest, the New Testament reveals the 'new Israel' becoming a part of Jesus' body (i. e. the Church) sharing his Priesthood through baptism.

PEOPLE OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The idea of God's people (Jeremiah 24:7) begins in the Old Testament with the promise that God made to Abraham. (Gen. 12:1-2; 13:14-17). Israel enters into a covenant with God on the strength of animal blood. (Exo:19:3; 24:1-12; Lev. 26:9-12). When the children of Israel boasted claiming that they alone were the children of God, *Jehovah started punishing them*. Yet God continued with His great plan of election ultimately leading to the fulfilment of selection in Jesus Christ, the son of David. That God would establish a "New Testament" is clearly seen in the prophecies (Jer. 31:31; Ezekiel 11:20; Hosea 2, Zachariah 8). Any way, the selection in the Old Testament history was a part of the Divine plan to present the promised Messiah.

GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Church or the new Israel was established through the "NEW Covenant" on the *great strength of the blood* sparing sacrifice of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:26; St. Matthew 26:28; Hebr. 9:15). The Old Testament priesthood was only a shadow of the real high priesthood of Jesus Christ. The Church is the body of Christ, exists as a reality that beams out from the essence of Christ's priesthood among the whole of mankind. Believers of the Church

share in Christ's priesthood through Holy Baptism. (1Pet. 2:9; Hebr. 8:6-13; Rom. 9:23-25). The word "Laos" implied Common people 'mobs of people' or 'mass gathered together' in the Old Testament context. It indicates a 'Christian society' in the New Testament writings. (Rom. 9:25; 2Cor. 6:16; Titus 2:14; 1Peter 2:9; Hebr. 4:9, 8:10; Rev. 8:4 and 2:3). In the Christian congregation this name was used for the society including both believers and ministers. The high priesthood of Jesus Christ is the common heritage of the whole Church and it is the Church which performs this priestly service in the world. It is meaningless for an individual to perform any ministry without the involvement and participation of the congregation. Neither the minister without the believers nor the believers without the minister can constitute the Church. There is no biblical basis for the Reformist line of thought, that all the members of the Church are individual priests. Equally unacceptable is the Roman Catholic thinking that their priests alone can individually perform the priestly ministry, even without the participation of the believers. It is the Church as a whole that possesses the priesthood. The Orthodox thinking on this issue shall be dealt with later.

NEW TESTAMENT PRIESTHOOD

There are references to Christian priestly ministry in the New Testament - In Hebrews, First Epistle of Peter and in the book of Revelation.

(a) In the letter to Hebrews : In general there are three points to be specially mentioned (1) New Testament priesthood is the gift of Jesus Christ for the Church (2) It prevails to ensure man's salvation through mediatory sacrifice before God (3) It is mainly on the Holy communion established by Jesus that the priestly ministry is centred.

(b) In the First Letter of St. Peter (2:5, 9-10)

(1) Everybody who believes in Christ and receives baptism in His name is called to be a partaker in Christ's priesthood.

- (2) Priesthood is granted to the whole Church and not to individuals.
- (3) An individual in himself is not a priest, he acquires priesthood by virtue of his participation in Christ's priesthood through baptism in the Church.
- (4) In the Holy Qurbana each believer gains a participation in Christ's priesthood when he dedicates himself as a pleasing sacrifice for God. Losing association with the Holy Qurbana means being driven out of Christ's priestly ministry.

(c) **In the book of Revelation (1:5,6; 5:10).**

The functioning of priesthood and kingship together is the general responsibility of the Church and hence that of God's people. It is the responsibility of the new Israel as the royal priesthood to consider the whole of mankind as God's people and work for them.

THE CLERGY AND THE LAITY IN THE BIBLE

There is no evidence in the Bible to show that the terms 'laity' and 'clergy' existed in the Christian Church. The terms "People of God" (laity) and "God's priestly heritage" (clergy) are acting as a single unit in the Christian Church. It is difficult to draw a demarcating line between the 'clergy' and the 'non-clergy' or "Purohithan" and "Almayar" as Roman Catholics do.

QUESTIONS

1. Carry out a comparative study of the "selection" in the Old Testament and the "bringing together" in the New Testament.
2. How is the term 'People of God' elucidated in the Old Testament and in the New Testament?
3. Describe fully the idea of priesthood from a New Testament point of view.

LESSON 3

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

Priestly Ministry of the People of God
Royal Ministry
Prophetic Ministry

We have already seen that the Church is the royal priesthood which God has selected and appointed to perform His ministry at the respective periods in partnership with Jesus Christ's kingly, prophetic and priestly mission (1 Peter 2:9). The Church has no ministry outside the ministry of our Lord. The Holy spirit guides the Church every day as to how she should fulfill this mission.

THE PRIESTLY MINISTRY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

By nature, man is the crown of creation. Before God, he represents the whole of creation. Jesus Christ is the only one who performs this high-priestly function as a 'perfect man'. He came to the world and lived to represent man before God in the ideal sense. At the same time He represented God before man in the full sense. Falling from such a glorious mediatorship, owing to Adam's sin of disobedience, man had become susceptible to death. In that fallen state man's priestly role also became tarnished. Hence it is by associating with Jesus Christ's priesthood, that is beyond time and space, and by becoming partners in His glorious sacrifice, that mortal man becomes immortal. The priesthood of Jesus Christ, the only mediator for the whole of mankind, becomes functional in the present times through the 'saved community' of Christians - the Church.

This priesthood has not been granted to individuals but to the Church as a whole. The Church which gathers together for the

celebration and acceptance of the Holy Communion as a priest, mediates for the whole of creation before God the creator. It is the priestly responsibility of the Church to present before God the grievances, the joys, the fears, the complaints, the desires, the anxieties, the praises and the extolments of the whole of mankind and thereby fulfill the will of God. Any tendency on the part of the believers to absolve themselves from this great responsibility finds no justification, just like any tendency on the part of the ministers to keep the faithful away from this great role. After all, ministers constitute only about 1 per cent of the members of the Church. It is really 'the faithful' who work in different walks of life, under all sorts of conditions, experiencing and sharing the pains and pleasures of life. Their noninvolvement is mainly responsible for the failure of the Church in fulfilling her mission. What is meant here mainly is the prayers, supplications and meditations that the faithful of the Church can perform for their brethren. But if the believers are to carry out such priestly obligations effectively they have to be properly conscientised and trained for the work. They have to acquire the proper sense of direction and the capability to fulfill their mission in life as Christians. Imparting such a sense of direction and capability is the duty of the ministers. "Take the teachings that you heard from me, proclaim in the presence of many witnesses and entrust them to reliable people who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). An effective training of the believers, to become 'ministers' for those outside the Church has to gather greater importance and momentum. All the members of the Church are to acquire the competence and devotion to discharge such ministerial responsibilities in the world whatever situation they are in. It is this capability that the members of the Church must acquire through their membership in the Church.

The following measures might be adopted by the believers as an attempt to get trained for assuming ministerial responsibilities.

1. Participate in and receive the Holy Qurbana with proper preparation and devotion in such a way that we feel like dedicating ourselves as a living sacrifice.

2. Participate in all the liturgies of the Church with utmost devotion and pray to the Lord as a mediator for others. Be punctual for the worship and participate with rapt attention.
3. Being a partner in the priesthood of the Lord, lead a holy life to be qualified to enter the holy place of worship. Be always conscious of the fact that you are a specially called and separated lot.
4. Try earnestly to observe Christian principles and rituals in family life remembering that family is 'the church in miniature' where Christian life is to be practised in an ideal way.
5. Participate with utmost sincerity in all the activities of the Church.
6. Be well informed about the Church - her history, practices, faith and mission.
7. Abide by the constitution, precedences and customs of the Church and act in allegiance and co-operation with the ministers.
8. Put up a constant effort in personal life, leading a prayerful spiritual life with the target of becoming a perfect and Godly man or woman.
9. Do everything possible to become the means for transfiguring the world, through a true Christian life and impart it into others through our own partnership in Church life and activities.
10. An inseparable relationship is to be maintained with the Church because, cutting off from a life in the Church means fleeing away from the glory of Christ's priesthood which all of us share.

THE ROYAL MINISTRY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Jesus Christ is the king of all creation. Man was created with the authority to reign over the whole creation (Gen.1:28). But

the authority was lost due to Adam's sin of disobedience. It was reestablished in Jesus Christ. The Jews were waiting for an invincibly powerful king as per the worldly standards. But Jesus says, "my kingdom does not belong to this world; if my kingdom belonged to this world my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to Jewish authorities. No, my kingdom does not belong here" (St. John: 18:36). Jesus chose the cross as his throne. It is on that throne that Pilate wrote, "the King of Israel". Our Lord prayed at Gethsemane that the glory of the son of God be revealed on the cross (John: 17:1-2). It was on the cross that everything was fulfilled. The heavenly roaring of resurrection and eternal life are frightening to the sinful. Never did the kingship of our Lord show the signs of a worldly reign.

Selfless love, suffering and sacrifice to the extent of sparing even one's life, self-renouncement, facing insult and humiliation cheerfully for good causes, etc, are the distinctive features of our Lord's Kingdom. The pre-condition for being heirs to the Kingdom of God is the readiness to humble down and be a servant, to be obedient to the extent of embracing death. There are several forces which drag the Church constantly back from entering the Kingdom of God—forces like royal luxuries, imperial powers, a life style with all the pleasures of life and without any suffering, unbridled struggles for worldly attainments, a mad hunting for worldly treasures etc. A Church with such an outlook can never gain victory over the world and establish the kingdom of God. The Church should be prepared even to give up its structural integrity in favour of the kingdom of God.

The Church has the primary responsibility of showing the world what the real values of life are. It is the royal responsibility of God's people to show the world that power means suffering, love and service. Only if the Church understands the meaning of our Lord's kingship in this right perspective, will we be able to experience the Kingdom of God where real peace prevails and where there is absolutely no place for terrorism, injustice, illness and ignorance.

PROPHETIC MINISTRY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

A prophet is a person who filled with the spirit of God, hears and announces the word of God. But Jesus Christ is the one who fully revealed the will of God. The Church also is called for this prophetic mission. It is the duty of the Church to find out the will of God appropriate to the situation and testify the same through the life of the members of the Church. The Church has to remain in the world as a perfect model and as the conscience for the world.

There must be collective worship, discussion and activities in the Church so as to understand the will and the scheme of God. Building up the Church through prophetic duties like teaching, speaking, convincing, conscientising, encouraging, advising and consoling is not to be kept aside as the sole responsibility of ministers. Believers too have a crucially important role to play in this matter. The Church ought to find out a few earnest and capable members in each parish in this regard, encourage them, train them and appreciate their services with due seriousness. Attempts can also be made, through such small groups, to eliminate undesirable practices and tendencies in various parishes. God's guidance and revelation of God's will would certainly be there in such spiritually prompted efforts. Acting thus as the 'salt of the world' we would be moulding a community which can combat evil, oppose injustice and crush criminal tendencies. Defeating evil with goodness we find ourselves marching to victory as Christians fulfilling the prophetic mission of the Church and existing in the world as the conscience of the society.

QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the priestly ministry of God's People?
2. Describe the meaning of 'royal ministry' in relation to God's People.
3. Give a critical account of the prophetic ministry of God's People.

sent Him, the Church has to fulfil an Apostolic mission- fulfilling the will of Jesus Christ.

4. Teacher (Gk. Didaskalos) - Mathew 23:8 and John. 13:13.

Jesus Christ is the greatest of all teachers and He imparted the real knowledge and advice. Our Lord Jesus is the perfect example for all teachers and advisers.

5. Bishop (Gk. Episkopos) - 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4.

According to the original Greek Text the word 'Episkopos' (which means the presiding officer) was used while referring to the Lord. The implication is that the bishop who presides over the Church is the controlling authority.

6. Shepherd (Gk. Poimenos) - 1 Peter 2:25 and 5:4; Hebrews 13:20. 'Shepherd' idea was very significant in the history of Israel. Prior to kings and judges, the 'ruler' idea was stipulated to this term. Moses and David were shepherds and this position was highly esteemed in ancient Israel. Jesus, the good shepherd was thus the "King" who spared His life for the sheep, the one who goes in front of the sheep to show the right path and he is the model for all the pastors or ministers or shepherds of the day.

7. High Priest (Gk. Archiereus) - Heb. 7:26.

Jesus Christ is the only real High Priest. Priesthood of the Old Testament was only a shadow of this supreme priesthood. New Testament priesthood is the reality and continuation of Christ's high priesthood. This is attained through a rebirth by means of baptism in the name of the Lord.

The basis for the ministry and the mission of the Church is what the Lord Himself performed during His life on earth. The Church as a whole possesses or shares all the ministerial functions of the Lord.

LESSON 4

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST— THE BASIS OF ALL MINISTERIAL FUNCTIONS

Servant
Deacon
Apostle
Teacher
Bishop
Shepherd
High Priest

All the ministries in the Church are the continuation of the ministry of Jesus. The Bible testifies to the ministry of Jesus Christ using the following titles:

THE VARIOUS MINISTERIAL TITLES OF JESUS CHRIST

1. Servant (Gk. Doulos) - Phil. 2:7, St. Mathew 12:18 and The Acts: 3:13.

Our Lord came to the world to suffer and obey as a servant fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah (Is. 42).

2. Deacon (Gk. Diakonos) - Rom. 15:8-9 Luke 22:26-27.
Jesus came not to be ministered but to minister and serve the multitudes who were in need. He showed it in practice and did not stop by simply preaching.

3. Apostle (Gk. Apostolos) - Hebrews 3:1 and Mark 9:37.
Our Lord is referred to as the first Apostle in the sense that he was sent by God with the special mission of salvation for the whole mankind. Just as Jesus fulfilled the will of the one who

THE VARIOUS MINISTERIAL POSITIONS IN THE CHURCH

The Church as a whole continues the ministry of our Lord. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit who leads us in the path of truth in everything, has instituted special positions with appropriate spiritual gifts. "In the Church God has put all in place: in the first place apostles, in the second place prophets and in the third place teachers; then those who perform miracles followed by those who are given the power to heal or to help others or to direct them or to speak in strange tongues." (1 Cor. 12:28). They were the people who continued God's mission. Though the gifts were granted to individuals they were meant for the general growth of the Church and not for personal benefits. The spirit of God leads the Church by giving such gifts for particular periods, for specific situations and for specific purposes or activities. We have to pray for God's guidance and advice for adopting a Christian approach in tackling problems of our own times in various fields of activities—religious, cultural, political and socio-economic.

We also see divinely appointed leaders for supervising matters pertaining to the Church chosen through the process of election. The Church has instituted ministerial positions like bishops, elders ('kaseesa') and deacons, mainly to co-ordinate, supervise and carry out efficiently all the activities of the Church everywhere.

It is not a temporary arrangement and as long as the Church exists there must be ministerial authorities to administer the Church. In the visible Church the bishop is the brain, while elders and deacons together constitute the nervous system. Just as an inactive nervous system can be harmful to the body, inactivity of the ministers can cause harm to the Church, the body of our Lord. Though the role and working of the head, nervous system and other organs differ, they all integrate into a consolidated experience of life. The same is the case with the Church also. With none of us looking down on another we ought to work unitedly with the solitary aim of continuing the Lord's mission, in a way appropriate to each person's posit-

tion and circumstances. When we consider the Church in the world as a whole, Christ of course, is the invisible head. "Under Christ's control the whole body is nourished and held together by its joints and ligaments and it grows as God wants it to grow" (Col. 2:19). The pre-conditions for the successful functioning of the body are (a) a constantly active nervous system which carries messages of needs from the various organs of the body to the brain, (b) nerves which carry back instructions from the brain to the organs and (c) organs which accept these directions and execute them promptly. The same is the condition of the Church with an organic relationship. A loving spirit of understanding, mutual approval and encouragement, etc. are essential qualities for Christians to succeed in their common endeavour of continuing the Lord's mission.

QUESTIONS

1. On the basis of the Bible, show that the different ministerial positions in the Church are derived from Christ's own ministry.
2. Describe how those holding special ministerial positions go in one with the general ministerial mission of the Church.
3. "Head, nervous system, organs, etc., function in the body in union with each other. The Church body also functions in the same way" Discuss.

LESSON 5

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH LIFE - I

(Church life in the New Testament)

Participation in worship

Collective work in the Mission of the Church

Participation in helping the poor.

Participation in the holiness of the Church

Role of the believers in the building up of the Church

During the Apostolic period, there was a lot of variety in spiritual gifts - preachers, leaders, and different ranks among ministers—still, they were all working together with one mind in propagating Christ's ministry and message, realising that if any one keeps away from Church life it would be spiritually weakening not only for the individual but also for the Church as a whole.

PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP

Worship is the life of the Church. Unless there is constant association with God through worship and prayer the body of the Church becomes lifeless. "Remain united to me and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4) Some special features of Christian worship are mentioned below.

- (a) "God is Spirit and only by the power of His spirit can people worship Him." (John 4:24).
- (b) "Taking part in the fellowship and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers." (Acts. 2:42).
- (c) Study and preaching encouraged as a part of worship (Acts. 20:7).

(d) "Pray at all times" (1 Thess. 5:17).

(e) Offering the Holy Communion and receiving it on special days including all Sundays. (Acts. 20:7, 1 Cor. 11:23).

(f) Give offering and contributions for God's work (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor. Ch. 8 and 9)

COLLECTIVE ACTION IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The Church as a whole has been authorised to work for the Lord in His scheme of salvation. Each person in his own situation is expected to be the Lord's ambassador in the world. Absence of a general awareness, that every member of the Church is expected to be an evangelist, is largely due to the impression that evangelistic work means mere speeches or sermons. Truly speaking evangelisation has three planes in the ascending order: witnessing by word, witnessing by deed, and witnessing by blood. Speeches are the simplest and the easiest method. But testimony through deeds is more sublime and more difficult, though anybody irrespective of his educational or other attainments, can adopt this method. The early growth of the Church depended heavily on this method. Witness through blood is the most sublime and the most powerful of the methods of testimony and evangelisation. Blood and life spared by martyrs provided the early Church with a very effective nutrition for the spectacular growth of the Church.

All of us are expected to work in the Lord's vineyard without expecting any reward (Mathew 25: 14-15). Jesus tells us to go unto the ends of the earth as His witnesses and transform other people also to become His followers (Mathew 28:19-20).

Sometimes leaders of the early Church used to fast and pray before blessing and sending specially chosen people for spreading 'the good news' (Acts. 8:4 and 13:ly3).

Several passages in the Bible (see below) show that we as individuals must share the responsibility of spreading the gospel to the extent possible in our own contexts.

- (a) Each according to his ability (Mathew 25: 14-15).
- (b) As individuals we are obliged to, as St. Paul did (1 Cor. 9:16; Rom. 1:4).
- (c) As the salt of the earth and light of the world. (Mtt. 5: 13-16).
- (d) Living in such a way that they would be able to read messages as from letters of testimony (2 Cor. 3:2-5).
- (e) Speaking out the word of God to individuals and to Groups (Rom. 1:15, Acts. 20:20 and Rom. 10: 14-15).
- (f) Helping gospel work and gospel workers (Phil. 1:5).

If the Church neglects gospel work the very existence of the Church becomes meaningless. Hence it is the duty of all the members of the Church to revive and expedite evangelistic work, in their situations.

PARTICIPATION IN HELPING THE POOR

Our Lord has always been compassionate to the poor and the needy; Life of the early Church brightly reflected such a Christian concern for the poor.

Self sacrifice (2 Cor. 8:3-5), love (2 Cor. 8:8), gratitude (1 John: 3:16) sympathy (1 Cor.12:25) gift for the needy (2 Cor. 9:12 and 15), dedication of the heart (2 Timothy 6:17-19) and equality (2 Cor. 8:14) were some of the basic tenets that the Church accepted and practised.

Charity programmes for the poor were undertaken by the Church individually (Acts. 9:36), collectively (Acts. 11:29, 30), regularly and according to the need (1 Cor. 16:1-2) and most willingly.

It is a pressing need of the day that all Christians individually and the Church as a whole extend their helping hands liberally to all the needy and the poor in the real spirit of Christian concern and compassion. It is a brotherly obligation and not simply charity affairs for propaganda.

PARTICIPATION IN THE HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH

"God did not call us to live in immorality but in holiness" (1 Thes.4:7). In the process of getting grafted to the body of Christ, i. e., the Church, through baptism members of the Church become purified (1 Cor. 6:11). They are called to be God's holy people (1 Cor. 1:2). The Church exists neither with any stain or wrinkle or any other impfection (Eph. 5:26-27). We are purified by the blood of Christ Jesus (1 John 1:7). God wants us to be holy and completely free from all immorality (1 Thes. 4:3).

Adherence to the following conditions may be helpful in keeping ourselves holy Christians:-

- (a) Do not conform to the standards of the world (Rom. 12:1-2).
- (b) "Surrender your whole being to Him to be used for righteous purposes" (Rom. 6:13).
- (c) Keep away from unbelievers and evildoers (2 Cor. 6:14-15).
- (d) Give up the old ways of life and become a new creation (Col. 3:1-14).
- (e) Keep yourself away from being corrupted by the world (James 1:27).
- (f) Do not love things that belong to the world - what our sinful self desires, what people see and want and things that people are so proud of. These are detrimental to God's love (1 John 2:15-17).
- (g) "Keep away from profane and foolish discussions" (2 Tim. 2: 16).

THE ROLE OF BELIEVERS IN THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

The Church is in the process of growing to the perfection, intended by the Lord, in a multifaceted way. The Holy Ghost leads the Church into truth in every thing and helps in the growth of the Church through several spiritual gifts.

The Criteria of Growth

- (a) Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).
- (b) Speaking the truth in a spirit of love we must strive to be like Jesus Christ, our Lord (Eph. 4:15).
- (c) We must keep on growing together with true knowledge and perfect judgement which enable us to choose what is best. Then "Your lives will be filled with the truly good qualities which only Jesus Christ can produce for the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).
- (d) Living a quiet life and a good life (1 Thes. 4:11-12).
- (e) Willingness to "serve as holy 'priest' to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).
- (f) To grow spiritually (in the Lord) you must "Put on all the armour that God gives you" (Eph. 6:10-18).
- (g) "Submit to God, resist the devil" (James 4:7)

Factors which Favour Growth

- (a) A thirst for spiritual growth (1 Peter 2:2).
- (b) Spiritual teaching (Hebrews 6:1).
- (c) Hold firmly to the faith, i. e. the truth we have heard (Hebrews 2:1).
- (d) Keeness in public reading of the scriptures, preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 4:13).

(e) Teaching of what agrees with sound doctrines (Titus 2:1).

(f) Ask God for what you need with a thankful heart (Philippians 4:6-7).

Factors Unfavourable to Growth

1. Evil, lying, hypocrisy, jealousy, insulting language etc. (1 Peter 2:1).
2. Reluctance to listen and slow in understanding (Hebrew 5:11).
3. Unbridled passions of youth (2 Timothy 2:22).
4. Foolish and ignorant arguments (2 Timothy 2:23).
5. Love of money which is the source of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

Growth of the Church is a spiritual experience. All the members of the Church must be partners in it. All of us must earnestly try to use our possession, positions, talent, gifts and abilities for the growth of the Church.

QUESTIONS :

1. Discuss the factors that must be specially observed in worship, from a biblical point of view.
2. At what all planes should the Church work for spreading the gospel?
3. In what all ways can the Church help the poor?
4. What should the members of the Church do for the growth and the holiness of the Church?

(c) Factors that Foster Unity

1. "Use sound words that cannot be criticised, so that your enemies may be put to shame by not having anything bad to say about us" (Titus 2:8).
2. Hold firmly to the message which can be trusted (Titus 1:9).
3. Keep the persons who sow the seeds of discord, away from the Church if they do not respond positively to exhortations in wisdom and prudence.
4. Avoid stupid arguments quarrels and fights about the faith and the law (Titus 3:9 and 2 Tim. 2:14).
5. Acknowledgment of the fact that no one by himself, without the help of the Holy spirit can interpret a prophecy in the scriptures (Peter 1:20).
6. Keeping away false prophets and false teachers (2 Peter 2:1 and 3:16-17).

(d) The Divine Criteria for Unity (Eph. 4:4-6).

1. One body - though a combination of different organs they all work together harmoniously for the same cause.
 2. One spirit - experiences the same life.
 3. One Lord - The sacrifice and power of Jesus Christ works through all and abide in all.
 4. One faith - keeps up the unity in preaching.
 5. One baptism - the only basis (foundation) for membership in the Church.
 6. The only God and the only heavenly Father - universal fatherhood implying universal brotherhood of all the people working with the Almighty Father in unity.
 7. One hope - a unity that extends up to the realisation of hope that God has called us for.
- Jesus prays to God the Father "I pray that they may be one, Father, may they be in us just as you are in me and I am in you.

LESSON 6

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH LIFE - II

Unity in the Church
Discipline in the Church
Administration of the Church

1. UNITY IN THE CHURCH**(a) The Biblical bases for Unity**

1. There are many parts in the body but there is only one body - all the parts integrating into a single body (1 Cor. 12:20).
 2. A single king and a single kingdom (Mathew 13:24; Luke 23:1-3).
 3. All are members of one family of God (Hebrews 3:6; Eph. 2:19).
 4. One bride and one bridegroom (Eph. 5:22 and 32).
 5. One flock and one shepherd (Luke 12:32).
- All the above imply the unity of the Church symbolically.

(b) Factors against Unity

Human nature is expressed in immoral, filthy and indecent actions. People become enemies among themselves and fight. They become angry jealous and greedy. They separate into parties and groups. These are all against Unity (Gal. 5:19-20). Those who are selfish and spoil unity will incite the wrath of God (Rom. 2:8). Everybody who fosters unity and peace will gather the harvest of goodness and justice (James 3:18).

May they be one so that the world will believe that you sent me" (John 17:21). All ecumenical movements are based on this idea.

2. DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

The Bible tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted the administration of discipline to the Church and His disciples (Luke 22:29,30). He told the Apostles "Whatever you bind on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). Nevertheless discipline in the Church was a personal concern of the members of the Church who used to acknowledge their responsibilities and discharge their duties.

(a) Supervision by Bishops

The Bible tells us that the following are the ways in which the leaders of the Church could nurture the Church and administer discipline among the members :-

1. Be vigilantly concerned about the well being of the whole flock - protect them from wolves, make them spiritually stronger, guard them from faulty and destructive preachers and maintain them in the true faith. Serve without any desire for reward. Be ideal to others (Acts. 20: 28-35).
2. Take care of the flock that God entrusted with you willingly and feed them (1 Peter 5.2-4).
3. Let yours be a clean and efficient administration. Strive for spreading the gospel and for preaching the good news (1 Tim. 5:17).

(b) Duties of the Believers

1. Treat the leaders who instruct you on Christian life with utmost respect and love (1 Tess. 5:12-13).

2. The work of preachers and teachers must be considered as dignified and valuable, and they should be paid decently (1 Tim. 5:17-18).
3. In all your blessings give a share to the Church. (2 Cor: Ch. 8,9)
4. Obey your leaders and follow their orders. Do not suffocate them but leave them alone so that they can do their work gladly (Hebrews 13:17).
5. Pray earnestly for them (Hebrews 13:18-19).
6. Remember your former leaders who brought God's message to you. Find out as to how they lived and died and imitate their faith (Hebrews 13:7).
7. Give full co-operation in raising money to help God's followers in the work they do (1 Cor. 16:1-2, 2 Cor. 8:12-15 and 2 Cor. 9: 1&7).
8. Keep away from immoral people and do not associate with them (1 Cor. 5:4-13 and 14:39).

If believers abide by the above instructions real discipline will prevail in the Church and the Church will move fast towards its goal.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCH

There is no relevance for 'administration' in the normal life of the Church. Yet the Bible itself tells us about situations warranting the need for administration. The institution of 'authority' in the Church is essential to adopt disciplinary action against transgressors acting against the growth and sometimes against the very existence of the Church. But the authority of Christ, our Lord, is given to the Church as a whole. Even in the case of St. Paul we understand that it is the Church which grants this authority through benediction (blessing) (Acts 9:17, 18; 13:2-3).

Jesus granted the twelve Apostles the authority to supervise and control all the affairs of the Church. Whenever a new Church was organised Apostles used to appoint a new minister. But once 'a Church' was established in a region the right to elect the local

leader of the Church was vested in that Church itself as is evident from later history.

Administrative set up of the early Apostolic Church is reflected by the following facts:-

1. The Holy Qurbana which reveals the fullness of life in the Church was attended by believers with due preparation. All the participants used to receive Holy Communion (1 Cor. 11:27; Acts 2:42). The leadership of the Apostles was very important in this context.

2. It was the Apostles who authorised the Church of the day or the congregation of disciples to elect a few leaders to hold different positions (Acts 6:3). The elected persons were also appointed by Apostles.

3. In the meeting of the Church convened to elect Matthias, all the Apostles and disciples, including women, were present (Acts 1:12-15).

4. Apostles, elders and the community of believers used to participate in meetings convened to take decisions on matters relating to faith also (Acts 15:6,12). But the Apostles alone spoke during the meeting; believers remained silent, listening (Acts.15:12).

5. For electing and sending two delegates to Antioch along with Paul and Barnabas the Apostles and elders along with the whole Church met together. But the Apostles and the elders alone were the ones who drafted and wrote the letter to the community in Antioch (Acts. 15:22-23).

6. People welcomed the letters and Epistles of Apostles and elders with great joy and they considered them as words of encouragement and consolation (Acts. 15:30, 31).

In short the church was administered either by the Apostles or those authorised by them. The right to elect leaders in the

Church was entrusted with the whole congregation (ministers and believers). But the authority of final sanction by benediction remained with the Apostles. The practice with Apostolic church has been for people to accept the verdict of the Apostles or the head of the Church in the particular region and co-operate in obedience with the ministers in the Church.

QUESTIONS

1. Evaluate 'unity of the church' in the light of the Bible.
2. What are the responsibilities of the members of the Church concerning discipline in the church?
3. In what ways should believers co-operate in the administration of the Church?

UNIT II

PARTICIPATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

LESSON I

LIFE IN THE EARLY CHURCH RELEVANCE AND PECULIARITIES

*Relevance of the early Church
Peculiarities of the early Church*

1. RELEVANCE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, growth of the infant Church during the first three centuries was very rapid. The Holy Spirit has been leading the Church into newer and newer gifts and experiences as required for the growth of the Church, just like satisfying the needs of a growing child.

Thus the Church has been continuously growing during the last twenty centuries. In spite of certain problems at certain stages, the Church continues to grow with hope and confidence towards perfection. It is meaningless to expect the Church to continue in the same predicament as it was in the first century A.D. The Holy Spirit granted a variety of gifts, multitudes of fields for activities, modern techniques of working, appropriate to the period, place and situation. All these are aimed at leading the Church effectively in the right path.

In the name of growth, we should not opt for a basic constitutional or structural change in the Church; after all, a child acquires

greater capabilities for varied activities without any change in the structure, number and nature of its organs at the time of birth. Appropriate for the variation in time and place, certain peripheral changes in the constitution of the Church may be acceptable just as man resorts to the use of footwear, clothes, spectacles, walking stick etc., during the various stages of his growth. But it is crucially important to abide by the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all these changes; selfish motives of any person in the church should never become the criterion. The basic structure of the Church has to be strictly maintained while functional developments are to be encouraged, as per the needs of the time and context.

The New Testament includes a historical data about the new Israel namely the Christian Church just as the Old Testament includes a historical reference to the pre-Christian history of mankind. The New Testament period which started in first century A. D. will culminate only with the Lord's second coming. Hence, we are still in the New Testament period. The history of the Church and the various writings about the Church after the 1st century should be considered as an authoritative report on the growth and style of functioning of the Church just as the "New Testament" is accepted as the authoritative data on the basic structure of the Church in the first century. If the Church is being guided by the Holy Ghost, historical data of this guidance also are to be considered as the latter part of the New Testament. The argument that 'the Bible alone is enough' would not stand in such a context.

PECULIARITIES OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The Church that had been spreading 'into the ends of the earth' was subject to the influence of the following factors in its growth.

1. Jewish Influence

As a number of Jews including priests joined the Christian Church (Acts. 6:7), a number of Jewish customs and practices

crept into the Christian worship and other activities. Though such practices were strongly opposed in the Church, Jewish influence became rather strong in Christian worship and practices.

2. Greek and Roman Civilization

With the expansion of the Church to the regions outside Jerusalem, there developed the influence of the Roman and Greek civilizations in the early Church. Some of these influences happened to be against the growth of the Church. In this context the Church had to come forward with clear definitions, declarations and sets of rules. Certain disciplinary actions also had to be adopted sometimes to enforce these. As a result a powerful administrative set up developed.

3. Administration of the Church, a Spiritual gift

The above mentioned influences were to be properly controlled. Moreover, different spiritual gifts granted to the Church happened to be misused for personal ends and several false prophets rose to create problems in the Church. As an arrangement to control all these, a supreme ministerial leadership with special gifts to rule was approved and encouraged. Thus the "Bishop, Elder, Deacon." ministry was fully developed to supervise all the activities of the Church.

4. Spiritual Lethargy :

Increasing prominence for administration in the Church retarded the activities and gifts which were to strengthen the spiritual growth in the Church. As a reaction to this, certain groups of people (eg. Montanists) started organising against these administrative setup. Though such incidents helped the Church to correct herself, in future, strained relationship between the ministers and the believers in later years was a reflection of this background.

5. Different Teachings-Faith Distorted

In the absence of discipline and reasonable restrictions, there sprung up different shades of false teachings. 'Fathers' in the Church started writing several epistles with the purpose of confirming true faith and making members of the Church loyal and devoted to the Church and to her ministerial leadership. Here also, emphasis on 'authority' led to the development of a cleavage in the relationship between the ministers and the believers apparently to a level as rulers and the ruled.

6. Synods - Canons - Creeds

The Church had to fight against internal disharmony, false teachings or heresies as well as external threats from peoples like the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans. Synods were convened to consolidate the true faith and discard defective teachings. They also formulated a creed of faith. The antagonistic elements in the Church were expelled, heretical teachings were defined and discarded. Formulation of such canons empowering the ministers to adopt disciplinary measures became imperative for the existence and growth of the Church.

7. Persecutions

The early Church was subject to series of persecutions from the Jews, the Gentiles and from Emperors. Even in the face of persecutions there prevailed a tremendous strength derived from firm faith, unity and a sense of dedication. Believers used to lead a harmonious Church life with great responsibility. On the whole, they could present a glorious testimony of Jesus to others through their own lives. Thus the period of persecution can be considered as a golden phase in the growth of the Church.

8. Worldly Pleasures

Though persecution continued till the beginning of the 4th century, normal life in the Church was quite ideal. Rules and

disciplinary measures were all meant for exceptional situations. In A. D. 313 emperor Constantine promulgated a decree (Edict of Milan) declaring the Christian Church as the royal religion and banned persecutions. This was a temporary relief for the Church. There are people who think that the royal patronage sowed the seeds for the sprouting up of several problems in the Church. In due course worldly pleasures and royal splendour became the glaring features of the Church. Leaders of the Church ceased to give importance for factors favouring spiritual growth and the darkness of evil started looming large in the Church. In spite of human failures, the Holy Ghost continued to lead the Church in her blessed journey to fulfill the Lord's mission in this world.

QUESTIONS

1. Bring out the relevance and the importance of the early Church.
2. Point out the circumstances under which the early Church existed. What were the peculiarities of the early Church?

LESSON 2

NAMES, POSITIONS HELD, PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

*Names given to the members of the Early Church
Status, positions of the Believers
Privileges and Responsibilities of the Believers.*

I. NAMES GIVEN TO THE MEMBERS

With the growth of Church we can see that the responsibilities of the members of the Church also vary in a peculiar way. By the time the Church entered the fourth century there developed a clear demarcation between two sections in the Church- the ruling ministers and the ruled believers. Besides there was a set of people with limited membership known as Catechumens who were in the process of studying Christian faith in their attempt to become fullfledged members of the Church.

Even among the rulers there were different levels-bishops, presbyters and deacons. They worked with different shades of authorities and privileges.

In addition to the Biblical terms like 'saints, disciples, believers and christians' members of the Church were given several new names. These names reflected their character and their way of life. Some of the names that members of the Church accepted at different periods were Jesseans, spiritual physicians, worshippers of the true God, Fishes (IKTUS), the learned, bearers of Christ (Theopher or Christopher) Ecclesiastics, sons of faith and Nazarenes. Certain names which were given and which the Christians dis-

(d) 'The Favourites of Heaven'. People who pleased God so much by their prayers and life that their mediations were accepted and those who were in the 'inner circle' of God, with freedom and privileges.

The early Christians who were proud of the above divine qualifications lived a life quite justifying them. This was the way they could attract many other people into the Church. In today's context also such an approach alone can ensure an effective Christian testimony.

3. THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BELIEVERS

(a) Acceptance of the Holy Communion

The most important privilege of believers is the right to be co-participants in the Celebration of the Holy Qurbana along with the right to accept Holy Communion. Early Christians greatly valued this right to participate in the Holy communion regularly, and lived such a good life. Excommunication means denial of the Holy Communion for the guilty members of the Church including heretics. In this sense, today majority of believers are excommunicated by themselves. It shall be interesting to note how many of us will be in a position to enjoy membership in the Church according to these standards.

(b) Full Partnership in Sacraments. The next is the right to participate in all the liturgical and sacramental programmes of the Church. Those who are not true believers were not allowed to participate. It is a pity today that "non-believers" sometimes participate, while the "eligible believers" do not make use of their privilege either by ignorance or by indifference.

(c) The Lord's Prayer

The right to use the Lord's prayer was exclusively limited to those who accepted God as their Father through baptism and grew up 'as sons of God.' Aspirants of baptism

carded were: Jews, Galilians, Atheists, Imposters, Magicians and New superstitions. These were the nick - names given to them by Gentiles and enemies of the faith in order to dishonour the Christians.

From the above names we are in a position to make an assessment of the early Christians to some extent. The synod that met in Constantinople (381) decided to include candidates studying the Christian faith (catechumens) also as Christian though not as full-fledged members. Even among the members penitents and energumens (possessed by devils) were counted with catechumens. Ascetic members of the Church could be distinguished externally by their dress and certain signs. Heretics were never considered or called as Christians.

The real 'Churches' of the Bible were known after the respective places only. Heretic groups alone were known by the names of the people who began the Heresy (eg: Montanists, Arians, Nestorians etc.). In this sense, terms like 'Jacobites' and 'Marthomites' also seem to be defective.

2. THE STATUS OF BELIEVERS

The following status levels were ascribed to believers :

(a) The "Illuminated" This spiritual status was assigned in the sense that they became sons of light and that they were the ones to spare light to others (Hebrews 6:4). It also meant those for whom the secrets of the kingdom of God were revealed, and hence, the enlightened ones.

(b) 'The Initiated,' meaning admitted in to the Church, permitted to receive the heavenly secrets (sacraments), those who had entered the process of Christian transformation or transfiguration.

(c) 'The Perfect' meaning the ones who put up an incessant effort to attain Christian maturity, by sharing in the "Fullness of God."

were taught the Lord's prayer only towards the end of their 1-2 years course of study on faith. Believers used the Lord's prayer only on very important occasions. We must always be conscious of the deep meaning and the heavenly glory of the Lord's prayer and we must not pray it carelessly ; pray it as our privilege.

(d) Teachings and Practices

The right to hear and know all the teachings and preachings was restricted solely for the believers. The early Church refrained from public preaching on the secrets of the true faith abiding by our Lord's advice not to throw pearls before swine. Inspired by the life of true Christians, people aspired to undergo baptism and join the Church. It was one of the major responsibilities of the Church to instruct them, prior to baptism, on Christian faith and practices (catechism). Preaching of the gospel as 'good news' among those who are already believers is absurd, what they need is religious instruction. Evangelistic work is meant to be among those who do not know Christ. Many of the Evangelists need to realise this fact while carrying out their work. What is required is a three tier approach:

- (1) Preaching the gospel among the people outside the Church.
- (2) Teaching those who aspire to become members of the Church in order to give them a clear idea on Christian faith and its practices.
- (3) Instruct or nurture the members of the Church as a continuous process on their responsibility to uphold the faith in which they already are and to practise it honestly and zealously. The more we study about our faith the deeper we go into its secrets. Believers must imbibe the inner meaning of the hymn, "secret, secret, the Lord has granted, secret for me and for my household" sung on Maundy Thursday in the Orthodox Church.

QUESTIONS

1. Mention the names given to the early believers and explain the relevance of these names.
2. Which are the status terms assigned to the members of the early Church? Bring out the significance of each term.
3. Evaluate the rights and responsibilities of the members of the early Church in comparison with the life in the contemporary Church.
4. Evangelism (Good News) for non-Christians and Catechism 'religious instruction' for the members of the Church are simultaneously important phases of the mission of the Church. Evaluate.

LESSON 3

LIFE IN THE EARLY CHURCH : MINISTER BELIEVER RELATIONSHIP

Minister - Believer Relationship

The status of Believers

The congregation of Ministers

Special Rights and Responsibilities of Ministers

Reverence to Ministers

1. MINISTER - BELIEVER RELATIONSHIP

In the epistles of St. Ignatius (Ca. 35 - 107 A.D) it is particularly emphasised as to how ministers, particularly bishops should be respected: (1) Bishop should be looked upon as the Lord him-

self (Epistle of Ignatius to Ephesians 6 : 1. (b) (2) One should not oppose the bishop in an attempt to show allegiance to God (Eph. 5:3. (b) (3) God loves the one who respects the bishop and any one who works without the bishop's concurrence serves the purpose of Satan (Smyrna 9:1). (4) The Church should remain ardently with the bishop just as the Church remains with Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:1). (5) Sacraments like baptism, and the Holy Qurbana should not be celebrated in the absence of the bishop (Smyrna 8:2 (b) (6) Nothing must be done in the Church without the bishop (Magnesians 4:7; Trallians. 2:2; Phil. 7:2; Smyrna 8:1). These, of course, are the lines in which St. Ignatius thought.

St. Clement of Rome (ca. 90 A.D.) also exhorts people to submit themselves to the elders in the Church, to be obedient to them and to respect them. He prays to Jesus this way: "Lord, you have granted them the authority to administer the Church..... Thy will, our Lord, is that we must recognise the status and glory thou hast granted them, to be loyal to them and that they should be in a position to carry out the administrative duties they hold without any impediment" (Clement to Cor. 61:1). Clement also records that there was vehement opposition to presbyters or Elders in the Church of Corinth and that certain of the Elders were even removed from their positions (1 Clement to Cor. 44:6).

As far as the activities in the Church were concerned, there was no question of either the ministers or the believers acting alone. They always acted together, in all liturgical, as well as social activities of the Church. But on special situations in the face of opposition, differences and disorder, there arose the need for clearly defining the rights, responsibilities and powers of each of the ecclesiastical offices and also those of the believers. It is in this context that the early Fathers assign the above specialities for ministerial leaders. Collective Priestly authority of the Church had to be maintained and exercised to deal with ministers as well as believers who turned out to be heretic and arrogant. In the actual or normal life of the Church, the real authority was from the love, suffering and service that Jesus showed in so perfect and

glorious a way. Worldly authority remained as a weapon to be used in exceptional situations alone.

2. THE STATUS OF BELIEVERS

The priesthood of Jesus Christ granted through the Holy Baptism is the inherited right of all the members of the Church - inherited from Jesus. Tertullian * assigned each believer the right to administer holy baptism and admit non-Christians into the Church in a situation where an ordained minister was not available at all. But Tertullian himself fell into the group of heresy later. Historians * like Socrates, Rurhin and Theodoret point out instances of believers, including a woman, who had brought about the conversion of several people into Christianity through the spreading of the gospel.

Theodoret * records that believers were called private men in the sense that they did not have the permission to perform common religious functions publicly. According to Chrysostom * what St. Paul refers to as 'one without the gift of the spirit' represents the ordinary believers of the day. Chrysostom * has this to say about believers, "neither an ascetic nor a minister but cannot evade from hearing the word of God with an excuse that he is secular. The commandment of God is binding on all believers."

3. THE CONGREGATION OF MINISTERS

All the participants of common ministry in public were later considered as a congregation of ministers. In the first and second centuries, Bishops, Elders and Deacons alone were counted as ministers. Later, readers, singers and candle-bearers also came to be included in the congregation of ministers as recorded by Cyprian and approved by the Nicæan synod. The Western Church started including certain other offices also in the lower rungs of ministerial position in later years. The congregation of ministers gained the name Canon or Catalogue also. The words implied a group of ministers belonging to the Church of a particular place. They occur in Nicæan synod documents also as

before the bishop for benediction prevailed. Even kings were not reluctant to kiss the hands of bishops. Chrysostom records that when Bishop Militius reached Antioch for the first time, all the people there respected him by kissing his hands. Jerome forbids the practice of welcoming bishops with shouts of 'hosanna'. Sometimes bishops used to be addressed as 'your honour' as in the case of judges.

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the full implication of the word, 'minister'.
2. Examine critically as to how far minister-believer differentiation in the early Church was relevant.
3. In what respects did believers respect their ministers?
4. What were the positions and responsibilities of specially ordained ministers?

* See Bingham, Joseph. "Antiquities of the Christian Church," London, (1878). Pages 13-40.

used by St. Cyril. St. Gregory Nazianzen gives the exclusive qualification, 'The order of the Sanctuary' for these ministers.

4. SPECIAL POSITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MINISTERS

Theodoret makes it clear that bishops or Elders of the early Church were even called 'Apostles' holding them in high esteem (Account on 1 Timothy 3:1). St. Ambrose says that Titus and Timothy were qualified as Apostles in the sense that they were 'sent' by the Church, and that St. Paul used to claim to be an Apostle sent by God Himself as different from 'man-sent' Apostles (Com. on Eph. IV). But in later years, the superior Ministers ceased to possess the power for miracles, universal authority and purity of life, the outstanding qualities of Apostles. So they ceased to be known as Apostles and came to be known as 'successors of Apostles'. Thus each bishop came to be considered as a heir to the 'throne' representing an Apostolic status.

Later years witnessed the conferring of positions like 'prince' and 'governor' upon bishops, as recorded by Origen, Eusebius, and Chrysostom. Positions like 'president' and 'inspector' were also assigned to bishops. St. Ambrose uses the term, 'Chief priest'. It is seen, many bishops came to be called 'Papa' meaning father (eg. Cyril of Alexandria). 'Confession fathers' who used to grant remission of sins to repentant sinners came to be known as 'Benedictus papa.' Gregory of Nazianus (Gregory Nazianzen) and Chrysostom were qualified as 'Father of Fathers,' the former by the second Council of Nicaea and the latter by the emperor, Theodosius. Gregory Nazianzen called several bishops including his father 'Patriarchs'. Other terms used to honour bishops were, the "vicar of Christ," 'angels' etc.

5. RESPECT AND REVERENCE GIVEN TO MINISTERS

There are indications to show that bishops were respected in different ways. The system of even emperors bowing their heads

believers who were fully qualified to receive the Holy Qurbana or Holy communion. The former consisted of prayers, psalms, scripture reading and sermons after each reading. All who participated in the liturgy of the sacrament used to receive the Holy communion. Tertullian particularly mentions about this practice (Ante-Nicene Fathers Series Vol. III p. 262). The book, 'Apostolic Constitution' has recorded about the following closing announcement by the deacon after the Liturgy of the word. "Non believers and those who came as audience should not participate in the rest of the liturgy. those who are not qualified for receiving the Holy Communion must vacate. Learners of the faith, audience, non believers and heretics should not participate." (Bingham, Joseph, "The Antiquities of the Christian Church" London, 1878 p. 568).

REGULARITY IN RECEIVING THE HOLY COMMUNION

This was the basic criterion for a genuine member of the Church. Those who did not participate in or receive the Holy Communion were not considered full members of the church. St. Ignatius writes to the Church of Ephesia emphasising the need to be jealous about celebrating and receiving the Holy Qurbana (Eph. 13). Justin Martyr says, "All the members present receive the Holy Qurbana." The deacon takes it to those who can't afford to be present (sick people for example). (Apologetics 2- p 97. 98)

To be a full member of the Church, one had to participate fully in the worship and all liturgical activities on all sundays and other festive days. Consequently a separation resulted in due course between ministers and believers; the former were present on all days of worship and continued to be full members while the latter were not present on all the days and ceased to be full members. Such a differentiation prevails, today also. The Lateran Council of the Western Church made it obligatory to confess and receive the Holy Communion at least once in an year. Frequent and regular confession followed by reception of the Holy Qurbana as prevailed in the early Church is essential for the spiritual growth and Christian testimony of the present day Church.

LESSON 4

LIFE IN THE EARLY CHURCH - PARTICIPATION OF BELIEVERS IN WORSHIP

- Worship, the exclusive right of Believers*
- Regular Acceptance of Holy Qurbana*
- Oblations and Offer-tories*
- The Church worship together as a Community*
- Worship in the mother-tongue*
- Set forms of worship*
- Believers in the Liturgy of the Word*

The real life of the early Christians was based on worship. Worshipping together and living together, the community maintained a high level of spiritual standard. Worship was conducted in common as well as in private. Though common worship was led by ministers the active participation of all the believers was very important, and it vitalized the Church. The group of people that came together for receiving the Holy Communion (Eucharistic Assembly) was considered the smallest unit which reflected the fullness of the Universal Church in a local area. In other words every Eucharistic community was the 'Church in miniature.'

WORSHIP THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT OF BELIEVERS

All believers used to participate fully in all the worships, ceremonies and practices. They had the right to know all the instructions and mysteries of the Church. Members of the Church considered their participation in worship as a valuable right. Celebration of the Holy Qurbana itself was divided into two parts: (a) First part 'Liturgy of the Word' for those who were in the process of studying faith (catechumens) and penitents i.e. those subjected to disciplinary action by the Church, but awaiting absolution after true repentance (b) Second part "Liturgy of the Sacrament" for fulfilled

OBLATIONS AND OFFERTORIES

Bread and wine required for the Holy mass were taken from the oblations brought by believers. Today also such a practice prevails in the Byzantine Churches. There was the practice of farmers offering their 'first harvests.' There was also the system of giving offertory in the Churches. Justin Martyr reports that the amount collected in this way was judiciously spent by the bishop for assisting widows, orphans, the sick and prisoners from among the believers (Apologetics 2 p. 98-99). Tertullian and Cyprian point out that such practices prevailed everywhere in the Church (Bingham, J. "Antiquities" - p. 752 f). This type of oblations, offerings and donations were received only from the fulfilled members of the Church. The oblations and offertories were not accepted from the following members: the immoral, the corrupt, drunkards, blasphemers, thieves, adulterers, idolaters, murderers, those in enmity with their brothers, those judging in an unjust way and those opposed to faith.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY

The whole Church met together for Worship, while the presiding minister, the Bishop, took the leadership and supervision. Each believer participated in the Divine Sacrifice i.e. the Eucharist, on the authority of the Collective priesthood of the Church, that is Christ's Body, acquired through the Holy baptism. In the order of celebration of the Holy Qurbana, we come across the prayer by the minister: "make 'us' worthy of offering this sacrifice". It is important that the people endorse each prayer by the minister with a whole hearted 'Amen.' It is not only the Holy Qurbana but all the liturgies are performed by the whole Church, under the control and supervision of the Bishop. Hence none of the real believers should keep away from worship or any other liturgical activities of the Church. Any worship conducted or any ministry performed by the minister alone without believers, or by the believers alone without ministers is unacceptable and unjustifiable from strict Christian point of view.

WORSHIP IN THE MOTHER TONGUE

It is seen that worship was conducted in the mother-tongue so that all the participants would fully follow and understand clearly. Origen says, "The Greek use their language in worship and the Romans use their own. Hence let everyone use his own language, while praying to God. God who understands all languages would consider their different languages as a single language (Contra celsum Lib. 8, p. 402). About reading the Bible in common worship, Justin Martyr says, "if the reading is done in a language unknown to the people it is a very wrong practice" (Apologetics 2, 98). Cyprian also advocates the same thing. Evidently the early Church attached great importance for believers, full participation in all her activities.

SET - FORMS OF WORSHIP

Uniformity of common worship in a given region was maintained by using a prepared set of prayers. In early centuries the bishop of each region used to prepare prayers for use in that region. Thus we come across several orders of Eucharistic prayer ("Thaksa" Syr. and Malayalam). St. Ignatius says, "You should not attempt to establish that everything you yourself feel is right, let there be a common prayer, a single prayer, a single mind, a single hope." This does not mean that spontaneous prayers in private prayers were forbidden by the Church. Common orders of prayer were used in common worship for ensuring uniformly active participation.

BELIEVERS IN THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Believers were sometimes allowed by the ministers to preach during the worship. Eusebius has this to say: "Persons capable enough to enrich believers through their speeches were asked by the bishops to do so. (Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine Vol. I p. 194). Even today such a practice is worth encouraging.

LIFE TESTIMONY OF BELIEVERS

From among the common believers there were several martyrs, saints and interpreters of faith. Such a role of Believers is very valuable in the Church, even today. Hence they are to be encouraged, educated and moulded properly. The saintliness, the theological scholarship, the religious maturity etc are not to be confined to ministers alone, but are to be extended to the common believers of the Church. They are to be made aware of their status, privileges and responsibilities in the Church, so that they can be shaped towards Christian maturity.

QUESTIONS

1. Show that worship was the exclusive right of all believers in the Church.
2. Those who do not regularly receive the Holy Communion are not full members of the Church—Discuss.
3. Discuss the active involvement of the believers in the worship of the Early Church.

LESSON 5

LIFE IN THE EARLY CHURCH - BELIEVERS AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCH

*For whom is the administrative Authority and from where?
Believers and the election of Ministers
Believers and the Church Councils*

1. FOR WHOM IS THE ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY AND FROM WHERE ?

It is the ministry of Jesus Christ that the Church fulfills in this world. Jesus Christ handed over His authority to the Church. It is worth examining as to how this authority remained in the Church and who exercised this authority. The Lord Himself gave powers to Apostles and specially appointed them to administer the Church. After the period of Apostles a team of administrators or ministers including bishops, Elders (Presbyters) and deacons was elected by the church, in a gathering of ministers and believers. They were given the glorious gift of the Holy Ghost through the ordination or laying on of hands by the Apostolic authority and different positions were assigned to them. Thus election by the Church, Apostolic authority through ordination, divinely assigned positions and administrative authority of the ministers were accepted and followed traditionally by the Church.

Congregational (reformist) Churches claim that the divine authority rested in believers is attained by ministers through elections in the Church and that the ministers so elected are appointed by the believers for a specific period and for carrying out specific duties assigned by them. The argument that the activities of ministers can be controlled by the Believers' Council and that the Council has the authority to remove a minister and appoint another one, is not in agreement with

the actual tradition of the Church. A minister once ordained properly is permanently a minister just as a person becomes a permanent Christian through baptism, because ordination is considered as a sacrament, just like baptism.

Another argument sharply in contrast to the above is presented by the Roman Catholic Church: The whole authority of Christ is confined only to St. Peter and to his successors, the Popes. The believers are mere 'Laymen' who have no authority whatsoever to elect, or accept ministers. All that they have to do is to participate in the sacraments and worship conducted by the ministers and attain blessings.

The approach of the Orthodox Church on the matter is quite in conformity with the situation in the early Church. Persons to ministerial positions are elected by the whole Church, together, without any discrimination between ministers and believers and are ordained and authorised by bishops on their authority of Apostolic inheritance. This authorisation is permanent and is accepted by the whole Church; it is not curtailed by anything like retirement or removal from office. Members of the Church are to respect and obey the ministers. It is only rarely that administrative authorities are defined and divided between ministers and believers. Normally all the affairs of the Church are managed by the ministers and believers together with a single mind. All important administrative bodies in the Church include believers.

2. BELIEVERS AND THE ELECTION OF MINISTERS

Apostle Matthias was elected by an assembly of all believers including women. (Acts. 1:14-26). The first seven deacons were elected by "the whole group of believers together" and appointed by the Apostles (Acts. 6:2-3). Election by the Church (Ministers and believers) followed by ordination by Apostles was the system in the early Church.

In "Didache" (Teaching of the apostles, a book probably dated 2nd century-15:1-2 we see like this: "you yourself must elect bishops and helpers who will really work for the Lord.....do not abuse or defy them." While writing to Corinthians, Clement of Rome

refers to ministers as 'appointed by the consent of the whole Church (44.3). The same epistle mentions about the appointment of administrators directly by Apostles but that was in the case of newly formed Church. St. Hippolytus of Rome says, "Let the bishops be ordained, chosen by all the people and when he has been proposed and found acceptable to all the people....with the agreement of all, let the bishop lay hand on him. And all shall keep silence praying in their hearts for the descent of the Spirit" (Dix, Gregory, ed., The treatise in the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome p. 2-3). Ordination without testimony of Elders and election by the whole Church lacks validity (Bingham, J. Antiquities of Christian Church, p. 133).

The sacramental seal of ordination is permanent and no body has the right to remove this apostolic authority given to them, but a bishop can suspend this authority as a disciplinary measure. Even in the case of a believer his status as a Christian secured through baptism cannot be removed from him through disciplinary or any other action. The Apostolic authority that our Lord granted to the Church will last as long as the Church exists and is handed over from generation to generation through ecclesiastical dignitaries. The twelve Apostles were ordained and sent by Jesus Christ and bishops by the Apostles. In the same way ministers are ordained and specially sent by bishops in order to exercise Apostolic spiritual authority. At the same time it may be remembered that ministers are elected from the Church, by the Church and for the Church. Believers are to witness and are to protect the faith. That is why the believers are considered qualified enough to elect ministers from among the believers as to be their spokesmen of faith. It is evident from the history of the Church that believers played a significant role to defend the true faith of the Church by discarding heretical bishops like Arius, Eunomius and Nestorius. Believers have a very significant role to play in protecting the true faith; for this, they must be well informed of the true faith of the Church.

3. BELIEVERS AND THE CHURCH COUNCIL

Believers, including women participated in the first two general Councils of the Church - one to elect Apostle Mathias (Acts. 1:14 - 26) and the other in Jerusalem to arrive at a decision regarding faith (Acts. 15). In both these sessions believers participated in prayerful silence, listening to the Apostles and carried out their decisions.

In subsequent periods also the system of believers participating in councils prevailed. Cyprian announces his administrative approach to ministers in the following words: "I have not been able to reply myself since from the first commencement of my episcopate, I made up my mind to do nothing on my own private opinion without your counsel and without the consent of the people (Cypr. Ep. 5:4, A. N. F. Vol. 5 p. 283). A few points are to be noted here :

(1) Decision is taken by the bishop. (2) But in taking a decision the bishop used to consider the opinion, advice and counsel of ministers (3) In implementing decisions in the Church the bishop used to get the consent of believers (Consensus fidelium).

There are evidences to show that ministers and believers used to attend meetings of the Church along with bishops (eg. Carthage Council of A. D. 258, Elvira Council of A. D. 305. Nicean Council of A. D. 325 and the Councils that met in A. D. 517 and A. D. 529 - see "place of the Laity in the Church," London 1918, p. 60 - 61). On many occasions believers either remained silent or expressed their opinions when asked for.

The historian Sozomen has recorded the reply of the emperor Valentine to the bishops of Bithynia when the latter asked for permission to convene a Council of the Church to discuss and decide upon matters relating to faith: "I am but one of the laity and therefore no right to interfere in these transactions, let the priests to whom such matters appertain assemble where they please" (Place of the Laity.....p. 62). Bishop Ambrose holds that (1) believers (even an emperor) should not get involved in adopting disciplinary action against ministers (Ambrose works. Treatise II 932) and

(2) believers have no permission to participate in meeting or to vote when matters regarding faith are discussed.

QUESTIONS

1. "The early Church considered the execution of administrative authority as the responsibility of the ordained ministers". Make an assessment of this statement.
2. Bring out the role of believers in the election and acceptance of their ministers.
3. To what extent did the early Church get the believers involved in Church Councils ?

the crime being confessed or alleged. If the Church was convinced that repentance was not upto the required, extent, a period of repentance would be decided and the guilty would not be allowed to receive the Holy Communion. Even after this period, if the guilty continues to sin he would be expelled from the Church and declared as 'cursed by the Church.' Other actions adopted by the early Church against offenders were : (1) believers would cut off all contacts with him. (2) inform other local Churches about him so that they would not accept him into their Churches. (3) all Christians would stop talking to him and dealing with him (4) Contributions and oblations would not be accepted from him. (5) memorial services would not be conducted after his death and (6) his talks, writings and publications would be rejected. All his writings and publications would be burnt to ashes.

2. ABSOLUTE IMPARTIALITY IN DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Disciplinary actions against the guilty were adopted without any discrimination equally for man and woman, poor and wealthy, master and servant, ministers and believers, rulers and the ruled, judges and the judged all in the same measure. Some concession was given to those coming with letters from martyrs in jails.

In spite of the stringency of punishment and the impartiality, each guilty person was given a chance to explain his position before the bishop. Disciplinary measures were adopted only if the bishop was not convinced of true repentance of the offender. Readmission into the Church with full rights after the period of repentance was also the sole right of the bishop. Ministers had the right only to 'hear' sins and prescribe penance. Disciplinary actions were taken only on the basis of legal evidence, reliable witnesses, or voluntary admission. Non adults and children were exempted. Disciplinary actions were never based on personal hatred, compulsion or persuasion of others or inadvertently committed sin.

LESSON 6

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS AGAINST THE BELIEVERS

*Different Types of Disciplinary Actions
Who all ? and in What Ways?
Approach to the Ten Commandments
The Mode of readmitting the penitents.*

1. DIFFERENT TYPES OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

The early Church used to be very Vigilant in finding out those who lived against Christian testimony advising them and reprimanding them. Hence all the members of the Church were very careful about leading a good Christian life. Disciplinary actions were not intended to alienate erring believers but to avoid their corruptive influence on others and to give them an opportunity to confess, to repent and to return to the Church. The early Church considered deviation from faith (apostacy) murder and adultery as the most serious of sins. Those who committed these sins were separated from the society for a long period of penitance. The period of penance (restitution) depended on the seriousness of the sin committed. Any way offenders were readmitted as full members only if the Church was fully convinced of their real repentance. Those who were not responsive to disciplinary actions and remained stubborn were kept totally out of the life in the Church. The aim of such a policy was the spiritual growth of the true believers. Naturally the expelled would not enjoy the rights and authorities of those within the fold of the Church.

Let us spare a glance at the different types of disciplinary proceedings. A preliminary corrective advice was a usual method

3. APPROACH TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. The following actions were considered as violation of the first commandment: **idolatry, burning incense before idols, giving contributions to idolators, participation in their festivals, horse racing, acting in dramas or cinemas, visiting cinema theatres, making idols, building temples for gentiles and selling articles for idol worship.** Those who violated the commandment were punished.

2. Violation of the second commandment: **Witchcraft astrology, foretelling, prognosis, omen, star power, belief in all these, worshipping saints in the place of God, and showing miracles through evil spirits or satan.**

Those who accept other faith giving up the true faith, those who create rifts and differences, those who spoil the sanctity of God's temples, those who make profit using spiritual gifts and heretics were all considered guilty and were punished appropriately.

3. **Blasphemy, rejection of faith, swearing by God's name, false witnessing and breach of contract** were considered as violation of the 3rd commandment and proper punishments were given.

4. Violation of the 4th commandment: **Abstaining from the celebration of the Holy Communion, partial participation, careless behaviour on the Holy days of the Lord, fasting on Sundays and holy days and visiting theatres.** The culprits were ideally punished.

5. The following were thought to be disregard to the 5th commandment. **Reluctance of Children to show obedience and allegiance to parents, similar behaviour of servants to masters, non-sustenance of parents (even if it is in the name of religious reasons), marriage without the consent of parents, disrespecting kings, acts of treason, disregard to the rules and regulations of the Church. These: of fences were insisted accordingly.**

6. **Breach of the 6th commandment: Some people argue that murder is a crime which deserved no remission at all. But later**

it was decided by the Church that opportunity should really be granted for true repentance continued for a couple of years. Abortion was also counted as murder. **Sacrifice of human beings, paternal fratricide, infanticide, attempt for suicide, mutilation of organs, arguing and witnessing in favour of murderers, spying against believers in the period of persecution, murdering and persuading murder, reluctance to help the ones dying due to hunger, behaving with hatred, anger and enmity - people committing these sins were all punished in the early Church.**

7. **Fornication, adultery, marriage between the incompatible, polygamy, keeping concubines, illegal divorce, marriage after illegal divorce, production or use of pornographic literature, seeing obscene pictures, nude dances, abusive talks and exposure wearing of clothes** were all violation of the 7th commandment and offenders in the Church were properly dealt with.

8. Violation of the 8th commandment: **stealing, cheating, purchase of stolen goods, hiding thieves, keeping articles lost by somebody else, nonclearance of debts, nonadherence to contract agreements, shifting of boundaries, torturing others, giving and receiving bribes, collecting inappropriately high interest rates, intimidating, deceiving, spreading of scandals, flattery and breach of trust** were all considered violation of 8th commandment and the culprits were punished.

9. **False witnessing, defaming, insulting, conspiring in secret, pulling ones legs, abusing, blaming, and scolding** are violations of the 9th commandment and the offenders were punished appropriately.

10. **Jealousy, arrogance, greed, false pride, vainglory, craze for money** - all these were considered violation of the tenth commandment and disciplinary actions were adopted against the offenders.

4. THE METHOD OF READMITTING THE PENITENT

The practice of excommunication as a punishment against offenders prevailed in the early Church. They were readmitted into the Church, after due repentance, as fulfilled members.

Real repentance was the essential condition for remission of sins. The repenting sinners had to pass through several stages. They had to wait before the holy altar, clad in sack and pray kneeling down or prostrating in such a way that all people could see. A certain period had to be spent in fasting and lamenting without participation in the worship. After this they used to stay in front of the Church and supplicate to the believers, 'Please pray for me'. Sinners were allowed to attend only the first part of worship (i. e.; the part meant for catechumens). After finishing all the formalities of penance one had to report to the Elder (Kassesa) who if convinced about the veracity of repentance would recommend the case to the bishop who would grant remission with prayers holding his blessing hand over the head of the sinner in penance. With this the person would again become a full fledged member of the Church. Those who came back without real penance were returned for a second period of penance. Any way all the disciplinary measures were intended to rectify the guilty and to protect other believers from going astray.

QUESTIONS

1. Examine the ways in which disciplinary measures were adopted in the early Church.
2. In what perspectives did the early Church understand the meaning of the ten Commandments.
3. Describe as to how imperative it is for the Church to separate out the guilty and welcome the penitent for the progress of the Church.

UNIT 3

PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN THE INDIAN CHURCH

LESSON 1

PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

CERTAIN PRINCIPLES IN ORTHODOX CHURCH

*The Church is God's people
Common priesthood through baptism
Holy Qurbana, the core of the Church
Relevance of special Ministry
Infallibility and supremacy only to the Church
Autonomy and national character*

We have seen the various aspects of the participation of God's people on the basis of the Bible and from the manner in which they lived in the early Church. We have also seen that as the Church grew, three traditions - the Orthodox, the Roman Catholic, and the Protestant - cropped up. But it will become clear through this lesson that it is the Orthodox Church that keeps intact at least a part of the true Christian tradition. Most of the traditions mentioned earlier continue to be the traditions of the Orthodox Church, and hence repeated here. Reformation took place in the Roman Catholic Church but not in the Orthodox Churches because there is nothing to protest in a true 'Orthodox' tradition.

It was as a challenge to the Roman Catholic Church (which claimed fullness of the Church in its "hierarchy") that the free thinkers, who believe that the Church is perfect even if there are only believers, started the Reformation. It is a fact that the trend of the Supremacy

of the Roman Catholic 'clergy' and the Protestant 'laity' have affected, to a certain extent, the Orthodox Churches also. While the 'ministers' attempt to rule the Church in the manner of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, some believers influenced by the ideas of the Reformation, protest against the 'rule' by the hierarchy'. Both these trends have caused much confusion of ideas in the Orthodox Churches too, but if the true Orthodox tenets are carefully studied in the light of theology and history of the Church, much of the 'tug of war' existing among different Churches and denominations will vanish. Let us, therefore, briefly examine how the equilibrium of participation by the ministers and believers is kept in an Orthodox Church. The following factors may be regarded as the special features of the Orthodox Churches:- they are either a direct continuation of the traditions of the early Church, or their repetition. (Hence the name 'Orthodox': Ortho = straight or direct from the original).

I. THE CHURCH IS 'GOD'S PEOPLE'

The Church is made up by all those who are called by God, (Ecclesia) or 'God's people (Laos). They are God's inheritance (kleros) also. The 'Clergy' and the 'laity' therefore are one and the same viz. God's 'people'. The Orthodox tradition does not permit the terms 'clergy' or 'laity', but 'ministers' and 'believers' who participate in all affairs of the Church, and together have to completely co-operate with the worship, service, and other activities of the Church.

The stately and pompous administrative set up and the "Clergy-laity" divisions that crept into the Church after the fourth century are still extant in the Orthodox Church. We saw that the words 'laity' and 'clergy' are derived from the tendency to keep some people at a distance, as worldly. However, these words are not relevant to the Orthodox Churches. Though there is an apparent "Minister-believer" distinction, they have no private mission in the Church, but do their duties in the common mission of the Church. Just as there is no Church without the ministry, there is no Church without believers. The Orthodox Churches teach that the fullness of the Church involves both the ministers and the believers coming together for the Holy Communion at the Eucharistic Assembly. They are

the indispensable parts of the Church. Though in different positions, both work for the same objective; their oneness is the basis for the strength and progress of the Church.

2. "COMMON PRIESTHOOD" THROUGH BAPTISM

Every member of the Church shows the Priesthood, prophethood and kingship of our Lord through Holy Baptism he or she is sealed and confirmed through the Holy Unction or Chrismation, and made 'perfect' by the Holy Communion. The special 'ministry' in the Church is based on the sharing of this common priesthood which entails everyone to share the responsibilities of the Church, which is called to perform the mission of Jesus. No member can evade this mission. It is not as mere spectators, but as co-workers that the people participate in the Church service, they all worship unitedly.

3. HOLY COMMUNION—THE PIVOTAL FUNCTION OF THE WHOLE CHURCH

The true Church constitutes a people who share in the Holy Communion after due preparation. The experience of the Holy Communion must enable them to take advantage of their gift of priesthood. In the Orthodox Churches it is not the minister alone who celebrates the Holy Qurbana—as the representative of the people he prays. "O God, make us worthy to offer this sacrifice to You." Similarly, all the Church Prayers, services and sacraments are done by the minister and the believers together. The Roman Catholic way of doing these things by the 'clergy' alone without the participation of the 'believers' and the Protestant manner of performing them by the believers alone (without a valid minister) are not acceptable to the Orthodox Church. Things are done in the Church by the ministers and the believers together.

4. RELEVANCE OF SPECIAL MINISTRY

All members of the Church share the priesthood of Christ; both the minister and the believers are equal in this since they have the same baptism. However, matters like administration of the

infallible. Even the decisions taken by the Church Synod consisting of the bishops, Elders (presbyters) and the believers are not regarded as the faith and tradition of the Church till they are accepted and implemented by the whole Church. 'Consensus Fidelium' (the approval by all the faithful) is one of the cardinal tenets of the Orthodox Churches, in the light of which the Church could excommunicate many heretics. When a bishop or a presbyter tries to implement matters which are different from the faith and tradition of the Church, it is essential that the whole Church should oppose such measures to defend the true faith. From the Orthodox view, joint is not right if the ministers alone take decisions on common affairs and implement them, nor is it proper if the believers alone (eg. lay organisation) handle such affairs. People sometimes erroneously think that the supreme power of the Church is vested either in the ministers or in the believers. In the Roman Catholic Church the bishops hold synods exempting 'laymen', take decisions, and impose them on the 'laity'. In the Protestant sects, the 'believers' alone assemble, take decisions and implement them. Both these ways are not acceptable to the Orthodox Churches. In them one can see, at all levels the minister presiding and the believers participating in all the administrative bodies. Our Church allows participation of the believers in councils and other supreme bodies which act as the synod of the Church. (Eg. Mavelikkara Synod, Mulanthuruthy Synod, Diamper Synod etc). This practice is followed in other Orthodox Churches also. It should be noted with pleasure that compared to other Orthodox Churches, the Malankara Orthodox Church allows more participation of the believers in all her Councils.

AUTONOMY AND NATIONAL CHARACTER

All national Churches are autonomous (self-governed) and autocephalous (Self - headed). They are governed by the local bishops and the believers, and no one from outside has any right over them. The Orthodox Churches believe that each national Church has the right to choose their heads; hence they do not allow foreign bishops and missionaries to govern or control them. That a foreign Patriarch or Pope, or missionaries should govern the Indian Church is opposed

Church, defence of faith, and general supervision cannot be handled by all members together. They are entrusted to those who have a special call from the Lord. Such people are selected by the Church, apostolic authority is given to them through "Ordination," and special positions and duties are assigned to them; this ancient tradition has been maintained unbroken by the Orthodox Churches. The responsibility for selecting such candidates for this special ministry belongs to the local Churches. Mere selection does not make a candidate a minister. The Orthodox Churches believe that the candidates become ministers when they receive the special gift of the Holy Spirit through the Ordination by the bishop who holds the apostolic authority. Both the Protestant view that a candidate is raised to a special but temporary position of a 'Pastor' merely because the people select him, but need not be 'ordained' and the Catholic tradition that one becomes a 'priest' when the bishop ordains him without being chosen by the people are unacceptable to the Orthodox. The Orthodox tradition that those who are selected by the Church are given permanent ministerial gifts and responsibilities through the sacrament of Ordination, remains even now as a continuation of the apostolic tradition. We read that in the early Church the seven deacons were selected by the Church and were appointed by the apostles. The Orthodox Churches believe that the 'ministers' - selected by the Church, ordained by the apostolic authority and accepted by the Church, are appointed by God, and they form a distinct group with their indelible character, Christ is represented on earth by the whole Church, but the bishops represent Christ in the Church, and the Elders (or Kaseesa) represent the bishop in the parish. That is the type of relation between Christ-Church- Bishop-Elder-Believers in the Parish. In short each believer is to be a "minister" to those outside the Church, that is, to represent Christ in their own places and situations.

5. THE CHURCH ALONE HAS INFALLIBILITY AND SUPREMACY

The fullness of the Church remains in the "Oneness" of her ministers and believers as we see in her Eucharistic community which is a "Church in miniature." The Orthodox Church does not teach that the decisions on Church matters taken by one group alone are

to the Orthodox traditions; and that is why we the Orthodox, are seeking legal protection to maintain this ideal traditions.

However, this autonomy has to be instrumental in introducing the Christian principles in a manner suited to the time and place, and also to the culture and needs of the locality of the Church. The benefit of autonomy will be lost to India if our Church remains to be the mere spokesman of the obsolete culture of the 'Syrian' Church. The autonomy must help us to have new approaches to theology, spiritual activities and worship suitable for our Indian Christian existence and growth. If we fail in this, we cannot win our Indian non-Christian brothers as is evident in the past. Christianity should be indigenised as has happened in all other National Churches (eg. Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox etc.). We should aim at a true Indian Orthodox Church. To achieve this goal we have to attain full 'autonomy'- freedom from all foreign domineering rules.

QUESTIONS

1. "Though the priestly ministry of the Church is performed by the Church as a whole, the leadership of the special ministry is essential in all the activities of the Church." Elucidate.
2. "All the Orthodox Churches which have autonomy teach that the Church alone has supreme authority and infallibility." Substantiate.
3. Elucidate with examples, the role and participation of the believers in the worship and administration of the Church.
4. Discuss the various fields of our Church which can contain nationality. How far does 'autonomy' help the Church to maintain a national identity?

LESSON 2

PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD
IN THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX CHURCH - I

A GENERAL SURVEY

National leadership - Latin conquest
Relation with Antioch - An irrefaceable blot
Towards complete freedom

We have seen that only the Orthodox Churches preserve the full participation of God's people as it existed in the early Church. In the Western and in the Middle-Eastern Churches the nature and growth of the Church had been checked and controlled by many social and political factors and sometimes the Church gave way to the interests of the emperors, and thereby lost its identity. Although India comprised of great many small native states the rulers of these states did not deny the autonomy of the Church, and even encouraged the growth of the local autonomous church.

I. NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

A survey of history (though historical works on the subject are few) makes us think that the Indian Church was independent, and that it flourished practising the principles of the early Church till 16th century when foreign domination was imposed on it. Before that time, though the Church had to depend occasionally on foreign Churches (especially the Persian Church) for spiritual leadership or apostolic ordination, history reveals that the local Church assemblies managed the affairs of the Church. The "Church Assembly" (or Palli Yagam) comprising of the believers and their minister selected by them, (ordained by the bishop) was the supreme body of the local Church. The administrative set up of the early Church could be conti-

med here as it had much in common with that of the Hindu community, and hence, the native kings also favoured it. These Church assemblies will be dealt with in detail later. The person who linked and led these small local communities was called "JathikkuKarthavian" (The Leader of the Community). Later he came to be known as Arch-Deacon or Malankara Metropolitan, and this Jathikkukarthavian was chosen by the Church delegates as their national leader, spokesman of the Church, and head of administration. When invited by this Church foreign bishops came here, ordained those who had been chosen by the Church assemblies, and gave the spiritual advice. But they never had any control over the administration of the Indian Church, commonly known as: the Malankara Nazarenes or St. Thomas Christians. The entire authority was vested with the Church assemblies and the Arch deacon (JathikkaKarthavian) chosen by them. It was with the advent of the Portuguese in the 16th century that this set up changed.

THE LATIN CONQUEST

The Latin Catholics from Portugal who came with the object of establishing their domination, gradually secured control over the Christians here by influencing the local kings. The Indian Christians gradually came under the control of these foreigners. The Synod of Diamper (1599) imposed a new kind of administrative set up and new restrictions on them. Protesting against this, a group of Christians liberated themselves from the Portuguese yoke through the now famous "Oath at Coonan Cross" (1653). The autonomous local Church assemblies were constrained to be under the Latin Catholic yoke, and gradually they were neglected. The arbitrary administration of the foreign bishops and their vicars continued in the Roman Church and parishes but the Malankara Church could break the Roman yoke as it had accepted the leadership of the Arch deacon.

THE ANTIOCHIAN CONNECTION

The Malankara Church then fell into another disaster unknowingly. They approached the Antiochian Church for guidance and assistance from their bishops. Instead of ordaining the candidate proposed by the

Malankara Christians as Arch deacon, Patriarch of Antioch ordained a Malankara Metropolitan. Imposing the supremacy of St. Peter, the Patriarch tried to bring the Malankara Church under his control. But they were strongly against surrendering its autonomy. Under the Malankara Metropolitan, the Church fought bravely against the foreign attempt. However, a few presbyters and some believers, without trying to understand the history and Orthodox tenets of the Malankara Church, surrendered themselves to the Patriarch. It also happened that a few Kaseesas were after high positions, and were ordained as bishops and thus the authority of the Patriarch came to be accepted in India leading to another schism in the Church, which exists even today. The sons of the Malankara Orthodox Church, imbued with the spirit of nationalism, freedom, and pride for Orthodox tenets, stood united under the Malankara Metropolitan and fought against all kinds of foreign domination and interference.

4. AN INEFFACEABLE BLOT

If it desired, the Malankara Church could surrender herself to the care of the Pope rather than to the Patriarch of Antioch, as that door is still open. Since the Sixteenth century our forefathers have fought bravely against the selfish motives and temptations of foreign powers. Now, if we lean either towards the Papal side or towards the Patriarchal side, neglecting their resistance and sacrifice, it would be a permanent blot on the traditions of the Malankara Church. This spirit of freedom has since been exhibited by the Church in its relations with all other foreign missionaries.

5. TOWARDS COMPLETE FREEDOM

If half a century was needed to throw off the Roman yoke, a much longer period, punctuated by litigation, was required for jettisoning the Antiochian domination. It was in 1912 that the Malankara Church regained its complete autonomy by declaring itself a "Catholicate of the East." Subsequently in 1934 the Malankara Syrian Christian Association was formed and a new start was made under the leadership of the Malankara Metropolitan to recover the antiquity of the "Church assemblies." Nevertheless, a united effort

has to be made to create a conducive atmosphere for the growth, enthusiasm, awakening and enriching of partnership which characterised the Malankara Nazarenes before the 16th century. We see that they invariably tried to maintain the autonomy of the local and national Churches and to a great extent have succeeded in their attempt.

QUESTIONS :

1. Briefly describe how the autonomy of the Malankara Church was maintained till the 16th century, giving the significance of "autonomy."
2. Illustrate that the Orthodox tradition is at variance with foreign domination which has been always a stumbling block for national identity and influence - Show examples from Indian Church history.

LESSON 3

PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD
IN THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX CHURCH - 2

PERIOD UPTO THE 16TH CENTURY

Church assemblies (Pally Yogams) Their functions
'Jathikku Karthavian' national leader.

Since records of ancient history are too few to give us certain knowledge in this matter, we can only come to some conclusions based on available evidences and circumstances. Scholars have recored that, according to the traditions and customs, Indian Christian-co-operated in the social religious and administrative matters.

Later history records that Christians lay scattered in various places; the native Kings recognised these Christian committies, gave them privileges and empowered their Church assemblies to decide the division and quarrels among them².

Very ancient customs and practices have been handed down orally from generation to generation and later some of them have been recorded in poems or "ballads"³ One such *ballad* entitled the "Thomas Remban song" relates how Apostle St. Thomas entrusted the public property of the Church of those days to 21 faithful lords. All the ministers ordained by St. Thomas were presbyters / bishops with power to ordain their successors. St. Thomas ordained Presbyters / bishops (who were then of equal status) in the Indian Church just as St. Paul, St. Peter and other apostles did in their respective Churches.

CHURCH ASSEMBLIES (OR 'PALLY YOGAMS')

Though Christians were scattered in various places, their spiritual and temporal affairs were managed by local autonomous assemblies called "Pally Yogams". Many historians have written that the Christians might have accepted an administrative set up similar to that of the Hindus.⁴ According to the Hindu set-up those who conducted administration were called "URANMAKKAR" (local. democratic administrators).⁵ These 'YOGAMS' were chaired by ministers or presbyters who had been elected by the local people and ordained by bishops. Since these ministers were not the representatives of the foreign bishops, they could protect the local interests and administer freely according to the decisions of the local Church assemblies. The Church assemblies had the power to take decisions in social spiritual and Church matters, which conformed to the traditions and faith of the Church; if need be, they could punish a member, and even ex-communicate from the Church. This power was innate in each local community and could not be questioned by any other community.⁶ Since the Church assemblies were led by the local ministers they enjoyed full freedom in worship, administration and discipline.

The concept that 'parish' was only a part of the Church and that ministers were 'vicars' did not exist then.⁷ Only the local ministers and the heads of each family of the locality constituted these Church assemblies. It can also be assumed that it was the "committee of the elders" which administered the Church with the episcopa, that managed the affairs of the Indian Church through the Church assemblies. The history of the Indian Church also reveals that these 'elders' were not specially ordained but were heads representing each family of the locality.⁸ It was after the establishment of the Roman Church supremacy in the sixteenth century, that the vicar became the representative of the bishops, and the parish was re-organized with all the adult male individuals as its members. But the administrative system of even the Persian (Chaldean) Church which existed in India from the 6th to the 16th centuries was conducive to the autonomy of the Church assemblies. We see that even in the Synod convened by a Chaldean Bishop, Timothy II, in 1513, the advice of the "best men of the community" was sought.⁹

2. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLIES OR YOGAMS

The important functions of the Church Assemblies extant, before the 16th century, are listed below:¹⁰

- (a) to build places of worship and protect them,
- (b) to raise funds from local homes,
- (c) to spend the income of the Parish for the protection of the poor,
- (d) to make arrangements for celebrating Church festivals,
- (e) to select men for ministry and to recommend them to the bishop for ordination,
- (f) to send representatives to the local and national Church assemblies,

(g) to run charity homes for orphans and the poor, and to bear the expenses for the marriage of the poor girls.

(h) to conduct 'Agape meals' on special occasions.

(i) to try and punish those who are guilty of moral lapses, to settle quarrels, to decide penance, and not to co-operate with, but to keep away from the guilty, till they are publicly absolved by the minister.

All these functions came under the jurisdiction of the Church assemblies.¹¹ The Church assembly functioned as a court of justice also.¹² Much similarity can be seen between the "Ecclesia" of the apostolic Church and "Church assemblies" or "Yogams" of the pre-Diamper Indian Church.

We see in the most ancient records¹³ that in the early phase, only the heads of each caste and class within the community were allowed to attend these 'assemblies'. It can justly be assumed that later, the head of each family was allowed to attend the assembly as 'elder' representing the members of the family, including women, and that in course of time, according to the system of franchise of the locality, all adult men were allowed to attend the assemblies, and in conformity with the administrative system of other religions (eg. Hinduism, Islam) which did not allow women's liberal participation, only men came to have participation in the Church assemblies.

Each Church assembly had at least one minister as its president. Generally he was known as 'Cassanaris' or "Kathakar" is a Malayalam term to mean a man of the 'Karthan' (Lord) or one who represents Christ the Lord. He was also called 'Vaidikan' (expert in vedas or Scriptures) "Acharyan" (teacher) "Kassasa" (Elder or Presbyter); 'Achen' (Father) and "Pattakkaran" (having authority to rule through ordination).

Historians agree that the ministers were married, and they lived on the contributions of the people. When there were more than one minister, they gave leadership in turn. The eldest presbyter was held in

high veneration. Only those persons selected by the assembly were sent for particular training under 'Malpans' (Syriac Teachers). The Roman Catholic system of a bishop ordaining a person of his own choice and sending him as his 'vicar to rule' a parish was imposed on the Malankara Church only after the 16th century. The income from the people was meagre and the clergy engaged themselves in other ordinary jobs in ordinary dress.¹⁴

3. 'JATHIKKU KARTHAVIAN' THE NATIONAL LEADER

The delegates of each 'YOGAM' constituted the local and national assemblies and these assemblies entrusted the duty of general administration to a person called "Jathikku Karthavian" (The leader of the people).¹⁵

He was the elected leader of the Christian community, who wielded power. Usually a minister was elected to this post. The Portuguese gave him the title of the 'Arch Deacon' and tried to reduce him to the position of mere 'Yesman' under the bishop. But they could not easily succeed in depriving him of his position as the leader of the Christian community, nor were the foreign bishops willing to raise him to the position of a bishop. Thus, for sometime the bishop functioned as spiritual leader and the 'Arch-deacon as the leader of the community. Though later history records occasional quarrels and trials of strength, the Kerala Christians enjoyed full freedom till the 16th century. History supports that the Church assembly of each locality managed the local affairs under the leadership of the local minister, that since the bishops were foreigners, they were venerated as guests, that their spiritual control often tried to encroach upon the autonomous internal administration; and that the Church had to fight under the leadership of the 'Jathikku Karthavian' for the national independence. We will hear more about it in the next lesson.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the relevance and the functions of the Christian Church assemblies or "YOGAMS" that existed before the 16th century.

2. The Protestants think that the believers alone can rule the Church; the Roman Catholics maintain that the 'clergy' alone must rule it; the Orthodox concept is that the minister and the believers together carry out the mission and life of the Church. Evaluate these approaches in the light of the Indian Church history upto the 16th century.

FOOT NOTES :

1. Kollaparambil, Rev. Jacob, "St. Thomas Christian Revolution in 1653" p. 3 f.
2. Mundadan A. M. (Fr.) "Traditions of St. Thomas Christians" p. 130.
3. Bernard of Thomas, "The St. Thomas Christians" Vol. I p. 62 f.
4. Aertthayil James, "The spiritual Heritage of St. Thomas Christians" p. 39.
5. Placid Podipara (Fr), "Christians of Kerala" pp. 121,123.
6. Nagam Ajiya "The Travancore State Manual" Vol. II p. 72.
7. Kollaparambil, Jacob (Fr.), "St. Thomas Christian Revolution, 1653" p. 6.
8. Mundadan A. M. (Fr), "Traditions of St. Thomas Christians" p. 152.
9. Koodapuzha, Dr. Xavier, "History of the Indian Church" p. 282.
10. Schurhammer, S. J., "Malabar Church during the Early Portuguese Period and before," p. 3.
11. Thaliath, J(Dr.), "Synod of Diamper" p. 28 Note 80.
12. Paulinus A. S. Bartholomeo, "A Voyage to the East Indies" tr. by William Johnson p. 196 f.
13. Paramakkal, Thomas, "Varthamanapusthakam" p. 41'.
14. M. S. Document "Istoria della Missions del Malabar" written (C. 1750) kept in the Archives of S. Propaganda Congregation, Rome (C. P. Vol109), quoted by Dr. Kurian Vanchipurackal, in "Laity in the Syro Malabar Church through Centuries."
15. Joseph, Thekkedathu, "History of Christianity in India" Vol. II p. 26.
16. Kollaparambil, Jacob (Rev), "Arch deacon of all India."

Diampier through which they attempted to make our independent Church dance to their tunes, and we see that they succeeded in their attempt to a great extent.

LESSON 4

PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD
IN THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX CHURCH - 3

IN THE LIGHT OF THE SYNOD OF DIAMPER

Portuguese ways imposed

Clashes begin

Portuguese reforms

If we examine the proceedings and the decisions of the Synod of Diampier (1599) convened by the Portuguese Bishop Menezis, we can understand many things that prevailed before, among the St. Thomas Christians.¹ In fact Menezis convened the synod exploiting the autonomous Church assemblies of each locality and the participation of the believers in them. In the order issued for convening the synod, Menezis made it clear that, as was the custom of this Church from ancient days, four significant persons representing each assembly should attend the synod, and that the decisions - both spiritual and temporal - taken by the Synod would be binding on the people. Obeying the order, 793 persons participated including 133 ministers (Presbyters) and 660 believers.²

Menezis succeeded in bringing our Church under Portuguese control by this Synod. Before that, bishops from the Persian and the Babylonian Churches came here on request from the Indian Church to give spiritual leadership, but never with the support of the Persian Kings, whose power was declining. The freedom that they allowed in their Churches was allowed here too. But Menezis and other Portuguese bishops came here with the object of seizing all powers of the Church with the support of the Portuguese Kings. To attain that object, with the help of the native Kings, they convened the Synod of

1. PORTUGUESE METHODS IMPOSED

Soon after the synod of Diampier, the Roman administrative system was imposed on the Malankara Church. Not only were the Church assemblies deprived of their autonomy, but they were declared as the parishes of the Roman Church, and the bishop appointed 'Vicars' to rule these parishes. The Portuguese bishop himself paid them a salary and the vicars started imposing the Roman faith and customs on the Malankara Church, which gradually lost its own faith and independence. The principle of collective responsibility shared by the minister and the believers gave way to the rule by the 'vicars' (hierarchy) of the Roman Church. Consequently the faithful became mere 'faily' under the 'vicars' and were forced to accept the Roman faith unquestioningly. The Jesuits could keep on with these Roman reforms with the support of the native Kings. They managed things in such a way that the Malankara Church became economically dependent on the Roman Church; Economic dependence infused Roman faith into the people.

Besides this, the Jathikkal Karthavian (the leader of the caste) who was accepted as the national leader, and who ruled this Church, was reduced to the position of the 'Arch-deacon' (equal to the 'vicar-general' of the Roman Church). He was made to obey the orders of the bishop and was paid from the Roman treasury. Gradually the Jesuits managed to impose the western culture and the Roman faith on the St. Thomas Christians of Malankara.

2. CLASHES BEGIN

Occasionally clashes took place between the leadership. In December 1632 Arch deacon George convened at Edappally a meeting of the delegates of all church assemblies, which made Brito, the then Archbishop, sign an agreement. According to the agreement, the

Archbishop was deprived of the power to ordain ministers, to appoint or transfer vicars and to take penal steps against anybody without the consent of the Arch-deacon. This was certainly against the Roman interest, and Garcia, the next Arch bishop, even threatened to kill the Arch-deacon (obviously he had the support of the Vice-roy and the Maharaja of Cochin). The agreement was repealed; Archbishop Garcia started again, with the support of the Jesuit missionaries, to impose Roman faith. The parish lost its entire autonomy, and the hierarchial system of administration was introduced. Arch-deacon George died in 1640. He was succeeded by Arch-deacon Thomas, who in his capacity as the leader of the caste, clashed with the Archbishop, on the question as to who should rule the national Church. The proud St. Thomas Christians stood united with the Arch-deacon as they were not willing to surrender their independence, (which they had enjoyed upto the 16th century). Many of the Presbyters unwilling to forfeit their salary sided with the Archbishop. The clash became intense, till Arch-deacon Thomas and majority of Coonan Cross at threw off the Roman Yoke by the historic oath of Coonan Cross at Mattancherry (1653). Eventhen most of the money-grubbing presbyters refused to come out of the Roman fold. (It should be noted that the Roman Catholic way of winning over the ministers and the believers, with financial help through the 'Rite Movement', continues even now.)

3. PORTUGUESE REFORMS

The Portuguese did the following things to destroy the independence of our Church :-

1. The Jathikku Karthavian was not allowed to rule the Church as the national leader. Moreover, he was reduced to Arch deacon which was equal to the Vicar General under a bishop. This led to the deprivation of nationalism, unity, and sense of independence.
2. The presbyters were made 'vicars' and were paid by the bishop. These 'Vicars' strated functioning as the mere agents of the

Archbishop; there occurred a wide gap between the ministers and the believers, their unity was lost, and the believers were reduced to mere 'laity'. The presbyters came to be known as rulers (hierarchy). Since the collective responsibility of the ministers and the believers was lost, the growth of the Church became stunted. The 'clergy' was concerned only to protect their position and power, and as a result, the non-co-operation of the faithful grew to alarming proportions. The reformists exploited the situation and they encouraged the revolt of the faithful against the ministers, and thus the idea of 'Congregationalism' developed in the Church.

3. The Portuguese, in their attempt to teach the Catholic faith to the people, stopped all other publications. They started special religious and theological institutions (Vypin Seminary) with a view to make the St. Thomas Christians owe allegiance to the Roman Church. The assembly held at Edappally in 1632 protested against this trend and recommended that the traditional theological education under the Malpan should be re-established.⁴

4. Traditionally the ministers were selected by the parish assembly and they were ordained for the parish at the request of the assembly. This practice was ended, instead, persons were ordained without considering anybody's choice or recommendation, appointed as vicars, and made to spread the Roman faith. The participation of the believers came to an end.

5. The true Christians of Kerala under the 'Jathikku Karthavian' were named "Puthenkoor" (a new set of people) and their right to ministerial succession was thwarted in various ways. The arch deacon wrote to various Churches with the eastern tradition for help to continue the apostolic succession through proper ordination. Metropolitan Abathulla was sent to Malankara, but the Portuguese executed him. It was then that the Malankara Christians threw off the Roman yoke by the "Oath of Coonan Cross" and ordained Archdeacon Thomas as Bishop. The Portuguese questioned the "laying on of hands" on him, and in his stead, ordained Alexander Parambil as a national Metropolitan, and there by managed to bring to the Roman fold a few people who had left it. Later, in 1665, the Malankara

Church started a new chapter in foreign relations, by accepting the 'ordination' by Metropolitan Gregorios who came from Antioch. "Redeemed" as we were from the Roman yoke, nobody at that time thought that another epoch in slavery was being started. Subsequent history proves that the believers played a very significant role in protecting the true faith and freedom of the Church. In all the dashes against foreign domination, the ministers and the believers, with a sense of freedom, stood united. These fights show that, rather than a protest of believers against the ministers, it was a question of nationalism against foreign domination.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe how the freedom of the St. Thomas Christians was protected before the Synod of Diamper.
2. Describe the methods employed by the Portuguese to impose the Latin style on the Malankara Christians after the Synod of Diamper.
3. Assess the national leadership of the 'Jathikku Karthavian' in the light of the Indian Orthodox tradition.

FOOT NOTES:

1. Geddes, Michael "The History of the Church of Malabar and the Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper," 1694, pp. 93-94.
2. Ibid p. 423 (No representatives from the Churches at Kunnankulam attended this Synod).
3. Kollaparambil, Fr. George. "St. Thomas Christian Revolution in 1653," pp. 40-63.
4. Ibid. p. 55.

LESSON 5

PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD
IN THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX CHURCH - 4

FROM THE 17th TO THE 19th CENTURIES

The Faithful, the guards of the Church
Approach of the British missionaries
The Antiochian grip tightens and then fails
"Rite Movement" a new threat
Training essential

1. THE FAITHFUL, THE GUARDS OF THE CHURCH

We saw that it was because the Roman Catholic Church tried to dominate over them that the St. Thomas Christians or the sons of the Malankara Church, who had been free upto the advent of the Portuguese, quarrelled and became divided into two groups. Similar intervention by other foreign Churches and the resultant division can be seen in the later history of the Church too. On all such occasions the believers stood firmly with the heads of the national or local church and played a significant role in preserving the integrity, freedom and the true faith of the Church. There were a great many strong and loyal believers in every locality who accepted the leadership of their local ministers, obeyed it, and co-operated with it even at the risk of their lives. The Church could hold its head high on account of their sacrifice. It was the few presbyters and bishops, who were fond of power and positions, that betrayed the Church to the foreign domination; they sold as slaves to the foreigners the innocent, guiltless believers, who had not enough knowledge about the Church and its autonomous character. The faithful, who blindly believed the ministers are innocent in this matter. The Malankara Orthodox Church should

be conscious of its great responsibility to make the believers aware of the reality and bring them back to the way of truth.

Later, the Malankara Nazaranees who liberated themselves from the Roman yoke happened to ask the Syrian Church of Antioch for spiritual leadership. At first this relation was good. The person who functioned as Arch deacon was ordained as Metropolitan, and he ruled the Church in the capacity of 'Malankara Metropolitan'. The autonomy that the Church enjoyed before the 16th century and the rights and powers of the 'Church assemblies' were almost restored.

2. APPROACH OF THE BRITISH MISSIONARIES

The advent of the missionaries from the west paved the way for certain new developments in the church. The British who came here under the guise of friends consolidated their political power, and as a result they started imposing their Protestant views on the Church. The missionaries questioned the ancient faith and customs of the Church and tried to put an end to them. Refusing the reformist trend of the missionaries, the Church registered its protest against them under the leadership of the Malankara Metropolitan, and locally under the presbyters. Fr. Abraham Palakkunnathu, who was drifted by the promises of the missionaries, stood with the British heads of administration and decided to betray the Orthodox Church. Deacon Mathews, who was the son of Fr. Abraham's elder brother, went to Mardheen in 1842 and quickly and cunningly got ordained by the Patriarch of Antioch as Malankara Metropolitan, and returned to Malankara in 1843. He got himself appointed as Malankara Metropolitan through the 'Quilon Award' (ie. a royal recognition) of 1848. He thus sold the Malankara Church to the missionaries and started a reformist Church (the present 'Marthoma Church'). Though the sons of the Malankara Church, whose sense of freedom was raised by the Oath of Coonan Cross, succeeded in defeating the reformist tendencies, they had to start another fight against the powerful Patriarch of Antioch, who secured unbridled power through the Synod of Mavelikkara (1836).

3. THE ANTIOCHIAN GRIP TIGHTENS AND THEN FAILS-

Patriarch Peter III tried to bring the Churches of Malankara under his direct administration. Since his attempt failed he convened a Synod at Mulanthurthy in 1876 and persuaded the participants to give away the Churches to him by writing deeds in his favour. This was a futile attempt, and so he personally visited the Churches and tried to persuade them, but in vain. Then he divided the Malankara Church into seven dioceses, ordained bishops for each diocese, got the deed and contract of allegiance from them, gave them such a letter of authorisation and tried to rule through them. Till that time the rightful Malankara Metropolitan had full authority over the Church, but to cripple his authority he was given the charge of only a single diocese. In this way the Patriarch imposed on the Malankara Church an autocracy and foreign domination which did not exist till that time.

However, the ministers and the faithful who were well aware of the history and faith of the Malankara Church, continued their efforts to protect the freedom of the Church. All the bishops in Malankara assembled at Parumala, and declared their loyalty and allegiance to the Malankara Metropolitan, in the place of the Patriarch. Thus the plan of Patriarch again failed. The struggle against foreign domination which manifested itself in suspension, dissension and litigation, entered a new phase with the establishment of the Catholicate in 1912. As in the case of other Orthodox Churches, by the grace of God, an autonomous Oriental Catholicate was established here. Despite the opposition by the Patriarch and his followers, a constitution was framed which enabled the "Malankara Syrian Christian Association" to run the administration of the Church in an independent manner, through its Managing Committee and Episcopal Synod. The followers of the Patriarch questioned the legality of the constitution, but the Supreme Court of India in its historic decision in 1958 declared that the Patriarch had no authority over the Malankara Church. Since there was no alternative, the Patriarch came for reconciliation with the Catholics. Both accepted each other and peace was reestablished in 1958. However, a few presbyters who were after positions of authority, and who could not get leadership after recon-

ciliation, tried to misrepresent facts, and led some of the faithful of this Church again into the Patriarch's domination. Today there exists in Malankara a group of Metropolitanans and people, ruled by the Patriarch of Antioch. They are known as the 'Jacobite Syrian Christians, and are neither 'Indian' nor 'Orthodox' in the true sense of the word.

4. "ROMAN RITE MOVEMENT" - A NEW THREAT

The 'Malankara Rite Movement,' (started in 1930) which felt it better to be under the Pope than to be under the Patriarch, also poses a threat to the freedom of the Malankara Church. This movement teaches that Jesus Christ entrusted all powers and gifts to St. Peter; that Christians all over the world are under the supervision of the successor of St. Peter, who alone stands as the vicar of Christ and therefore, the Malankara Nazranees who also had been, from the very beginning under the Roman Catholic Church, must re-unite with that Church. The Orthodox Churches believe that Christ gave powers and gifts to all the 12 apostles equally and the believers of a particular Church founded by one apostle, are not superior to the believers of another Church. History reveals that each national Church grew independently inculcating the culture and traditions of that nation. Hence the Orthodox are not likely to fall into the trap laid by the "Roman Rite Movement." Nevertheless, the followers of the Patriarch of Antioch, who recently accepted the supreme authority of St. Peter, are likely to accept not only the 'Rite Movement', but to merge with Roman Church itself. The Primary consultations towards this, is said to be over. Our Church members are to be cautious against this threat from the 'Rite Movement.'

5. TRAINING IS IMPERATIVE

The Reformists who came here from the Western Churches in the early part of the 19th century have questioned the faith and customs of our Church. As the Church leaders were engaged in the fight for freedom, they failed to teach the people the true faith and customs of the Church. Consequently some of the believers, influenced by the Reformists, have brought havoc to the peace of the Church. Some

ministers also behave badly towards the faithful, as the Roman Catholic hierarchy does, to confirm their authority and rights. Both these approaches have had adverse effects on the harmony of our Church.

Consequently the relation between the ministers and the faithful has become loose, and often, the Church is not able to stand firmly in the Indian Orthodox tradition in the practice of the true faith and customs. Inspired by national consciousness and the spirit of freedom, and leaving aside all sorts of divisive tendencies, the ministers and the believers must work together to foster the interest, love and enthusiasm for the Church. Simultaneously Church must have training programmes and other schemes to prepare her members to achieve that aim.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain with examples how the leadership of the foreign Churches have always stood in the way of the independent growth of the Malankara Church.
2. Elucidate how the faithful, who were learned, enlightened and who loved the Church have always co-operated with the leadership of local ministers to protect the Church, during 17-19th Centuries.

I. A CONSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE IS FORMED

Many parishes had had their own constitution before, a common constitution was approved by the Church for the first time in 1934. (For instance, St. George Church, Trivandrum 1935, Puthuppally-Nilackal 1939, Parur Syrian Church 1940). An examination of these constitutions reveals that every Church assembly enjoyed more freedom than was allowed by the common constitution. The Church assembly had the freedom to choose a candidate for ministry, give him a certificate and request the bishop to ordain him. If the presbyter was unwilling to convene the Church assembly, the secretary had the power to do so, and one "Aymeni" or believer, nominated by the assembly, could preside over the meeting which meant that the ministers could not but accept the decisions of the faithful. The believers as well as ministers of those days were well-versed in the faith and observances of the Church. Hence the freedom they enjoyed was harmless. But the freedom which was meant to preserve the individuality and integrity of the Church became later a hurdle to its real growth, and paved the way for anarchy in parishes. Though the foreign Metropolitanians were disliked, the ministers and the believers were ready to co-operate with the native Metropolitanians. As a result, the supreme administrative body of the Church, viz., the 'Malankara Syrian Christian Association' was convened in 1934. Though it cannot be claimed that our Constitution is entirely without deficiencies, it has accepted the right of the ministers and the believers to bring about timely amendments to it. Thus, by the grace of God, the freedom of the Church has been restored to a certain extent. Nevertheless, with its freedom, the Malankara Church has not been able to influence the non-Christian people of India, nor make any considerable contribution to the culture and heritage of India.

2. FREEDOM AND NATIONALITY

All Orthodox Churches have tried with the aid of their freedom, to shape their system of worship, theology, style of life, customs traditions and culture, according to the needs of time and place in which they have lived; they have succeeded to a certain extent in their attempt. The

LESSON 6

PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD
IN THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX CHURCH - 5

IN THE 20th CENTURY IN THE LIGHT OF THE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

A Constitutional Structure gets formed

Freedom and Nationalism

Constitution and the participation of God's people

Reforms in the Constitution

We have seen briefly the freedom enjoyed by the St. Thomas Christians of India, the way in which the Church came under foreign domination, and the manner in which the ministers and the believers fought unitedly and defeated the foreign powers. In all these we find the intense desire of the faithful to recover the freedom of the national Church and the ancient Orthodox tradition. The autonomy of each Church assembly, though not in the same degree as was enjoyed earlier, has been re-established. The decisions taken by the assemblies at parish and diocese levels have been found fit to protect the Church in any crisis. Each member of the Church, whether minister or believer, considered the Church as his own and was anxious to strengthen it. It was a great achievement that high officials and influential persons in various walks of life, participated in the task of protecting the Church. The practice of seeking their advice in the Church assemblies, accepting them with due respect and implementing them, came to be reestablished. The believers were given majority - participation in all the administrative bodies of the Church.

Greek, Latin, Syrian, Russian, and the Roman Churches have all grown imbibing the culture of the places where they flourished. Since alien cultures had been imposed on the Indian Church, we were not able to go deep into the Indian culture or attract the non-Christian Indians. Since the non-Orthodox Churches in India encourage foreign connection for their selfise motives, each keeps the other at a distance and introduces Christian values in a foreign manner and mostly under foreign supervision; this has become an ineffacable blot on the Indian Church. The true nature, unity, theology, customs, observances and systems of worship of the Indian Christians can attract other Indians only if they show the courage to oppose all sorts of temptations and foreign tendencies. All foreign relations which stand in the way of this objective will always be an obstacle to us. Foreign domination is an obstacle to bring about ecumenism in India. The Indian Church has a great responsibility. Tearing the foreign yoke to the winds, all Christians, irrespective of ministers or believers must work together to fulfil their responsibility, then only can the full meaning and extent of the participation by God's people become clear; it is the duty of every Christian, imbued with a sense of freedom and nationalism to lead the Church to that objective.

CONSTITUTION AND PARTICIPATION BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Though the Malankara Church has a long way to go to achieve this goal, its constitution envisages the possibility of a system of administration which will lay the foundation of the guidelines necessary for reaching the goal. The aspects of the Constitution that encourage the participation of God's people are given below:

1. Complete participation is allowed to the representatives of the people who form the majority, in all administrative bodies at parish, diocese and at Malankara Church levels.
2. Each Church assembly is given the freedom to take and implement decisions on matters allied to parish, diocese and Church provided they are not at variance with the faith, order, ministry and discipline of the Church.

3. From among faithful are elected, a Secretary of the Church a Diocesan Secretary, a parish Secretary and Office - bearers of the spiritual organizations.

4. The right to select Bishops candidates rests with the Malankara Association which comprises of the Catholics, Bishops, Presbyters and the faithful which implies that the believers have ample opportunity to influence the Church.

5. The ministers-believers participation is ensured in all spheres of the Church. Neither the ministers nor the believers can take and implement decisions on common affairs of the Church without the consent of their counterpart. As in the case of the early Church, those leaders among the ministers, who consulted the faithful, listened to their advice, and protected their interests, were particularly respected. When a minister is not able to give leadership he is entitled to entrust it to some believer; thus the Constitution gives opportunity to deserving believers to rise to leadership.

6. The Presbyters, the Metropolitan and the Malankara Metropolitan have the power not to implement the decision of the local assemblies if they are found to be against the common interests and faith of the Church. This provision of the constitution helps the Church not to go astray from the right path.

7. The fact that before the Episcopal Synod takes the final decisions on all matters that are to be implemented in the Church, they are to be discussed in all administrative bodies, wherein the believers have ample representation, is conducive to the growth of the Church. The Constitution also warrants representation of the believers even in bodies intended for taking disciplinary action against presbyters and Metropolitan. It is worth mentioning that in no other Orthodox Church is allowed so much participation of the believers as is done in our Church.

8. The Malankara Syrian Christian Association and the holy Episcopal Synod have the right to bring about reforms to the constitution through the "Rule Committee," and thus the timely growth of the Church is assured.

4. REFORMS IN THE CONSTITUTION

A few suggestions to make amendments to the Constitutions to ensure more participation of believers in future are given below:

1. Women also attended the Church assemblies of the early Church (Acts 1:14). In course of time a system arose in which only the heads of the families (Male elders) attended the assembly as among the Jews. This system seemed better than the one in which many representatives from one family attended the assembly. At present, all administrative bodies are representative in character. Even in the parish assembly, representation of the family is enough. It encourages the harmony of each family to have one voice and all families will be duly considered. In this way, one person either male or female, should represent the family in all church assemblies.

2. The Church assemblies must have the right to choose candidates for Ordination. A Presbyter who has not been selected in this manner may not feel any responsibility to the people, nor can he claim that he represents the people. The presbyter who comes as the mere "vicar" of the Metropolitan, creates the feeling among the believers, that administration is imposed on them from above. Though the person need not be ordained for a particular parish, the trend of ordaining candidates without a certificate from the parish, and without sufficient training, has to be discouraged. Provisions to achieve that aim should be included in the constitution.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the factors in the Constitution of the Malankara Church which promote participation of the believers?
2. Suggest provisions to be included in the constitution which will ensure more fruitful participation of the ministers and believers in the Church.
3. Assess the relevance of the independence of the Malankara Church to grow as a national Church.

UNIT IV

PARTICIPATION BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD TODAY AND TOMORROW

LESSON I

MISSION FIELDS FOR THE FAITHFUL - I FAMILY LIFE

*Nature of the mission of the believers
Those who are to reform the world
Christian family, the first scene
Family life and social Security
Family, practical considerations.*

1. NATURE OF THE MISSION OF THE BELIEVERS

We have already seen the picture of the early Church, in which all actions ended in success because of the participation of the ministers and the believers. In the following few lessons an attempt is made to evaluate the role and activities of the Church in modern times.

The incarnation of God and the establishment of the Church on earth are based on the principle of love, humility and suffering for the salvation of the whole of mankind. The missionary activities of the Church are to be carried out in the world mainly through the believers, the reason being they are the people who live in it. They must, therefore, acquire through life in the Church, enough knowledge, inspiration and the spirit of dedication required for working in the fields where missionary activities based on the above principle are imperative.

God expects us to carry on the work of Jesus Christ who entered history and started his saving work; it is the bounden duty of the faithful to work, in their respective fields, as the ambassadors of Christ, to continue this saving work in accordance with the times and places and circumstances in which they live. Just as the sacramental presence of Jesus Christ is revealed in the Church through the bishop and in the parish through the priest (as explained in Unit I Lesson 1) It is to be revealed in the various realms of the world through the loyal members of the Church. Each believer should therefore realise that he or she is an apostle sent by God to witness Jesus Christ in the realm wherein he or she is working and that it is a unique mission entrusted to them to be fulfilled with the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. It is the significant duty of the Church, particularly of the ministers to make the faithful conscious of their work, and to give them adequate training for it; hence the believers must respect the ministers and value their leadership.

2. THOSE WHO ARE TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD

'The people of God' are the light to the 'People of the World.' Being the salt of the earth they should get dissolved to remove the evil and to preserve the good in society. Many of the evils in the present day world are due to the failure of the mission of the Church. Jesus said, "Just as my father sent me I am sending you to the World;" it is the primary duty of every believer to work in the world drawing inspiration from these words. To awaken the believers to this sense of duty is of supreme significance. The ministers have the great responsibility of making the believers aware that Christian perfection can be attained and infused into others by them, even though they are ordinary people. Every approach discouraging the believers from carrying out their mission is a failure on the part of the Church. Only those believers who live and grow as true Christians in the lap of the mother Church can transform the world. Only a transformed Christian can transform the world. The self-transformation and the transformation of others is a simultaneous process. Let us examine in what realms a believer can bring about this transformation.

CHRISTIAN FAMILY, THE FIRST SCENE

The foundation of Christian life is laid in the family. Freud, the reputed psychologist, says that a child learns the first lessons of life before he attains three years of age, absorbs all the fundamentals before seven, and that only the development of things already acquired takes place later. Since the Christian values strike root first at home, the significance of the Christian family is very great. We do not see family as a human arrangement, but as a divine institution. The spiritual growth of the family is regarded as the yardstick for Christian growth in the parish, Church and in Society as a whole. The very foundation of the Church is shaken when the Church fails to uphold the glory of family life. The Christian tenets that a divine gift is essential for leading a good family life, and that an ideal family life is God's establishment, should be emphasised.

Family, according to Indian thought, is an ashram, the period of a householder. The Family which may be regarded as the smallest unit of the Church, is itself a Church, a seminary, a school and an ashram. The growth of the Church and society depends on the solidity and solidarity of the family. The approach of the believers must help them form a style of functioning which would protect the security of the family, its holiness, and to foster understanding among its members.

FAMILY LIFE AND SOCIAL SECURITY

It is a matter of deep concern that the glory of family life is often submerged by ultra modernism. If the undesirable tendencies and anarchy creeping into family life are to be checked, Christian values must be infused into believers through families. The glorious position of the parents must be reestablished through the small unit of family to create a conducive atmosphere for the physical, mental, cultural, social, spiritual and religious growth and maturity of children. The couple who are called through holy wedlock for 'missionary' work, must practice in life, true love, sacrifice and purity. Like "the lamp that shines on the hill" they must be a beacon light for children and

neighbours, upholding the true Christian values. It is in the family that husbands and wives witness Jesus for the first time as ministers, prophets and administrators. The missionary work in the family moulds true Christians and trains them towards perfection. The faithful must be given proper training by the Church to enable them to lead an ideal family life, upholding the glory of family life which forms the pillar of the society and the Church. Then only can the Church produce ideal persons who can be true witnesses of Christ in the World.

5. FAMILY LIFE - CERTAIN PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Vatican Council (II) proposed the following guidelines to encourage missionary activities in family life in the Roman Catholic Church :-

1. to adopt the Orphans and the destitute
2. to respect the poor as guests
3. to work in the educational field to preserve moral values in society,
4. to give guidance to children and youngsters,
5. to prepare young men and women (who are getting married) for Christian family life by giving them counselling,
6. to prepare the believers by catechism to be Christian witnesses in society,
7. to give advice and help to those families and couples who are in physical and spiritual poverty, and
8. to help the old in all their needs.

The believers can do really fruitful missionary work only when the Church begins to act accepting the above or similar suggestions as guidelines. In a state like Kerala, where families belonging to different castes and religions live in close proximity, the influence of the Christian families, which are loyal to gospel truth and uphold the Christian values, can be very great. The true missionary work the Church will be useful to society only if the faithful are informed,

encouraged and inspired by the Church to lead a true Christian life. It is only through a true Christian family life that the Christian mission is made effective in India today.

QUESTIONS

1. "It is through the believers that the missionary work in the community is mostly done". Evaluate this statement.
2. Elucidate the relevance of the glory of family life in the missionary work of the Church.
3. Examine the ways in which the missionary work of the families can be improved.

LESSON 2

MISSION FIELDS FOR THE FAITHFUL - 2

SOCIAL SERVICE. POLITICAL OUTLOOK

Social Service : Christian, the Criterion of community-Faith should be revealed in action - defective social service United Christian approach

Political outlook :- Church and the state Political approach without vested interest An independent Christian force.

1. SOCIAL SERVICE

(a) Christian, the Criterion of community

It is a pity that the Christians, who are called upon to transform the community into a Christian experience, often degenerate themselves as instruments which reinforce the corruptive trends in society. It is a sad fact again, that Christians are behind all the corruption and treachery in the community. Unlike in ancient times, the fascination and influence of Christian values is getting diminished. The history of Kerala records that in ancient days, attracted by the loyalty, purity and piety of the Christians, the non-Christians, desired to win them as friends and neighbours and foster trade relations with them. But that has become a thing of the past, and other communities do not have a high opinion about the Christians, today.

It is the believers who get more opportunities to bring about a change to this sad condition and to project the presence of Christ in society. Here is a large field where the missionary work of the believers must be done fruitfully. The believers who are well aware of various social

ets like laws, trends of thought, directions and precedents, must attempt to fill them with Christian values, and they must consider this attempt as their social service. It is this Christian witness, which is shared through ordinary experiences like work in daily life, learning, amusement, rest and love, that serves as the criterion for true social transformation.

b) Faith should be revealed in action.

The person who reveals his faith through action, influences the society more than the person who simply possesses and declares the faith. It is not mere words but sincere deeds that show a man's faith; deeds should be the yardstick to measure one's faith. Rarely do we try to see that faith and action go hand in hand. It is here that we wear a mask—Unless we give up this self-deceit we cannot exert any influence in the social field. However, the message of Christ is to be carried out through the missionary work of ministers and believers whose work harmonises with their faith. The missionary work of the believers is as important as that of the ministers.

Two thousand years ago Christ comforted multitudes of people by healing them and giving them food; Christians as representatives of Jesus, have to do the same mission at all times. The basis of social service should not be work inspired by human love alone, but one inspired by divine love. We must help those who are suffering with brotherly affection since we all are the sons of God who is our father. The words of Jesus, "Whatever you do for others is done for me" must be the basis of our social activities.

c) Defective Social Service

When we examine the various fields of social service today, we see that corruption has engulfed these activities, begun with great expectations. We shall point out a few defects which already exist in the field of Social service, or which are likely to occur there:

1. In the world of today people have become Mammon worshippers; the personality of the Individuals is not counted, individuality

is given little significance. The yardstick for success is money, pomp and position no matter how they have been won. In such a social set-up the sort of personality development based on real values is out of question.

2. In a social system where the rich become richer and the poor, poorer, work aimed at social justice can hardly become fruitful.

3. Though the welfare work done by the Church or by social Organisations is fruitful to some extent, social work often degenerates into a source of lime light, and people often serve themselves under the guise of social service. People who claim to be champions of social service profess lofty ideals but seek means of pleasures and self-satisfaction, while funds are mostly spent on selfish priorities.

4. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of God", said Jesus and he upheld poverty and identified himself with the poor. Most of the so called social workers are money-grabbers and they take Jesus's lofty ideals and use them for selfish motives like acquiring power, increasing wealth, and enjoying worldly pleasures. Needless to say that these social workers are bad examples because they cannot implement the ideals of Christ.

d) A United Christian approach

The defects described above make the whole field of social service imperfect. True social growth is possible only when we encourage the selfless social service by people scintillating with the presence of Jesus, and the sort of social work which enables the growth of individuality. It is here that the relevance of Christian values comes in. Social service must be organised under the common auspices of the Church, but at the same time the Church should encourage the faithful to do social service in their parishes and among their neighbours. We must chalk out plans to comfort those who are suffering among us and try to put an end to the factors-social, economic and political—which land people in such a pitiable plight. We must cultivate the attitude of the good Samaritan who comforts the wounded traveller and take him to the inn. Simultaneously, we must catch the thieves who waylaid the traveller, and ensure a safe journey for

future travellers. We must treat diseases, but at the same time we must find out the cause of them, and see that they are not repeated.

It is here that the real challenge crops up. To meet this challenge, a field has to be prepared where all the believers, who are ready to uphold the Christian values, can come together and fight, irrespective of the denominations to which they belong. Whatever be the extent of the meaning of 'ecumenism', the minister must prepare the faithful to make a concerted effort to put into practice the 'compassion of Christ.' The faithful must reveal their zeal for social action in this field, inspired by honesty, sincerity, Christian attitude and the gifts of the Holy spirit. They must be able to instil on others the conviction, and courage to build a good social system, eradicating the existing social evils. The fields of education and politics must be made use of with this end in view. The success of believers in all these fields depends on their readiness to work in society projecting the compassion of Christ, unselfishness, honesty in purpose, and the spirit of sacrifice.

2. POLITICAL OUTLOOK

a) The Church and the State

The relation between the Church and the State must be subjected to an in-depth study. Political leadership has persecuted the Church on numerous occasions; at the same time the instances that the Church exerted control over nations are not rare. Christians have a duty to enter into politics and infuse values of life into the public. It is not wrong to call Jesus a politician. He declared before Pilate that his Kingdom was not of this world. But Jesus approved Pilate's royal power to judge him as it came from God. Judged by the attitude, objective, and style of functioning of Jesus, every Christian is obliged to work in the political field. Only a true Christian can become an uncorrupt politician. But the present political system is not conducive to the growth of the politicians who stick to their principles. Politics has developed certain "morals" of its own; a Christian politician is compelled to sacrifice his Christian principles for the political "Scruples." Hence a Christian confronts a "contradiction" in the field.

The Christian Church must be able to infuse into the administrators, values of life and influence them ideologically to administer, without overlooking truth, justice and morality. Similarly they can do much in "preparing" the people to elect such representatives as are able to build a welfare state in which justice prevails.

b) An approach without vested interest is imperative

Often the Church interferes in politics for vested interests, and this is undesirable. The Church must help and encourage political parties to work for the progress of the people; it should protest in a Christian manner against the injustices and violence that exploit society. Both are integral parts of the missionary work of the Church.

Political interference in religious matters, as in other fields, has become very common. There is a general notion that everything can be achieved through political influence. Christians cannot disregard politics which affects the life of an individual in many ways, on the other hand, they have a special obligation to see that politics plays the game in its attempt at promoting patriotism and social service. They must regard politics as their true field for missionary work, and realize the exact meaning of the words of Christ, "pay to the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay to God what belongs to God", and act accordingly.

Sometimes we point out that there are many undesirable trends in the political field. But, how do people allow such trends? Why does the standard of the "Politician" not rise? Because each society, organization, and party tries to protect its own vested interests. Vested interests must give way to common good, that is the kind of political approach we need today. The Church must set a model for this.

It is in this context that we are to evaluate the political revolution of Jesus Christ. Jesus sacrificed his life to give life to others; he chose the path of suffering, and received ridicule and dishonour; he came down to earth to build heaven on earth. The Christian must, not

only accept such a style of life, but also win others into it. That is the political approach that Christ taught us. We must accept it as a divine call, love it and follow it. The missionary work of the Church must help the believers realize that service based on love will not succeed without sacrifice. Christians have a responsibility to behave as a "political force," to eradicate corruption and injustices that crop up in the political scene from time to time. In doing so, they should not get merged in any political party, nor should they remain as a fulfilled political party, but consider the political field a place where they can bear their Christian witness. It is the bounden duty of the minister to make the faithful aware of it and unite them for selfless political service.

c) Independent Christian force

The Christian must have the freedom to work with any party that stands for people's welfare and progress of the country, without getting identified with an ideology, and at the same time, holding on to Christian values. No Christian should be prepared to support a political party without discerning its policies. Standing firmly under Christ's flag, Christians must so fight for the good of the people, that neither the ruling party nor the opposition should think that Christians will dance to their tune. They should, at the same time, see that the stand taken by them is not to materialise their selfish interests, nor to sustain communalism. "Christianisation" of politics is a real mission work which God has called us to undertake. We must accept it and work, individually and collectively, for the realization of it. This is the same as a building up the Kingdom of God on earth. Lay - organization can do much in this field.

QUESTIONS

1. Evaluate the field of social service of today; point out its defects and suggest remedies to them.
2. Discuss the rôle of the faithful in filling the framework of social service with Christian values.

3. Discuss the relation as well as distance between the Church and the State. How far can Christians interfere in politics?
4. Assess the importance of Christians as a force without vested interests or communal feelings.

LESSON 3

MISSION FIELDS FOR THE FAITHFUL - 3

EDUCATION, ART, CULTURE, LITERATURE, INFLUENCE OF OTHER RELIGIONS

Fields of Education - the present bad condition - creative

approach - fields of art, culture and literature -

Nationalism, the core of Christiamness - the bondage of

foreign relations - We must contain

Indian nationality - Fields of art and culture must

be Christianised - influence of other religions -

Faith that is diluted - Christianity, the life of all religions.

1. FIELD OF EDUCATION

a) The Present bad conditions

In this filed the primary duty belongs to the parents. The training for bringing up children in discipline in the home itself, must be given to parents and 'would be parents.' Though the Government does certain things in this matter, our schools and colleges do nothing fruitful. But the Christian Church has a very significant mission to carry out here. Instead of finding fault with the poor system of education, the Church must be able to make some contributions which

n the past have been valued highly. It must be debated now, whether our approach precipitates deterioration in educational standards. It is a sad fact that educational institutions which extort money for the appointment of staff and the admission of students, have reduced education, which should be considered holy, to a mere merchandise. The co-operation of the nrire Christian world is needed to avoid such malpractices which strike at the root of Christian values and Christian witness.

b) Creative Approach

Christians are to come forward, individually and collectively, to approve and implement the following:

1. The sort of education that upholds human values and helps the formation of good character must be encouraged.
2. Christians must work together and persuade the government to remedy the defects prevalent in the filed of education.
3. The Church must try to run educational institutions well. The undesirable trends existing in Christian institutions can be wiped out only if the members of the Church help generously. If that is not possible it is better not to run these institutions.
4. A sincere attempt must be made to reestablish the decency of the teaching profession, and to respect those teachers who are deeply learned and dedicated.
5. The Christian Church must make an earnest endeavour to persuade the Government to prohibit political interference in the educational field and to impart education of high quality.
6. Moral and religious instruction must be organized in educational institutions so as to enable the students to get proper guidance for forming a good character and living a moral life.
7. Christian student organisations must be made to work more fruitfully. Christian study classes and instruction media or communication systems must be arranged in the schools and colleges run by the Church.

Sincere co-operation of each Christian is essential for the above things. The participation by the faithful is of supreme importance in enabling the Church to maintain a high standard in educational matters. A line of lay leaders, with readiness to learn and teach Church matters is the greatest need of the day.

2. FIELDS OF ART, CULTURE, LITERATURE AND NATIONALISM

The Church of each nation has the responsibility to imbibe and appropriate the art and culture of that nation, and to modify and introduce it in a Christian manner. One can see clearly in the history of Christian traditions, how the Greek, Roman, Syrian, Russian and other Churches grew and flourished through the art, literature and culture of their respective nations. As for the Indian Christians, they could flourish to a certain extent, in the Indian style, till before the 16th century; then it had to be discarded owing to the domination and interests of the foreign Churches.

Formerly the Malankara Nazarane Christians had accepted, as a part of Indian culture, Indian models of worshipping centres, festivals, marriage customs, costumes, fastings, 40th day and annual funeral rites, "Margam Kali." "Kalarippayattu" etc. (Read: Paret Z. M "Privileges and tribal customs," a book in Malayalam).

The Bondage of Foreign Relations

Nevertheless, from the time when foreign Churches established supremacy over the Indian Church, they not only did not give any encouragement to the national approach, but imported foreign culture and imposed it on the national Church. Particularly in the beginning of the reformist movement they taught the people that everything Indian is sinful and evil. They removed paintings and icons in the Churches, the model and architecture of the Church buildings were changed. Many of the social customs that influenced the non-Christian Indians seemed social evils in their sight.

All these foreign relations prevented the Indian Church from growing through identification with Indian culture, art, and literature. Consequently, "Christianity here is regarded by the non-Christian Indians as a "foreign or import." For the same reason, "Christianity" is a fact that imported Christianity could not attract and influence the non-Christian Indians; on the other hand it could win only their dislike and opposition.

Therefore, as other national Churches do in their respective cultures, we also must go deep into the heritage of Indian culture and enrich the fields of art, literature and culture with Christian values. Unless we try to grow as "Indian Christians" our Christian witness in India is not likely to become fruitful. We need not remain any longer under foreign ideology which taught us that such an approach is wrong and sinful.

There was only one united Christian Community in India before the advent of the foreigners. The domination of the foreign Churches at various occasions, imposed different outlooks, approaches and interests on the Indian Church. As a result, the Indian Church got divided into various denominations, which often competed and fought with one another. Gradually we lost our "Indianness." Our theology, worship, and the training of the ministers were based on the books produced abroad, even today we mostly depend on them.

We must contain Indian national identity

If we are to develop our own line of thought we must develop an Indian theological approach which probes into the Indian culture and Indian thought. All the Christians of India must join together in the search for this new approach. A "theology of, for and by the faithful" has a very significant role to play in this field.

Our task is to discover the "Indian" and "Christian" roots of the Indian Church. Then only the Christian Church, which is firmly

rooted in the Indian soil, and is nourished by Indian theology, can do really fruitful missionary work in India. It is the duty of the leadership of the ministers trained in the Indian style, to ensure the participation of the believers in this work. Even in the field of training of ministers, emphasis should be given to the Indian approach, we must have Indian theological works in abundance. Excellent theological thoughts reflecting Christian approach, must crop up from the sons of India, inspired by their studies of other literary works and scriptural books. The believers also must be encouraged towards this objective. We must produce theologians from among ourselves.

Fields of art and culture must be Christianised

The art forms of Kerala (eg. Kathakali, ottamthullal, etc.) may be employed in propagating the Christian message. We have many geniuses in the fields of art, literature, and culture. Since they get no encouragement from the Church, they are forced to work in other fields, and there they become instrumental in spreading corruption, violence and immorality in the society. Media such as cinema, drama, painting, music, dance, novel and short story, instead of being used for propagating moral values, are adulterated by private individuals for making money. The Christian Church must be able to transform them into scenes which uphold human values, arouse valuable thoughts and encourage spiritual life in society. The media described above have tremendous influence on the masses and, hence, the Christian Church can examine whether human culture can be purified by establishing film-producing companies and societies for literary writers. Since it entails great expense various Churches will have to work in co-operation. At present it is not easy to use the medium of cinema on a large scale, but mediums like video, radio and television, slides, wallposters etc. can be extensively used by the Church in public places, Playgrounds, schools and colleges. The Church must find out talented persons from among the believers and form an art and cultural department which could be advantageous, and yield good results which could uplift the society.

3. INFLUENCE OF OTHER RELIGIONS

Adulterated Faith

India is a secular nation. Since India has a broad outlook receiving all religions, gods and goddesses, religions like Sikhism, Jainism and Islam flourish here. Our Hindu friends might be ready to accept Christianity as one such religion, and Christ as a mere founder of a religion. There is a growing tendency among Non-Christians to worship Jesus's mother as 'goddess Mary'. There are Christians who are not ready to accept the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. They are not ready to approve Jesus as the "Son of God" or as the "Saviour of the world." It is strange that Christians have started "Call for Help" (S. O. S.) imitating the "Ayyappan Call" of the Hindus. Certain centres of faith encourage such calls to the so called 'Mother' or other 'Saints' to make money. In short, faith in Jesus is being distorted or overwhelmed by such a tide of "religious faith." Such popular cults should not be encouraged as a good sign of national identity.

A real believer is one who desires to see God's wish fulfilled. But there are believers who give offerings and offerings "for favours received" and thereby try to change God's mind and Church administrators who employ economic income as the yardstick for judging the believers piety. One has to consider seriously whether there would be faith on earth when the Son of Man comes again.

'Christianness' — the life of all religions

Christianness is not a religion, it is a means. The Church is called to pour out real Christian principles to the members of other religions. The faithful must be trained not only for transmission of "Christianness" but they must try to win back the sheep that 'go astray'. The most important duty of the Church is to train the faithful in such a way that there can see Christian values like, love, sacrifice and truth in their daily life. Unless the Christian tries to practice the good aspects of other religions, and expose the glory of the Christian principles through their own lives and through inter-religious dialogues, the Christianness,

meant for getting identified with the soul of other religions, will remain as a mere 'religion' One among the many." It is the duty of the Church to protect the individuality, identity or uniqueness of Christianity in India, while seeking a national identity to the maximum level possible.

QUESTIONS

1. Evaluate the field of education, pointing out how the believers' participation can be better used in that field.
2. Explain why the Christian Church should contain nationalism through Indian art, culture and literature.
3. Describe how the uniqueness of the Christian faith can be preserved in its approach to other religions.

LESSON 4

THE CHURCH AND WOMEN

A GENERAL SURVEY

Position of Women, Biblical basis
Womens participation in the early Church
Womanhood in theological perspective
Ordination of women

Women constitutes half the Church. The Church cannot flourish neglecting women who lead more active Church-life than men, and who share in all spiritual experiences of the Church. There is an argument that laws and customs, formed in a system wherein existed the supremacy of men, do not properly encourage the full participation of women. One must evaluate how far this argument is valid. Since we are surrounded by the Protestant denominations who go to the extent of ordaining women as ministers, and the Roman Catholics who are ready to admit women-representatives to the Councils, the members of which include bishops also, we should think about the position of women in our Church. This topic can be dealt with only briefly.

1. POSITION OF WOMEN - BIBLICAL BASIS

a) In the Old Testament

In the Old Testament period womanhood was totally neglected and even denounced. In the story of creation itself, woman was created as a support or help-mate to man from his rib (Gen. 2:18). God created woman because he could not find a suitable support to man among other creatures. It is man himself who names her 'woman.' Since woman was the cause of man's fall, she was described in the Old Testament thought, as the one who made man lose his good-

luck. The curse of God fell on woman. "He will rule you" (Gen. 3:16) Man's supremacy started, only after the Fall, before that they were partners in life. Jewish Women had no place in their Synagogues and in society; Women were not included in the genealogy of the OT. They had no right to learn or teach the covenants (torah), nor did they have permission to participate entirely in the worship. Women were considered frail, and womanhood, unclean. The sin of adultery was attributed to women only. Jewish men had a prayer more or less as follows: "O Lord, I praise you for not creating me as a pig or as a woman." Man considered woman so mean a creature. She was meant only for satisfying his sexual desires; Jewish women were forced to live as slaves under veils. Polygamy and concubinage prevailed in society. Divorce was the right of the male only—Jewish law allowed men to divorce their wives, by giving divorce certificates even for silly and simple things. We also find eminent ladies who could lead the people of Israel - women like Deborah (Judge), Esther (Queen) and Miriam (Prophetess), but these were considered exceptions in the Old Testament period.

b) In the New Testament

This old approach underwent a change in the New Testament period. Since the world got its Saviour through a woman viz; Virgin Mary, woman was redeemed from the old curse and Womanhood was raised to a blessed position. Jesus made a beginning to raise the status of womanhood. Adultery was made the criterion for divorce and Jesus declared that this criterion was binding equally on man as well as woman. Among His disciples there were many women. We see in the New Testament numerous women, who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus, and got engaged in the gospel work (St. Matt. 27:55; St. Mark: 15:41; St. Luke 7:1; 10:38; 23:55; 24:10). Women were participants in the apostolic Church. Both Sexes participated in worship, preaching and teaching, (Acts 1:14) St. Paul taught that in Christ there is no distinction between man or woman (Gal 3:28).

In the Apostolic Churches women were not seen as working in

administrative jobs. But the Church assembled in homes in those days, and women, who headed families, were given special status and recognition. (Acts 12:12; 16:14; 1 Cor. 1:11. Husband and wife co-operated in Christian service (Acts 18:2; 18:26; Rom. 14:13; 1 Cori. 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19) St. Paul gives special mention to certain women. (Rom. 16:1-2; 2:12; Philip. 4:2-3) Some women are referred to as prophetess in the Bible (Luk 2:36-38; Acts 2:17-18; 21:9). We see Phoebe of Cenchreae Church, serving widows as a deaconess (Romans, 16:1-2). There are hints in the Bible to the effect that women must cover their heads with a veil (1 Cor. 11:16), they must be silent in Church (1 Cor. 14:34-36), they should not be official advisers, nor should they be appointed as administrators over men (1 Timothy. 2:12). The duty of adult women, to take care of widows and youngsters, is emphasised (1 Timothy 5:2; Titus 2:3).

2. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN — IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Not many special references are found about the participation of women before the synod of Nicea (A. D. 325). The position of the 'deaconess' is seen to be growing in the tradition of the Eastern Church after the 3rd century. They are also seen to be entrusted with special responsibilities'. The duties assigned to the 'deaconesses' by the early Church are recorded in a Syriac book entitled 'Djaskalia' (A. D. 300). They were told to visit the homes of the non-Christians and secretly teach faith to the women, to care for the sick, help the martyrs who were detained in prison, prepare grown-up women for baptism, and help by smearing oil and Holy Chrism (Mooron) on them after of persecution. Since many women had lost their husbands during the time of persecution, the Church had the responsibility of caring many widows. The deaconesses were directed to control these widows and to keep them and children under discipline during Church worship. Only those who were mature in age, behaviour and character were appointed to this job. Good widows with experience in child-rearing also were appointed. This matter is stressed in the books, viz. "Apostolic Constitution" (4th century) and "Testamentum Domini", a book written in the 5th century, which records that just as deacons, deaconesses were appointed to take Holy Qurbana to women

patients at home. It was decided in the Synod of Chalcedon that only those who reached the age of 40 should be appointed as deaconesses.

As the Church grew, the position of the deaconess became irrelevant. There were a few reasons for this; (a) Adult baptism decreased. (b) Secret teachings became unnecessary when women began to participate in Church life, publicly. (c) Women got neglected in the administrative set up of the Church. (d) "Widows" could function more fruitfully, when they became experts through training (e) as the monastic movement advanced; 'virgins' or 'nuns' came to be regarded as a special group. The nuns started serving the Church under the control of abbots. (f) Rules were made in the convents prohibiting nuns, interference in public activities; consequently the position of the 'deaconess', which owed much to the nuns, vanished. Since more importance was given to prayer and spiritual activities, women gradually withdrew from the public activities of the Church.

3. WOMANHOOD IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

We have seen from the history of the Church that only men worked as the "ministers" in the Church. Why were women neglected in this field? The Church has not seriously considered this matter theologically. It is no easy matter to begin a new tradition in the Orthodox Churches which is already firmly rooted in tradition. It is a fact that, not only the men of India, but women, also will not be willing to accept a Church "ruled" by women. However, we must realize the theological approach of the statement that "in Christ there is no distinction between man and woman" (Gala. 3:28).

There was not much thought about the lack of women's participation till the 17th century when the reformist movement started. Owing to their hatred towards monastic orders, and interest in family life, the Protestant Churches pioneered the ordination of women as Christian Ministers. Traditionally the Church did not approve the appointment of women as ministers in the Church by heretic groups (like 'Montanists of the early Church) and repudiated it as heresy. However, though the new developments that occur in the Church from

time to time, owing to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, may be taken as good symptom of the growth of the Church, it is not in the structure of the early Church, but in its functional activities, that growth should be viewed.

Jesus Christ in his service as the High Priest represents 'Womanhood and manhood' before God. Therefore, it stands to reason that like men, women also can attain the gift of priesthood. It is accepting this tenet that the Orthodox Churches teach that through baptism men and women equally attain to a common priesthood. Women also are given the full priestly rights of a believer in the Church to participate in Jesus Christ's Sacrifice, and to share in the Holy Communion just like men. Just as the ministers and the faithful get equal opportunity in the Church to share the spiritual experience, women and men are also considered equal in experiencing all the spiritual gifts. The Church does not find any distinction between a 'layman' and a 'lay woman'. A believer, whether man or woman can share in the full life of the Church without any distinction. The only prohibition of women is in the field of administration through an ordained ministry. This has also to be reconsidered as per the need of the times. In the theological viewpoint, there is no obstacle to allow women's participation in the Church councils and other committees. But in our rural society, especially where the family set up prevails, we see in the majority of women a co-operative mentality to accept the leadership of men. Most Indian women prefer to live with their husbands who are more able than them to give protection and leadership. As long as this mentality exists, a sudden change in the field of the Church administration might create problems. Nevertheless, all encouragement and participation must be given to those women, who come forward to work in the field of service in the Church. But care must be taken to keep up the real growth of the Church, through reform.

4. THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

The Orthodox Churches have to consider certain basic norms

QUESTIONS

1. Assess the position of women in the light of the Bible.
2. In what ways did the early Church benefit from the activities of women?
3. What is the theological outlook towards women's participation in the affairs of the Church?
4. Is the "ordination of women" necessary in the Christian Church? Give your views about it.

LESSON 5

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE MODERN CHURCH LIFE

*Women—the active participants in the Church
The tide of western culture
Natural peculiarities must be honoured
Pious and powerful women
Physical and mental factors
Practical considerations
Special fields of activity*

1. WOMEN—THE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE CHURCH

Though men and women are considered equal in all fields of the Church, it is the women who work more fruitfully. Women, who play a vital role in shaping the spiritual life of the family, also enrich

before ordaining women as 'ministers' in the Church .

1. Persons with special ministry are the successors of the 12 Apostles appointed by Christ. Since women were not included among them, a change from it will be a change in the structure of the Church which is not ideal.
2. The Orthodox Churches do not allow a new system to soon supplant the tradition started by Jesus (who did raise the status of women, but not to the level of 'ministers' in the Church.)
3. The Church, standing firmly on the Biblical principles and following the Church life in the apostolic tradition, cannot approve of the special ministry of women, through ordination; because such a practice is not seen in the Bible or in tradition.
4. The majority of Indian women may not like to accept women ministers as their leaders. Perhaps some women, influenced by the Women's Liberation movement from the West may try to win ministerial leadership, but they themselves may not yield to other 'women' ministers.
5. Men may not be ready to accept women ministers. Hence a split is possible on this issue which is unhealthy to the real growth of the Church.
6. When for some reason, men are not available as ministers, we can think about ordaining women.
7. It is not right to bring about a change in the general tradition by a section of the Church alone. We shall regard it as the realization of God's will only when the whole Church meets and takes a decision about it. If not, it need to be considered only as the protection of the interests of certain denominational groups which need not be accepted as the general character of the Universal Church.

the Church through spiritual movements and religious activities. But since women are not apparently allowed to participate in the administration of the Church, they may have a feeling that they are totally neglected. The verity of this must be examined.

2. THE TIDE OF WESTERN CULTURE

Women have not demanded any special participation in Church administration for the past 19 centuries. The demand for women's participation has perhaps come from the women's liberation movement inspired by the loose family life of the western world. This trend spread when the tide of modern western culture rubbed out the concept of family. It is therefore no wonder if modern women who regard monogamy as outdated, become the promoters of the women's liberation movement. But Indian women, who are desirous of keeping the security and prestige of family life, are not likely to wish for a freedom of this kind.

3. NATURAL PECULIARITIES MUST BE PROTECTED

Whatever may be said, it is necessary that man is to retain his 'manliness' and women, her 'womanliness.' Even though there are effeminate men and women with masculinity, they are not natural models, but exceptions or frailties. The community has the responsibility to protect this naturalness of men and women which God has fixed for achieving human perfection. 'Male and female, God created them (Gen. 1:27) with a definite purpose of attaining true humanity. We are to achieve this goal without denouncing one, but encouraging both. Equality does not mean to have uniformity; but free opportunity to develop the innate qualities of both without any bias.

4. PIOUS AND POWERFUL WOMAN

Women are very powerful in shaping society. The woman is the centre of power in society through her influence over children, protection given to sons and daughters, and the care for her husband.

Instances can be cited from history to show that women's influence have precipitated the rise and fall of nations. Even now in various walks of life women act as man's chief source of inspiration; Perhaps they work more fruitfully than men in society. They have made strong impressions in literature, art and science. The Church should leave no stone unturned to encourage the creative power of women and to use it more advantageously. It must also be noted that women can sometimes become powerful tools in destroying the society through undesirable and certain wicked activities. So, good and pious women are to be encouraged through their participation in Church activities; giving them maximum opportunities for effective leadership in all walks of life.

5. PHYSICAL AND MENTAL FACTORS

It is not true to say that women are feeble physically. Women can do more work continuously and more patiently than men, in many factories and offices. They have proved that they can work efficiently in many fields, if the opportunities are given. It may be admitted that a woman's body is not strong enough to do heavy work; but modern technology is sophisticated enough to give large opportunities to women workers.

The physical attributes of women are being exploited by the media and society, and women must organise themselves and come forward against all such exploitation. Unfortunately, certain women have encouraged such exploitation to make money. Some women sometimes fail to keep up their modesty in clothing, behaviour and conversation, and thus encourage such exploitation. Here, women's associations have a great role to play in rehabilitation and conscientisation programmes. Intellectually and mentally women are not behind men; often, women are securing higher positions in examinations. Women have proved their ability in Arts, science, sports, literature and even in politics. In the practical field also, women have the capacity to face problems with more patience, and they can even give timely advice to men during certain critical occasions. It may be said that women are generally timid, and tender in emotion, but

nobody can denounce them as the weaker sex on that ground; perhaps that too may be their strength, to work effectively in certain fields like Medicine, Education, Child-care and other philanthropic activities.

6. SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- a) Family is the basis of society. Woman must be able to play her role in the family. Man also must play his part. The parents must together bear the responsibility to their children. Women as well as men should enter into service only after they have properly performed their duties to the family. This factor is important even in the fields of the service of the Church.
- b) There are places where women cannot go alone and situations in which they alone cannot participate; such aspects are hindrances to their service.
- c) It is not proper to persuade women for Church service by imposing celibacy on them. Those who voluntarily accept monastic life usually prefer solitude.
- d) Generally women do not like to interfere in problems common to men, and suggest solutions to them. If they do so, others are likely to misunderstand.
- e) Those women who like to spend the whole of their time in Church-service can do so by becoming the wives of ministers. But sufficient training must be given to them for such services.

7. SPECIAL FIELDS OF WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES

Let us now examine a few more areas where women can do Church service in their daily life.

a) Family

Women have a significant role to play not only in practising the true faith, prayer and customs in their lives, but also in teaching them to their children. They can influence and lead men and children to shape their church-life, by keeping up a deep spiritual atmosphere in their families.

b) Parish

Individually and collectively women can work in various fields. They can involve themselves in the activities of women's league, and in charitable Societies. They can visit homes and comfort the sick, destitutes and those without shelter. In these fields women can do more work than men which in fact they do. They can also participate in Sunday school work, give lectures in the meetings of the women's league, and lead meditation. Women's leagues can act as pioneers in parishes to implement schemes like 'Divyabodhanam' to teach lay people about the faith of the Church. They must be able to help cultivate good reading habits by establishing good libraries at the parish level.

If good consultations and decisions can be had in the administrative bodies of the parish due to membership of women, then the Church must encourage their participation. If it is after the consultation with their wives that the husbands express their opinions in the Church assemblies, then one cannot say that the Church does not get women's consultation and opinion. On the other hand, if there is difference of opinion between the husband and the wife, or the father and the son, or the brother and the sister, in their families and if that is expressed publicly in the Church assemblies, that will adversely affect the family, the Church and even the society. Formerly, one member represented the whole family in the Church assembly and if that system is resumed, men and women of each family will get equal participation in Church - administration. If the participation of women as spectators and as an audience is helpful in conducting of public meetings, that may be encouraged. Statutes must be made to include women in the administrative bodies of the parish, if the 'family representation scheme' is not implemented.

c) Educational fields

Women as teachers in schools and colleges get opportunities to implement the religious-instruction - courses among students, and train them as ideal Church - members by setting good examples. The cooperation of the teachers is essential to organise religious - instruction courses in the schools and colleges of our Church.

d) Social activities

Women have a great deal of work to do in society. In fields like literacy, culture, cleanliness, and health much welfare - work is organized under the auspices of the government and the Church and Christian women have a great responsibility to co-operate with such work. Similarly, their co-operation is essential to eradicate the exploitation, negligence and violence against women in society.

QUESTIONS

1. "Women work more fruitfully than men in Church-life"

Evaluate this statement.

2. What are the practical difficulties faced by women in Church-life ?
3. What are the special fields of activities and possibilities open to women ?

LESSON 6

TRAINING FOR THE FAITHFUL

Objectives of training

Training : certain principles

Methods and media of training

Indian schemes for Training

A Theology of, by, and for the Faithful

Fields of training

The mission of the Church can be successfully carried out only if the believers get adequate training in Church-life, as in any other field. The ministers and the faithful have the responsibility of working together in the overall mission of the Church. Our knowledge and training must be directed towards that objective. The faithful get more opportunities than the ministers in carrying out the mission of the Church in the world, and therefore, it is one of the significant duties of the ministers to enrich the faithful by giving training to them. The ministers must first be trained for this through their seminary education.

The believers have the responsibility to put into practice the teachings of the Church. Each parish must be regarded as a "seminary of the Faithful" and the training for life in the world must be given in each parish, which is the "Church in miniature". The ministers have a great role in this matter.

1. OBJECTIVES OF TRAINING

Generally speaking, the training given to the believers must enable them to participate in the mission of the Church aimed at making the whole mankind God-like; it should help them secure divine gifts like love, mercy and patience ; it should also prepare those

who are working in the missionary field of the Church, and others who are in other walks of life. The following aims may be specially noted.

- a) to give the required knowledge about the faith of the Christian Church, its basic tenets and its history.
- b) to provide training and advice which is helpful to living a Christian life in the world.
- c) to help adults and parents to bring up children in the true Christian path.
- d) to find out those who can give responsible leadership in the spiritual movements of the Church and train them.
- e) to prepare the believers for Christian witness and to carry out their social responsibilities.
- f) to enable the members of the Church to face the challenge against true faith and to stand firmly and
- g) to prepare the members of the Church to behave with a Christian outlook in social, political, economic, cultural and other fields.

2. TRAINING—CERTAIN PRINCIPLES

a) A correct notion must be given about the significance of the holy baptism, the lofty position that a believer gets through it, and his responsibilities. Baptism should not be conducted in a careless manner; on the other hand this common service of the Church should be attended by all. (We should conduct the holy baptism on Sundays, before the Holy Qurbana begins publicly, when all can take part in it piously) The Holy Baptism is a sacrament which admits a person to the Church; to conduct it secretly by a couple of persons is actually a dishonour shown to it.

- b) Holy Communion should be presented in such a way that it involves the full participation of the believers with their 'priestly' nature to mediate between God and creation. The training given must be sufficient to ensure active participation in Holy Communion and to lead a good Christian life in society.
- c) The training must enable the believer to know about the relation between God, man and the world. He must be persuaded of the fact that God wishes to preserve and protect the world and the whole creation, and of his responsibility to co-operate with God in this task.
- d) People must be made conscious that they have been 'called' by God to work in their respective fields, and they should feel their responsibility in doing missionary work through their life and vocation.
- e) Only transformed people can transform the world. Hence the training programme must be sufficient to change individuals, and through them the society, to Christian transformation. The training courses should not comprise of mere traditional learnings, conferences, and conventions. They should aim at real Christian conversion, dedication and witness.
- f) Family must be regarded as the smallest unit of the Church and the society. The training should create a consciousness among believers that family is greater than "individual" and society is greater than family. Special importance must be attached to the set-up in which personal interests give way to family interests and family interests do not stand in the way of social interests.
- g) The training must help each person to exhibit Christ's presence in the field in which he works. The believer should not confine himself to Church-activities alone; his spiritual gifts must be employed in his daily life wherever he works.
- h) The believers must be made to react in a Christian way to the various ideologies prevalent in society and to fight against evils like poverty, corruption, and violence.

i) The Church must take the initiative to use media like cinema, T. V., radio, newspapers, books and other periodicals for their training programme. Similarly steps must be taken to give training in fields like cinema, music, art and literature. The co-operation of those talented in these fields must be sought. Private individuals who run 'business' in these fields should be influenced in a Christian way. Here the Churches must work together, even suffering loss, to teach the faithful to walk on the right path, upholding human values.

j) The faithful must be trained to face crises, miseries and helpless conditions boldly and go forward doughtlessly, evaluating life with a true sense of values.

k) They must be trained in groups, to work in different fields through "lay organizations". The work of each group can be activated taking into account the age, socio - economic - official status, and the professional fields of those who are involved.

l) The minister - believer relation must become stronger in the activities of the Church. The Minister or the believer alone should not be allowed to work individually. Both must work with mutual understanding of their positions and duties. The distance kept by the faithful in the past towards the foreign bishops must not be there towards the native bishops and other ministers. The Church must be viewed as one; individuals, families, parishes, and dioceses all must grow stronger accepting the leadership of the bishops of the Church, as in the early universal Church and in the Indian Church, when the believers completely co-operated with the leadership of the native ministers. The training given to the leaders should encourage this attitude and discourage the trend of neglecting the ministerial leadership.

3. METHODS AND MEDIA OF TRAINING

a) **Seek expert opinion:** When the methods of training are put into practice expert opinion about them must be sought. Educationalists, psychologists, and individuals who work in the field of religious training in other religions and communities must be consulted for this.

b) Consideration of the persons and their Circumstances:

Training suited for circumstances should be given. Mothers, professionals, social and political workers, artists and writers, workers engaged in trade and agriculture, office-bearers of spiritual organizations, evangelists, heads of administration, inmates of monasteries, all need to be given proper training, but in doing this, their circumstances and their opinions must be taken into account: If all are given the same training, that will not be of use.

4. INDIAN SCHEMES FOR TRAINING - INDEGENOUS PRIORITIES

We must have indogenous books dealing with Indian religious ways and Indian thought, to attract non-Christian Indians. We have a tendency to accept anything that is foreign. The influence of the religious books imported from foreign countries, has incapacitated us to think nationally. We have fallen into a state of intellectual slavery; to escape from it and not to fall into that trap again, we must have numerous books in the Indian languages dealing with Christian principles in the Indian style and written by Indian authors. Opportunities have to be created for imparting religious instruction, along with other branches of learning by establishing libraries in each parish. Courses like "Divyabodhanam" must be compulsorily conducted in all parishes. Classes for religious instruction must be conducted in schools and colleges, and books for that purpose must be made available. The Church must take the initiative to use audio-visual aids. Indian music and art must be introduced in a Christian way. Indianization has to be encouraged as much as possible.

5. A "THEOLOGY OF, BY AND FOR THE FAITHFUL"

There must grow a theological approach which upholds the relevance of the faithful. As in the other Orthodox Churches, our Church also must produce many theologians from among the believers. In the Roman Church and in other Reformatist Churches there are a great many of them. The Church must adopt a theological approach

and teaching, which help the minister and the believers learn that the latter are eligible to receive God's gifts, and to lead a life which would make them fit for this and even to attain sainthood; it must also help them learn that they are called to play their role in the realization of Christ's mission in the world, and to work enthusiastically in the Kingly prophetic and priestly status of Jesus Christ. The Church has occasionally accepted various kinds of approaches to implement her mission fruitfully.

The 'apostolic theology' found in the Bible, the 'Episcopal theology' of our fathers of the early Church, the 'Monastic theology' which developed in the eastern tradition, the 'Canonical theology' that flourished in the western traditions, and the 'Seminary theology' formed in the 19th century, all these represent the various approaches that the Church had to adopt in different times. All these are found to be giving way in all Churches to a "Theology of, by, and for the believers" of the 20th century. One of the most important needs of the day is to create a theological outlook which would make the believers who live and work in the world, fit for the realisation of Christ's mission.

But God's people must take great care to see that "theology" does not become a mere thing to be learned, but it gets transformed into the training of the true Christian faith and the style of daily life.

6. FIELDS OF TRAINING

Suitable training can be organised in places like family, parish, society, offices and factories. If anybody offers leadership without first being properly trained, that will do a lot of harm, instead of good. The Sunday School teachers, gospel workers, convention speakers, preachers, nuns, members of monasteries all must be made first to undergo the training courses of the Church, and then, with the special sanction of the Church, teach and train God's people. The present system enables any Tom, Dick or Harry to interfere officiously and make speeches for money; this is harmful, and deserves to be condemned. There ought to be a line of leaders from the faithful in the Church who are as well trained as the minister. If they work with the ministers in the parishes to give leadership in spiritual matters, the

parishes will progress very quickly. May the Holy Spirit lead the Church, so that the mission of the Church can be carried out with the full participation of the people of God.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the importance and objectives of giving special training to the believers.
2. What are the principles to be specially considered in the training of the Faithful?
3. What are the factors to be considered when the training schemes for the believers are planned and implemented in the Indian Church?