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# **Cloud Of Witnesses**

**( A short study of the builders of Christian Tradition)**

**FR. DR. JACOB KURIAN**

Translator

**PROF. P. K. MATHAI**

**Divyabodhanam Publications**

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# Introduction

This is a short study of the life and contribution of the builders of the Christian Tradition during the first four centuries. In a sense, all those who shared in the life and witness of the Church can generally be called “the builders of the Christian Tradition.” But among them, some are particularly significant and for obvious reasons our study is limited to a selected group among these “particularly significant” ones. We call them “Cloud of Witness” following the assurance in Hebrews 12:1 “As for us, we have this large cloud of witnesses round us...” The objective of such a study is to enable us shape our present and future basing on the strong foundation of the past.

As far as the members of the Malankara Orthodox Church are concerned, ‘the cloud of witnesses would appear to them from three backgrounds: 1. the universal Christian tradition upto the Council of Chalcedon 2. the Indian Church’s tradition from the first century and 3. the Syrian Church tradition with which the Indian Church has a long history of association. In the present volume, we are concentrating on the first background alone.

The original Malayalam material of this volume was first published in 1985. I am happy that its English translation is made available in 2004. My personal thanks to Prof. P. K. Mathai for his kindness to undertake the translation. I hope it would be useful for all who want some introductory information in English on 'Church Fathers'. My thanks to 'Divyabodhanam' office bearers and students without whose co-operation and encouragement this would not have been possible. I give thanks to the Lord because He is good and his love is eternal. I thankfully remember H. G. Paulos Mar Gregorios Metropolitan who gave me the initial inspiration to study the fathers. I sincerely thank all the members of the Divyabodhanam Committee especially Rev. Fr. T. J. Joshua, Rev. Fr. Dr. K. M. George, Rev. Fr. Jacob Mathew and Rev. Fr. C. C. Cherian the former co-ordinator.

**Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian**

Orthodox Seminary  
All Souls Day, February 15, 2004

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We bow down to the Almighty God who enabled us to bring out this English version of “Divyabodhanam - growing in the wisdom of God” series. We place trust in Him alone who provides His matchless care to this lay training programme.

Divyabodhanam is the brain child of our former president H. G. Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios Metropolitan, whom we pay homage gratefully. Thirumeni was the real inspiration behind the Divyabodhanam programme including the initial financial support.

Our heartfelt thanks to Revd. C. C. Cherian Achen who had been working as Central Co-Ordinator and Registrar of this programme.

Our sincere thanks to Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian, the author of this book, who needs no introduction in the Kerala Christians and in the theological scholarly world. Eventhough this book was published originally in Malayalam in 1985 and its translation entitled 'Cloud of Witness' was ready by 2002, printing was delayed because of financial and other constrains. We are extremely grateful to Prof. P. K. Mathai for his scholarly and prompt service in the English translation of the book Sakshyapathayil.

Our sincere thanks to Sophia Print House and to the National Press Thiruvalla for their prompt service in DTP and Printing works respectively.

Thanks to everybody and invitation to all the budding scholars in Patristics.

For Divyabodhanam Committee

**Fr. Jacob Mathew**  
(Co-ordinator)

Eldho Nomp  
Dec. 2003

# PREFACE

Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian's well received Malayalam work on the *Builders of Christian Tradition*, primarily meant for the Divyabodhanam students is now being offered in an English version. This will certainly benefit the younger generation of our Diaspora and all those who avidly use the Divyabodhanam textbooks without being registered students of the course.

Study of the Fathers of the Church (known as Patristics or Patrology in academic circles) is a major part of any Orthodox theological curriculum. This is not because of an unhealthy interest, as some people might think, in the distant past at the expense of the present day life and witness of the Church. It is because of a wholesome understanding of the Christian Tradition as an unbroken stream of Spirit inspired life flowing from the Triune mystery of God through the incarnate Christ to our contemporary world. Tradition is always refreshing and motivating for those who delve deep into it. It is the living and continuing work of the Holy Spirit in and through men and women who love Christ and dedicate their lives to the building of the Church, the body of Christ.

Obviously, a book like this has to be selective. Only a few of the Fathers and Mothers whose work has come down to us or who are copiously referred to in other people's works appear in these pages. But we should not lose sight of the fact that there are thousands of anonymous men and women, who through their deep love of Christ, their tears of compassion and prayer, their faith and good works contributed to the building of the Christian Tradition. Though academic Patrology cannot cope with this immense cloud of witnesses, the Church cherishes them in her heart as sources and models for Spirit inspired life in our own world.

We sincerely thank the author Fr. Jacob Kurian for his dedicated work, the translator Prof. P. K. Mathai and all those who helped in making this publication possible.

**Fr. Dr. K. M. George**

President  
Divyabodhanam

Orthodox Theological Seminary  
All Souls Day, February 15, 2004

# CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Acknowledgment	4
Preface	5

## UNIT I

### THOSE WHO SOWED AND THOSE WHO WATERED

1. Tradition of the Church and builders of the Tradition	7
2. St. Mary Mother of God	12
3. The Apostles - 1	18
4. The Apostles - 2	22
5. The Apostles - 3	27
6. St. Paul	30

## UNIT 2

### IN THE DAYS OF GROWTH

1. Apostolic Fathers - 1	35
2. Apostolic Fathers - 2	40
3. Apocryphal Literature	44
4. Early Martyrs	49
5. Early Apologists	53
6. Against the Early Heresies	57

## UNIT 3

### INTERPRETERS IN EASTERN AND WESTERN TRADITIONS

1. Hypolitus, Tertullian, Cyprian	61
2. Clement and Origen of Alexandria	65
3. Dionysius of Alexandria, Gregory Thaumaturgus	69
4. Palestinian Heritage: Pamphilus, Eusebius	71
5. Athanasius	74
6. The West Against Arius : Hilary and Ambrose	78

## UNIT 4

### ASCETICS AND HEROES OF FAITH IN THE WESTERN AND THE EASTERN TRADITIONS

1. Some Ascetic Leaders - 1 (Paul, Antony, Pachomios, Makarios, Ephrem, Epiphanius)	82
2. Some Ascetic Leaders - 2 (Baselius, Makreena)	88
3. Gregorios Nazianzus	93
4. Gregorios Nyssa, John Chrysostom	96
5. Cyril of Jerusalem, Cyril of Alexandria	100
6. Jerome, Augustine	103

# **Unit 1**

## **Those Who Sowed and Those Who Watered**

### **Lesson 1**

#### **Tradition of the Church and Builders of the Tradition**

‘Tradition’ - some wrong notions - Content of the Church tradition  
- Church tradition: two important aspects - The Bible and the tradition  
- Jesus Christ: the central point of the Church tradition - Church  
tradition: three significant backgrounds - Builders of the Church  
tradition - Builders of the Church tradition and the Fathers of the  
Church - Fathers of the Church: definite hint - Builders of the Church  
tradition : ancient studies - The works of the builders of tradition  
which are not included in the New Testament.

#### **1. ‘Tradition’: Some Wrong notions**

The word ‘tradition’ gives rise to some wrong notions. Some people think that it contains certain rites which are baseless, irrational and full of errors. But by ‘church tradition’ or ‘Christian tradition’ we mean the existence and witnessing of the church by the grace of the Holy Trinity. To put it more simply, ‘church tradition’ is the life of the church with divine vigour. The Greek word ‘Paradosis’ used in the Bible for ‘tradition’ means ‘that which is entrusted’ or ‘handed over.’ What is entrusted in the church is the whole liveliness or vigour of the church. To sum up, church tradition has a wider meaning and, in this sense, the study of church tradition is really the study of the life of the church.

#### **2. The Content of Church Tradition**

All things that helped the existence of the church hitherto and its witness are contained in the church tradition. Everything that the early church received from the words and actions of Jesus Christ and the heritage that it received from the apostles and their disciples through

the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, all constitute the Church tradition. One of the most significant of such received traditions is the Bible. In other words, the Bible is a part of the Church tradition. Another part is the holy sacraments or the holy mysteries. A third part is church's creeds and other documents. A similar part constitutes the customary rites. (Examples lent, worship etc). Like-wise, all other things that have contributed to the growth and life the church are a part of the church tradition.

### **3. Church Tradition: two important aspects**

Church tradition has two important aspects - written and unwritten. The written tradition includes the Bible and other authoritative documents of the Church. Matters connected with sacraments and other customary rites are included in the unwritten tradition. The written tradition might remain for long as unwritten oral tradition (For instance Jesus' words were written after they remained as oral tradition for so long).

### **4. The Bible and the Tradition**

Is there any biblical basis to regard the Bible as a part of the Church tradition? Let it be made clear at the outset that the significance of the Bible is not at all reduced when it is said to be a part of the church tradition. Unlike other written traditions, the Bible is the word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. But the Bible itself says that it contains only a part of the divine revelation which the children of God saw, heard and touched. Note the following two verses for instance: "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence his disciples, which are not recorded in this book" (John 20:30). "Jesus did many other things as well. If everyone of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (John 21:25).

These verses show that there are so many things that Jesus Christ did and only a part of them has been recorded in the Bible. In other words the written tradition about Jesus contains only a part of the tradition about him. We see in the Bible references to many things that the apostles entrusted to the believers or said to them. But what



they were is not made clear (for example 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6). Thus it is obvious that there were many things which were not made clear in the Bible and they existed as a part of the church tradition.

## **5. Jesus Christ: the Centre of Church Tradition**

Jesus Christ is the central point and the foundation of the Church tradition. Any trend that neglects the centrality of Jesus Christ deforms the Church tradition. The vitality of one's relation with Christ is the dynamism of the church tradition.

## **6. Church Tradition: Three significant backgrounds**

To a member of the Malankara Orthodox Church, Church tradition has three significant backgrounds.

i) the universal Christian tradition that existed till the Synod of Chalcedon, 2) the Syrian church tradition and 3) the Malankara Church tradition that exists from the first century.

## **7. Builders of Church Tradition**

All those who have contributed to the growth of the Church and its witness through their relationship with Christ who is the central point of the church tradition, are builders of the church tradition. From that viewpoint all members of the church who are associated with its mainstream are builders of the church tradition. But some of them stand out among others because of their saintly life and selfless service. They are regarded as the chief architects of the church tradition. The objective of the study of the builders of church tradition is to become acquainted with some such outstanding leaders and their contributions.

## **8. Builders of Church tradition and Fathers of Church**

Since the 'Fathers of Church' has a definite meaning all those who come under the category of builders of church tradition are not fathers of the church. Builders of church tradition includes fathers of the church, malpans (teachers), some church leaders and writers and their works. Needless to say that there are women too among them.

## 9. Fathers of Church: Definitive notion

Some reformists hold that the appellation ‘fathers of church’ is a heresy. They base their opinion on St. Matthew 23:9 where it is said, “Do not call anyone on earth ‘father’, for you have one father and he is in heaven” (But they themselves call their begetter ‘father’ and some predecessors in their tradition ‘pilgrim fathers’). If the words of Jesus Christ are taken literally, a man cannot call even his own begetter father because it is written, “do not call anyone on earth father.” If Jesus had in mind the literal meaning, then in his own words and in the words of the evangelists and apostles there would not have been a single instance in which the word ‘father’ was used for man. But note that in the following verses the word ‘father’ is used for man. Matthew 4:21, 22; 10:21, 35, 37; 15:4; Luke 11:11, 15:18; Acts 7:2; Romans 4:12; James 2:21. Moreover, St. Matthew’s gospel chapter 23 not only the word ‘father’, but ‘teacher’ (adviser) and ‘master’ also are forbidden. But these terms are used in the New Testament for men, especially for the apostles: Matthew 6:24; Mark 13:35; Luke 14:21; Acts 13:1; Romans 2:20; Colossians 4:1 1 Corinthians 12:28; 2 Timothy 1:11; Ephesians 6:9. It is clear from this that when Jesus Christ said the above verse (St. Matthew 23:9) he had in mind a particular situation and not the literal meaning. The whole of St. Matthew Chapter 23 is a tirade by Jesus Christ against the hypocrisy of the pharisees and the saducees. They liked to be called ‘father’ ‘teacher’ and ‘master’, and it was to discourage this trend that Jesus said the above verse.

It is the fundamental position of the church that there should not be an earthly father who claims the position of the heavenly father, and a master or teacher or shepherd (pastor) who claims the position of Christ and the New Testament writers used in a limited sense these terms for men. In like manner, terms like ‘father’ and ‘malpan’ (teacher, advises) are used in the church tradition. It is a very ancient practice to call bishops and heads of monasteries ‘father.’ In course of time the term ‘father’ to mean spiritual father or confessor father became common. Simultaneously in the church tradition, “the church fathers” was given a definite meaning.

All the church leaders, malpans and writers who lived hitherto do not come under the category of ‘church fathers’. The church fathers must first accept the divine revelation through Jesus Christ and witness that truth. Secondly, they must possess integrity and saintliness of life of the highest order. Thirdly, they must have made distinct contributions to the growth of the church, and fourthly, they must be recognised by the church as possessing the above three facts. Hence, those who are not ‘fathers of church’ may be builders of church tradition.

### **10. Builders of church tradition: ancient studies**

The church history by Eusebius who lived in the fourth century is the most important work among the ancient records about the chief builders of the universal church tradition. Another important work in this line is *De Viris Illustribus*, a book about the great leaders of the church, written in the fifth century by Jerome (Hieronymus), which is based on Eusebius’s church history. There are others also who tried, after these two, to write books of similar nature.

### **11. Works of Builders of Tradition, not included in the New Testament**

Works available in Greek, Latin and Syriac are being published now in their original version and in translations. Most of the works in Greek and Latin have been published under the guidance J. P. Migne, and many works in Syriac, under the guidance of F. Griffin. Among the English translations the following deserve special mention:

1. The Ante - Nicene Christian Library (Roberts-Donaldson-Menzies) Edinburg-1866 - 1897, 25 vols.
2. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Schaf-Wace), New York 1806-1900, 28 vols
3. Library of the Fathers (Pusey-Keble-Newman), Oxford, 1838-1868, 45 vols.
4. Translations of Christian Literature (Sparrow- Simpson and L. Clerke), SPCK, 1917 ff, London.
5. Ancient Christian Writers (Quarten-Plumpe), Westminster, 1946 off.
6. The Fathers of the Church, Schopp, New York, 1947 ff.
7. The Early Fathers (H. Bettenson), London, 1956.

**Exercises:**

1. What is meant by 'Church tradition'?
2. Briefly state the hints given by the following verses about the relationship between the Bible and the tradition: 2 John 12; 3 John 13, 14 Philippians 4:9; Colosians 4:16, 1:2.
3. Who all can be builders of church tradition ?

**Lesson 2****St. Mary Mother of God**

St. Mary in history  St. Mary in theology  St. Mary in spirituality  Hints in the Old Testament about St. Mary.

**1. St. Mary in History**

It is from the gospels that we get trustworthy and authoritative information, though limited, about St. Mary's life. Some ancient works also contain facts about St. Mary's life. (Examples: The Gospel about St. Mary's birth, the Apocryphal Gospel in the name of St. Mathew, the first Gospel of St. James, Joseph the Carpenter's History, St. John's Book about the assumption of St. Mary). But certain exaggerated details and contradictions in them dim their credibility. However, the facts in these books which do justice to the information available in the gospels are useful.

**2. Birth, Childhood, Betrothal**

Yoyakim and Hanna were Mary's parents. She was born to these as the reward of their prayers and offerings. As she was offered, she joined the girls brought up in the Jerusalem Church. When she was twelve years old her marriage was settled in the presence of the priests. Some records say that during the betrothal ceremony, signs occurred to show that God had chosen Joseph to wed Mary.

**Aununciation**

It was when she was living in the home at Nazareth after her Betrothal that she got the intimation from the angel that she was to give birth to the Saviour of the world (Luke 1:26). (It is not clear whether the home is her father's or Joseph's). She welcomed the

annunciation which affected her whole future, with the words : “I am the Lord’s Servant. May it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38). It was perhaps, in its excitement and anxiety that before long she went from Galilee to see her relative, Elizabeth, at Judea and stayed with her for three months. Elizabeth was then bearing John the Baptist in her womb. The words that Mary spoke on her greeting by Elizabeth (Luke 1:46-55) highlights profounded spiritual experience and thoughts of revolutionary social change. What were the thoughts in her mind about the child growing in her womb, not through an ordinary marriage, but because of the Holy Sprit? - a topic for poetic imagination.

### **Birth of Jesus**

Joseph was perplexed when he knew that Mary was pregnant. Since he loved Mary very much and since he was noble he decided to give her up secretly. However, before doing so Joseph got divine revelation on the basis of which he decided not to give her up. As per the orders of Augustus Caesar, Joseph and Mary went to the former's native place Bethlehem for census formalities. When they reached there Mary started having labour pain. Since all the inns were full, they could not get a room anywhere. At last they took refuge in a cattleshed. There Mary gave brith to Jesus. Soon they must have shifted to a home related to Joseph (Matthew 2:11) or which took pity of them.

### **The Unforgettable Experience**

At least two events that took place in Jesus' boyhood must have left indelible impressions on Mary. After the period of purification, when Jesus was taken to the temple Simon, the old man, took Jesus in his hands. He praised God and hinted at the sword that was going to pierce her heart (Luke 2:34, 35). She realised later that that was a hint at the heart - rending experiences she underwent at the time of her son’s crucifixion. Moreover, she might have remembered the things that occured when Jesus was taken to the Jerusalem Church when he was twelve years old (Luke 2:41-52).

## **St. Mary in Jesus' Public Ministry**

St. Mary was one of the cardinal inspirations behind Jesus' public ministry. The very person who gave birth to him prompted him into his field of action. She inspired him to turn water in to wine which was his first public miracle. Ancient records say that Joseph had passed away by that time. Hence we can reasonably guess that St. Mary accompanied Jesus to his public ministry. The meeting of St. Mary and of his relatives with Jesus may be the first instance of their following him (Matthew 12: 46-50, Mark 3: 31-35, Luke 8: 19-21). The gospel writer refers to St. Mary even at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. We see her weeping at the foot of the cross on which her son is crucified. The scene in which Jesus who is suffering intense agony entrusts his mother to his dear disciple, John, is really touching (John 19: 25-27).

## **St. Mary's life after the Crucifixion of Jesus**

St. John gladly accepted his master's mother into his house which was the first centre of the early church. When the early church assembled to elect Matthais to replace Judas St. Mary was there. In a way, after Jesus' resurrection, St. Mary became one of the sources of inspiration for the early disciples. It must be through St. Mary that the early church got details about Jesus' birth, boyhood etc. As the mother of all, she tried to be immersed always in prayers and exhortation and a person radiating spiritual vigour. She remained the source of inspiration of the early church till her assumption.

## **Assumption**

There is an ancient book which deals with the assumption of St. Mary. It says that at the time of her death apostles from different countries came to her, that Jesus Christ took her soul and that the disciples buried her body in a grave in Gathsamene. The book concludes that her body was taken from the grave to paradise. However, we can undoubtedly say that St. Mary had a blessed end. The church celebrates her assumption on August 15.

## **2. St. Mary in Theology**

### **‘Mother of God’**

St. Mary is called the ‘mother of God’, particularly in the Catholic and the Orthodox traditions. The appellation does not mean an eternal mother of the eternal God. It only means that she was the mother of the incarnate God Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was perfect God and perfect Man. On the basis of his divinity she is called the ‘mother of God’ ‘the woman who gave birth to God’. When heresies cropped up that denied or limited the divinity of Jesus, the term ‘mother of God’ became famous as the symbol of true faith. Nestorius argued that St. Mary must be called ‘Christ’s mother’ not ‘God’s mother’, which showed the main weakness of Nestorius’s view point, viz, the lack of insight into the divinity of Christ.

### **Virgin birth from the view point of Rationality**

Some modern theologians argue that virgin birth need not be taken seriously because it is irrational. But that argument may make us deny even the incarnation of Christ which is the basis of Christian faith. That God became man is beyond reason. Similarly that Jesus incarnated through the virgin is also beyond human understanding. The birth that human reason can digest is for the existence and increase of a tribe which is subject to death. But that is not the purpose of the birth of God. It was to create a new a tribe which is not subject to death. For that God chose a means which was special in its own way. There is nothing impossible for God.

### **Is ‘Immaculate conception’ Acceptable?**

The ‘Immaculate conception’ of Virgin Mary declared by Pope Pius IX in 1854, is accepted by the Chatholic Church as a dogma. The phrase ‘immaculate conception’ means that Virigin Mary is not only without ‘sin of commission’ but also without ‘the Adamic sin’. What the Adamic sin implies here is the participation by all mankind in the condition of sin and death caused by the fall of Adam. If we say that Virgin Mary was free from the Adamic sin, that would mean that she was not a human being. We would be compelled to say that she was not included in the state in which, as Romans 5: 12 says, ‘all

sinned' and hence she did not need to be saved. Therefore, the doctrine of 'immaculate conception' is not acceptable. St. Mary is certainly a part of the creation that needs redemption. Fathers of the Church give her the epithet 'sinless' which does not mean 'immaculate conception', it means that she had a perfectly saintly life.

### **Is Virgin Mary a Co-worker in the Redemptive Work?**

Virgin Mary cannot be said to be a co-worker in the redemptive work of the Saviour because she is the mother of the Saviour. Jesus Christ is the only Saviour and intercessor. But the Church gives her a singularly significant position because of her relationship with the intercessor.

### **3. St. Mary in Spirituality**

St. Mary is regarded as the paragon of saintly life. Her position is pre - eminent among saints. How radiantly she shines in the realms of modesty, sacrifice, silent service, selfless love and so on!

Special significance is given to St. Mary's intercession in church service. In the western and in the eastern traditions five festivals are celebrated in the name of St. Mary. 1. August 15, St. Mary's Assumption; 2. March 25, Annunciation to Virgin Mary; 3. January 15, The festival of St. Mary's Intercession for seeds; 4. May 15, the festival of the Mother's Intercession for Harvest; 5. December 26, the festival of the mother's day of veneration. As a mark of special respect to Virgin Mary the church observes Sunoyo Lent (fifteen day's Lent) or the Lent of Mother's Assumption) from August 1 to 15.

Here a note should be added on the festival of September 8. Virgin Mary's birthday is celebrated as a festival by the Catholic Church on September 8. As a local tradition certain Orthodox churches have started September 8 as a festival of Mary. In the history of church saints have glorified Christ through their witnessing life and hopeful death. Hence the Orthodox Churches do not have the tradition of celebrating the birthdays of persons other than Jesus Christ. It is true that John the Baptist's birthday is remembered on a Sunday, but that is only as an event that occurred before the birth of Jesus Christ or as a remembrance in the history of salvation. John the Baptist's festival



is really that of his beheading. That is why September 8 is not included in the official festivals of the church, and the eight day lent is not declared as a lent according to the canon of the church. However, it is spiritually edifying if we observe the eight - day lent or any other lent provided that would bring us nearer to Christ and to church life.

#### **4. Old Testament Hints about Virgin Mary**

The Old Testament hints about St. Mary are highlighted many times in the worship of the Orthodox Church. Some of the significant ones among them are listed below:

1. Eve: The old creation entered through Eve. The first born of the new creation entered through Mary, the Second Eve. If the fall started in the first Eve, salvation started in the second Eve. 2. The bush that caught the ram by its horns (Genesis 22: 13), 3. Stairway to heaven (Genesis 28: 12), 4. Bush in the flames of fire (Exodes :2), 5. golden jar of manna (Exodus 16:33), 6. Arc of testimony (Exodus 26:33), 7. Aaron's sprouted staff (Numbers 17:8), 8. Gideon's wool fleece (Judges 6: 36-40), 9. Elisha's new bowl (2 kings 2: 19-25), 10. The shut gate which must not be opened (Ezekiel 44:2).

#### **Exercises:**

1. Write about the message of the life of St. Mary, basing your answer on any of the following passages: Luke 1:26-38, 1: 46-55, John 2: 1-12.
2. The correct translation of St. John 2:4 is "woman what have you and I got to do?" What difference in meaning is there if it is put as "Woman what have you to do with me?"
3. Write briefly your views about the criticism that the eight-day-lent inspires us to worship St. Mary rather than God.

## Lesson 3

### The Apostles - Part I

☐ St. Peter life and works ☐ Position in the Church ☐ St. James and St. John: their lives ☐ St. John's works.

#### 1. St. Peter: life

##### Names:

There are three more names by which Peter is known in the New Testament. He was usually called Simon, rarely Simeon and at times Kepha. His first name was Simon (which is the abbreviation of Simeon). Kepha in Aramaic and Peter in Greek mean the same, viz, rock. In those days many Jews used the Greek form of their Hebrew names too. (For instance, Thomas - Didimos, Thabitha - Dorcas). Jesus Christ liked to call Peter by the Aramaic form of the Greek name Peter. 'Simon Peter' which is a combination of the old and the new names, is often seen in the gospels.

##### A brief biographical sketch:

St. Peter hailed from Bethsaida, a village in Galilee. His father was called John. A married person, Peter supported his family by fishing. In his professional life Jesus performed a miracle and then invited him to be a 'catcher of men' (Luke 5: 1-11). Peter must have got acquainted with Jesus through his brother, Andrew, before Jesus called him (John 1:40-42). Jesus conquered Peter's mind completely when he went to the latter's house and healed his mother - in - law. In Peter we see later a person with absolute sincerity, leadership and pure love. Hence he became the first among the disciples with whom Jesus had closer contact.

St. Peter was one among the few persons who witnessed a few very invaluable moments in the public ministry of Jesus. He was on the transfiguration mount, he was near his master in Gethsemane and he was one of the first who was convinced of the truth of resurrection. He was often the spokesman of the disciples (Examples, Matthew 15: 15, 16:15, 18:21, Luke 9:31).

St. Peter is the disciple who got most scolding from Jesus

(Examples: Matthew 16:22, 23, Mark 8:32, 33). Peter who declared that even if others stumble he would not do so, happened to disown Jesus three times. But he repented thoroughly when he realised his mistake. It was because of his repentance that Jesus called him the representative of the disciples and entrusted with the responsibility of leading his sheep.

After Jesus' ascension, Peter organized matters well. He proved his ability at the election of Matthias and at Pentecost. He was not only the first speaker of the church but also the first performer of miracles and the first prisoner for Christ. It was St. Peter who first received the insight that the gentiles need not pass through Jewish customs in order to accept Jesus.

There must have been four regions in the gospel work of St. Peter - 1. Judea and its neighbourhood, 2. Antioch and its suburbs, 3. some parts of Asia and 4. Rome. St. Mark was his constant companion in his missionary journey. St. Peter's reminiscences of Jesus are regarded as the basis of St. Mark's gospel.

It is about the activities of St. Peter that we read till the 12th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Many of the events described there show his firm faith and unflinching courage.

There is an anecdote about the martyrdom of St. Peter in the ancient work 'Acts of Peter and Paul.' The opposition of the non-Christians in Rome against St. Peter was increasing. When he came to know that he would be killed, he ran away secretly from Rome in accordance with the advice of his Christian friends. On the way he saw Jesus walking towards Rome. "Lord where are you going?" Peter asked. "I am going to Rome to be crucified once again instead of you, Peter!" replied Jesus. Peter got the message of what Jesus said and he returned to Rome where he was imprisoned. He was sentenced to be crucified as per the decision of Emperor Nero. Peter's wish was to be crucified head downwards so that he might kiss the feet of his master, and the wish was allowed. It is believed that St. Peter and St. Paul were killed together the same day. The tradition is that they suffered martyrdom on 29 June 67 A.D. Hence June 29 is celebrated as a festival by the church to honour them.

It is at the place where St. Peter's earthly remains are buried that St. Peter's Basilica in Rome is situated.

### **Works**

There are two letters by St. Peter in the New Testament. The first letter must have been written in Jerusalem and the second, in Rome. The thrust of the first letter is to encourage those who are persecuted. There are a great many messages which instil relief and hope into the suffering (examples 1 Peter 1: 6-7, 3:13, 17, 4: 13, 16). The second letter reminds us of God's call and choice. It also exhorts us to avoid heresies and immoral life and to eagerly wait for Jesus' coming.

### **St. Peter's Position in the Church**

St. Peter has undoubtedly a singularly significant position among the apostles. But this position must not be interpreted as authority over other apostles. Authority and position are two different things. Jesus gave authority to his disciples in general (Matthew 10:1, 19:28, 28:18-20, John 20:23, Mark 16: 14-18). St. Peter's position was due to his greatness. None else could claim that. There is hardly any proof to show that he had any authority associated with his position or that he exercised any such authority over others. It was St. James and not St. Peter who presided over the Synod at Jerusalem (Acts 15). It was only as the representative of the disciples that Jesus saw Peter in Matthew 6: 18-19 and John 21: 18-19.

### **2. St. James and St. John - brief life sketch**

Like St. Peter, St. James and St. John were of the inner circle of Jesus Christ. They were the sons of Zebedee and Solum and the epithet thunder sons (Bovanarges) was suited to them very much. They came into the community of disciples from Bethsaida. They had a touch of adventure which was characteristic of fishermen. Their true minds inspired them to fight against all sorts of injustice (Luke 9:54).

Jesus called them while they were mending net with their father Zebedee. The younger one - John - was a disciple of John the Baptist. In John 1: 25-40 we, presumably, have a reference to how John first came into contact with Jesus. John must have told James about that.

As soon as Jesus called them they left their father and their job and went after him.

It was only natural that they associated the thoughts of their own future with those of the kingdom of God. It was evidenced by a special petition to Jesus for allowing them to sit on his right and left in his glory (Mark 10:35-40). Jesus exhorted them to get ready to drink the cup of suffering. Subsequent history proved that they whole - heartedly accepted Jesus' exhortation.

St. James and St. John started preaching after they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. St. James is believed to have preached in Judea, Samaria and in Spain ignoring all oppositions. He became the first martyr among the apostles. Herod had him killed with the sword (Acts 12). The officer appointed to kill James became Christian seeing his unusual courage and the true Christian tolerance. St. James' mortal remains were taken to Spain and buried there. Spaniards still consider St. James their special saint.

John was the youngest of the disciples and the most beloved of Jesus. John himself described him as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:21-25; 19:26, 27; 20:1-10;21:24).

At the time of his crucifixion it was to John that Jesus entrusted the protection of St. Mary. Since he had to fulfil his duty as the most liked 'son' of the 'mother', Jerusalem and Judea were the fields of his first missionary work. After the departure of St. Mary, he went to Asia and established seven churches there. Residing at Ephesus, he supervised them. In the mean time he happened to go to Rome and suffer a great deal of persecution there. It is said in the "Acts of John" that as per the command of Emperor Domitian he was thrown into boiling oil, and was made to drink poison; but he escaped from them unhurt. He was banished to the island of Patmos, where he was led by the Holy Spirit. Again he returned to Ephesus and led the church. He is believed to have died in old age. He is known as the apostle of love.

### **The Works of St. John**

The New Testament books Gospel of St. John, three letters and the

Book of Revelation are ascribed to St. John. They contain profound spiritual experience and theology. More than giving historical details about Jesus Christ, they depict Jesus as the word of God (logos) and as the real source of truth, light and life. Their special feature consists in their attempt to discover a universal relevance for Christ. Each miracle is treated as the 'sign' of a new insight. His letters also reveal the warmth of his close relationship with Jesus. The main content of his letters is the loving advice of a spiritual father and the statements about Christ as a historical reality. There is difference between darkness and light, between truth and falsehood, and love and hatred. John's message exhorts us to understand this difference and to become through Christ one and the same with God who is the real light, love and truth.

### **Exercises:**

1. What are the lessons, fit to be emulated, in the lives of St. Peter and St. James?
2. "If the question was to all, the answer was for all. If the answer was for all, the promise also was for all" These words refer to an event in the gospel of St. Matthew. Elucidate the event and its meaning.
3. Write an introductory paragraph about the works of St. John.
4. What are the public events, referred to in the 1st and the 15th chapter of the Acts? Write an essay, based on the manner of those decisions, about the "elections and decisions in the church."

## **Lesson 4**

### **Apostles - Part 2**

St. Andrew  St. Philip  St. Bartholomew  St. Thomas

#### **1. St. Andrew**

Andrew came from Bethsaida. He was the brother of St. Peter and was a fisherman like him. First, he was a disciple of John the Baptist.

According to St. John's gospel, Andrew was the first to go in search of Jesus and join him. Hence he is called 'Protoclatos' (the first-called). John depicts him as the person who brought Peter and some others to Jesus. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus saying that he had seen the Messiah (John 1:40-42). It was Andrew who led the boy with five loaves to Jesus with which the hunger of the five thousand people was satisfied (John 6:8-9). Again it was Andrew who arranged the meeting between Jesus and the Greeks when they wanted to talk to him (John 12:20-22).

Andrew's mission field was very extensive. He spread the gospel in Capadocia, Bithunya, Galatia and Akhia. It is believed that he worked in certain areas of Russia too. Hence Andrew is regarded as the patron saint of Greek and Russian traditions. When he tried to dissuade the Greeks from idolworship they threatened to kill him.

An ancient record about Andrew's martyrdom says that he was crucified on an 'X' shaped cross at Pathras (Hence the 'X' shaped cross is called Andrew's cross). A crowd of around twenty thousand Christians assembled before the judge and wanted his release. The judge ordered to release him. But the above said record says that Andrew was crucified at his own request and that he faced martyrdom, calmly, courageously and with pleasure. His heroic martyrdom led to the conversion of the ruler's wife, Maximilia and with her help the Christians buried him. Later his mortal remains were taken from Pathras to Constantinople.

## **2. St. Philip**

Like Peter, Andrew and the sons of Zebedee, Philip also was from Bethsaida. Fishing must have been his profession. Though it was Andrew who first joined Jesus Christ recognising him as the Messiah, it was Philip to whom Jesus first said 'follow me.' Immediately Philip followed him. Philip had the rare knack of handling things with a sense of reality and sincerity. He points out Jesus to Nathanael as the Messiah about whom the law and the prophets wrote (John 1:43-46). He says to Jesus that two hundred pieces of silver is not enough to buy food for five thousand and odd people. It was Philip that the Greeks met first when they wanted to see Jesus. He had the generosity

to discuss the matter with others before taking a decision (John 12: 20-22). It was the same Philip who said “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (John 14:8). What is revealed here is Philip’s confession of his weakness and his readiness to solve it.

Philip’s gospel work is recorded in a work known as “Philip’s Acts.” It is believed that he preached the word in different parts of Asia and Lydia and became a martyr at Hyropolis (Ophiorima) in Asia. His feet were pierced with a metal bar and was hung head downwards from a tree. Apostle Bartholomew was a witness to it and Philip’s body was buried under his leadership.

### **3. St. Bartholomew**

No details are available from the gospels about St. Bartholomew (son of Tholomew). His name is also included wherever the names of the apostles are mentioned. If the root of ‘Tholomew’ is ‘Tolomy’, he could have had some connection with Egypt.

Some biblical scholars say that Bartholomew is none other than Nathanael who appears only in St. John’s gospel. The following reasons are given for this : (1) Wherever the names of the apostles are mentioned (Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16) Bartholomew’s name comes with that of Philip. St. John’s gospel does not give the names of all the apostles. But Nathanael’s name follows Philip’s (John 1:45). (2) Nathanael’s name is found when John gives the names of a few apostles, but Bartholomew’s name is not seen there (John 2:2).

If Nathanael is none other than Bartholomew, he was from cana of Galilee and was brought to Jesus by Philip. “A true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false”, says Jesus of him (John 1:43-51).

According to the ancient work “Bertholomew’s Martyrdom”, he preached the gospel in “India”. The India of this book has three parts: Ethiopia, Medea east of Ethiopia, and in the far east the India whose boundaries reach the ocean. In the book “Philip’s Acts”, it is said that Bartholomew first spread the gospel with Philip in Ophoyorima’ where both were sent to the gallows, but both escaped miraculously. The same book records that after Philip’s burial he went to a place



called Lucania. Eusebius and Jerome hold that Bartholomew preached in India. This India must be Persia or the regions west of Persia. During his work he healed the daughter of a ruler. Hence the ruler, together with a number of people, became Christians. But idol worshippers complained to the king against Bartholomew; he was much persecuted by the orders of the king and in the end was beheaded. Another tradition has it that he was flayed alive and then crucified head downwards.

#### **4. St. Thomas**

St. Thomas had two more names - Didymus (twin) and Jude. 'Thomas' is Aramaic Syriac and 'Didymus' is its Greek version. It is said that he was called 'Didymus' because he was the twin - brother of Adai, or that his two fingers were united. In short, 'Jude' was his first name and 'Thomas' his second name.

St. Thomas hailed from Galilee. Gospels present him as a brave man who took firm and sincere decisions. Since the Jews were hatching plots against Jesus, some disciples discouraged their visit to Judea. But Thomas bravely said, "Let us also go that we may die with him" (John 11:16). Thomas was not among the disciples when Jesus appeared to them after resurrection. Thomas was well aware that the sight of the resurrected teacher was very essential to his gospel work, hence he was steadfast in his determination to see him. Since it was a just demand Jesus appeared to him and this led to his declaration of faith (My God and my Lord) which was not so far declared by anyone else about Jesus.

After Pentecost St. Thomas preached in Palestine for some time. The ancient book "Acts of St. Thomas" relates that St. Thomas came to India as an architect with merchant Abbanis to construct the palace of king Gondephorus. The coins excavated bearing the name of Gondephorus support this story. The book records that King Gondephorus and many of his subjects became Christians in the light of the miracles and preaching by St. Thomas.

The strong and ancient faith of the Kerala Church is that St. Thomas landed in Cranganore, a port of Kerala in 52 AD. He preached there and established seven churches in Malankara at Kollam, Cranganore,

Paloor, Paraur, Gokkamangalam, Chayal and Niranam. (The ecumenical church at Nilackal has been built near the remains of the Chayal church). Moreover he ordained some as priests from among the christians who were converted from the high - caste families of Pakalomattom, Sankarapuri, Kalli and Kaliyankal. The theme of the “Margamkali Pattukal” which have been in existence in Malankara for years is constituted the gospel work of St. Thomas in Malankara.

From India St. Thomas went to China and other places for gospel work. Then he returned to India and preached at Mylapore near Madras where he was speared by the religious fanatics who were enemies of christianity. Tradition is that he was speared on December 18 and died on December 21, in 72 AD. There are others who assert that St. Thomas suffered martyrdom on July 3. His body was buried at Chinnamala near the town of Kalamina in Mylapore.

The mortal remains of St. Thomas were taken from India to Edesa (Uraha). There is a strong tradition that it was on July 3 that the festival of St. Thomas was celebrated in the Church where his mortal remains are kept. Later, the remains were taken from Edesa to Moosal. It is a part of these remains that the then Patriarch Moran Mar Ignatius Yakub III handed over to the Catholicos Moran Mar Beselius Augen I, in 1965. It was brought to Malankara and kept in the Catholicate Aramana Church, at Devalokam, Kottayam.

### **Excercises:**

1. Compare St. Andrew and St. Philip in the light of the details about them in the gospels.
2. On what basis is St. Bartholomew said to be Nathanael?
3. Does John 20 : 26 - 29 hint that St. Thomas was too much a doubting person? Give your views about it.

## **Lesson 5**

### **The Apostles - Part 3**

- St. Matthew  St. James, son of Alphaeus  St. Simon the Zealot  
 St. Judas  Matthias.

#### **1. St. Matthew**

St. Matthew who wrote the gospel was also called 'Levi.' Jesus called him while he was collecting tax at Capernaum in Galilee. Tax collectors were in those days notorious as money grubbers and exploiters of the poor. Jews regarded them as sinners. Since they collected tax for the Roman government they were regarded as cheats. If one tax collector followed Jesus as soon as he called him he must have been different from others. Matthew gave up his job and followed Jesus. Luke 5 reveals that Matthew was very hospitable and willing to share with others what he had. He prepared a big feast for Jesus and his disciples.

St. Matthew's gospel work was mainly done among the Jews of Palestine. His gospel is directed at the Jewish Christians. He says to them that the law and prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

It is believed that St. Matthew first preached in Judea and then moved to the east, especially to Parthia, Media and Persia. Moreover, he preached and performed miracles in the north - eastern part of Africa. He resurrected Princess Afjania and, as a result, the king and the majority of his subjects became christians. St. Matthew is believed to have been killed and buried in Antioch.

St. Matthew's gospel was first written in Aramaic. The present Greek version may be based on that. Special attempt has been made in it to relate Jesus to the Jewish tradition. His statement that Jesus is in the lineage of Abraham and David and that the prophecies have been fulfilled in him are examples of this. Also, much importance is given in his gospel to the sermons of Jesus.

#### **2. St. James, son of Alphaeus**

St. James is mentioned nowhere in the Bible except in the list of

the disciples. If Matthew 9:9 and Mark 2 : 14 are compared St. Matthew and St. James may be regarded as brothers; mainly because of the reason that Matthew's father also is called Alphaeus. If Matthew and James were the sons of the same father, both must have been tax collectors.

It is said that St. James preached the gospel in Egypt, Arabia and in some parts of Persia. He is believed to have been crucified at Bethanandasarug.

### **3. St. Simon the Zealot**

Simion was a member of the Jewish revolutionary organization called 'Zealotes'. He was known as 'Zealot' and 'Cananite Simon.' Though he severed his connections with the organization, he was still known by the same old name. He must have joined Jesus inspired by the hope that Jesus would win political freedom for the Jews from the Roman yoke. However, his association with Jesus caused a profound spiritual transformation in him.

It is believed that St. Simon preached the word of God in Egypt, and in some other parts of Africa, Syria and Britain. 'The Apostolic History of Abdias' says that St. Judas and St. Simon preached the gospel together in Persia and became martyrs there.

### **4. St. Judas**

St. Jude was also called 'Thaddaeus' and 'Labi.' His father was called James (Luke 6:16) According to Greek and English versions and ancient traditions, Judas was regarded as a scholar among the disciples. A conversation that he had with Jesus is recorded in St. John's gospel 14:22-23.

After preaching the word of God in Palestine, Arabia and Mesopotamia, St. Judas reached Persia. Abgar was the ruler of a small kingdom called Eddesa. When he fell ill he sent a letter to Jesus through a messenger called Ananyas. Abgar's aim was to get healed by Jesus. The letter said that since the Jews were plotting against Jesus, he could come and live peacefully in Eddesa. (If Jesus agreed, Abgar would get healing too!). But Jesus wrote a reply that since he came to die for the world, it was impossible for him to come to Eddesa

and that his disciple, Thaddaeus, would reach there after his resurrection. Jesus took a kerchief and pressed it against his face. The kerchief miraculously had the impression of his face. He sent the kerchief also with the letter. As soon as Abgar received the letter and the kerchief, he was healed. When St. Judas reached Eddesa the king gave him a warm welcome. With the Cananite Simon St. Judas successfully preached the word of God in Persia. Many people became Christians. A great many churches were established. He worked for some time in Syria also. The book referred to above says that he later reached the town of Berythus and there had a natural death. But the historical work by Abdias says that he became a martyr in Persia. Another tradition has it that he was stoned to death at Orud by fanatic heathens and was buried at the town of Berythus.

### **5. St. Mathias**

Mathias was chosen by the early church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to fill the vacancy created by the suicide of Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. He was one of the seventy.

Though walked with Jesus, he was not one among the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus.

It is written in the 'Acts of Andrew and Mathias' that St. Mathias went to the 'land of cannibals' to preach the gospel. Inspired by the Holy Spirit he preached in India, Cappadocia and Ethiopia. He is believed to have suffered martyrdom either in Cappadocia or in Jerusalem.

### **Excercises**

- 1) Write a paragraph each on St. Mathew's life and gospel.
- 2) Elucidate the main difference between the revolutionary organization of the Jews and the revolutionary message of Jesus Christ.
- 3) What is the special qualification of Mathias mentioned in Acts1:21-22?
- 4) Point out, with the help of the Church calendar, the festivals of the Apostles.

## **Lesson 6**

### **St. Paul**

☐ Birth ☐ education ☐ conversion ☐ gospel work ☐ letters

Though St. Paul was not one among the twelve apostles, he was especially called by God to be the ‘apostle’ of the gentiles (Galatians 1:1). He accomplished his mission so well that he was recognised as a prominent apostle.

#### **1. Birth**

The details that St. Luke gives in the Acts and certain personal hints by St. Paul himself in his letters constitute the sources of information about St. Paul. Tarsus was an important port - city of Cilicia in the Asian part of the ancient Roman empire. The affluence of Tarsus and its political and cultural significance were well-known to the world of those days. St. Paul was born there in an important Jewish family of the tribe of Benjamin. His first name was Saul. Jerome holds that his family immigrated from Galilee to Tarsus. Saul’s father was a rich and renowned merchant and the mother, an ideal Jewish house - wife. Since Saul was born at Tarsus, he was entitled to Roman citizenship.

#### **2. Education**

As any Jewish boy, Saul learned his first religious lesson and reading and writing in the school associated with the synagogue. He read the religious books in Hebrew. The Jews of Tarsus unlike those of Palestine, did not have to use Aramaic Syriac. However, Saul studied in his boyhood Aramaic - Syriac also from his parents and from his own people. After his studies in the school of Synagogue, he went to Tarsus for higher studies. As a centre of education Tarsus was well - known like Athens and Alexandria. Hence Strabo’s words “The people of Tarsus amazed with their wisdom those of Athens and Alexandria.” In Tarsus Saul acquired profound scholarship in the branches of science, philosophy, and Greek and Roman languages. He also learned his favourite art of tent - making. After his studies at Tarsus he reached Jerusalem where he continued his studies in law

for a long time, under Gamaliel, the great scholar. It was presumably because he grew in knowledge and experience as a staunch Jew that he was allowed to associate with the assembly of the Pharisees and the Sanhedrim.

### **3. Conversion**

When the growth of Christianity became a headache to the Jewish religious leaders, Saul with the vigour of a youth emerged as the spokesman of the Jews. Though a religiously pious man, the things that he heard about Christ and the advance of Christianity might have made him think deeply. Saul was as an accomplice in the stoning of Stephen. That incident also must have shocked him. However, it was Saul that the high priest chose and sent giving letters of introduction to arrest Christians and bring them to Jerusalem. Pious Paul considered it an honour and recognition. He went to Damascus to do his duty. Ananias, a pious Christian must have been the first in the list of the Christians to be arrested in Damascus. Nevertheless, things happened in such a way that Ananias himself caught Paul.

As Saul and his men were nearing Damascus suddenly a light flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you Lord?" he asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," Jesus replied and asked him to go to Damascus. Saul got up from the ground, opened his eyes, but could see nothing. But with the help of his friends he reached Damascus where he stayed with Judas. For three days he could not see anything, and in a vision he was told that he would recover his eyesight. As directed by God, Ananias, the leader of the Christians in Damascus, visited Saul, placed his hands on him and Saul could see again. He declared his faith in Christ, was baptised by Ananias and became a new creation as Paul (Read Acts 9:1-18; 22:4-2; 26:10-18).

### **4. Gospel Work**

Paul had the conviction that he was called to propagate Christ's message among the gentiles, kings and to the people of Israel (Acts 9:15). He courageously witnessed to what happened to him among

the Jews at Damascus. It was because of the stiff opposition by the Jews at Damascus and for preparation for his future work that he retired to Arabia (Galatians 1:15-19). He returned to Damascus and then went to Jerusalem. There he did gospel work with Peter and James for fifteen days. Later he reached Antioch with Barnabas and from there they were sent off for vigorous gospel work (Acts 13). An ancient work entitled "Acts of Paul and Thekla" describes the physical appearance of St. Paul as follows:

"He was a short, baldheaded person with legs curved like a bow, a strong body, bushy eyebrows and a lively face. Though it was a man's face, it looked like an angel's."

### **Missionary Journeys**

St. Paul has gone on at least three missionary journeys. All of them started from Antioch.

#### **The First Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14)**

Paul and Barnabas started from Antioch and preached the gospel in Cyprus, Perga, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Darba. They performed miracles and established churches there. On returning to Antioch, they heard some Jewish Christians arguing that Christians must keep the Jewish traditions. They required the gentiles who became Christians to be circumcized. Paul and Barnabas had different views. So they went to Jerusalem to discuss the problem with the leaders of the church. The apostles, the elders and the whole church pondered over the matter and it was settled that the gentile Christians did not have to follow the Jewish laws (see Acts 15).

#### **The Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:35 - 18:22)**

The insight and encouragement that St. Paul got from the Jerusalem Synod prompted him to go on another missionary journey in which he was assisted by his friends Silas and Timothy. They started from Antioch and passed through Cilicia, Galatia, Thrace, Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Berea, Athens, Corinth and Caesaria. In these places either new churches were established or the believers were strengthened in faith. The second missionary



journey ended when Paul reached Antioch from Caesaria via Jerusalem.

### **The Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23-21:16)**

On the third journey St. Paul reached Ephesus via Galatia, Phrygia and other places. Then he passed through Philippi, Troas, Miletus, Tyre and Caesaria and got to Jerusalem.

All these Journeys were eventful. The Acts of the Apostles records a great many precarious situations through which St. Paul was miraculously led by God.

When St. Paul reached Jerusalem to make an offering the Jews unleashed organized violence against him, and thus started a chapter of new relationship with them. He had to remain in prison in Jerusalem and Caesaria for two years and, as desired by him, was sent to Rome to be tried before Caesar. Even during his long journey he was engaged in gospel work and in writing letters to various churches. In Rome he was allowed to have association with Christians. One tradition says that he was tried and was freed, but after some time suffered martyrdom in Rome, whereas another tradition has it that he was executed immediately after the first trial. However, it is generally believed that he was beheaded in AD 67 as per the orders of Emperor Nero. The church celebrates June 29 as the day of St. Paul's (along with St. Peter's) martyrdom.

## **5. Letters**

The New Testament contains most of the letters of St. Paul. Some of them must have been lost (Examples: The Laodicea letter referred to in Colossians 4:16; the earlier letter referred to in I Corinthians 5:9; the letter that made the Corinthians sad, mentioned in 2 Corinthians 7:8-16). Opinions differ about the authenticity of authorship of some of the books attributed to St. Paul in the New Testament.

The works of St. Paul reflect his profound spiritual experience and scholarship. They throw light on the faith of the early church and its structure. For instance, in the letter to the Romans he speaks about the justification by faith that sinners can have through Christ; in the first letter to the Corinthians mention is made about the moral standard

that Christians should keep and the spiritual gifts they should possess; in the letter to the Ephesians Paul deals with what the church is and what the believes are called for and in the pastoral epistles he mainly dwells on matters that the leaders of the church should know.

**Letters of St. Paul**

Since uncertainty remains about the authorship of Hebrews, a list of the remaining thirteen letters is given below:

General category	Name of the Letter	Where Written	Probable date
1. Letters written while on Missionary Journey	i. Galatians	Antioch	AD 48
	ii. 1 Thessalonians	Corinth	AD 50
	iii. 2 Thessalonians	Corinth	AD 50
	iv. 1 Corinthians	Ephesus	AD 54-55
	v. 2. Corinthians	Ephesus	AD 55-56
	vi. Romans	Corinth	AD 57
ii. Prison Letters	i. Colossians	Rome	AD 60-61
	ii. Ephesus	Rome	AD 60-61
	iii. Philemon	Rome	AD 60-61
	iv. Philippians	Rome	AD 61-62
iii. Pastoral Letters	i. Titus	Ephesus	AD 62
	ii. 1 Timothy	Macedonia	AD 62
	iii. 2 Timothy	Rome	AD 64-65

(The above places and dates may not be exact. This list is made on the assumption that St. Paul was released after the first trial in Rome).

**Exercises:**

- Briefly describe what St. Paul speaks about his life in the following passages: Galatians 1:12, 2:10, 1 Corinthians 15:9, 2 Corinthians 11:22-33, 12: 1-10, Acts 22:4-21; 26: 10-12.
- What must be the meaning of the question “Why do you persecute me?” asked to Saul, who persecuted the church?
- Write a brief general preface to the works of St. Paul.

# Unit 2

## In The Days of Growth

### Lesson 1

#### **Apostolic Fathers - Part 1** (St. Clement of Rome St. Ignatius of Antioch St. Polycarpus of Smyrna)

- Who are the Apostolic Fathers?  Life and letters of St. Clement
- Life and letters of St. Ignatius  Life and witness of St. Polycarpus.

#### **1. Who are the Apostolic Fathers?**

The appellation ‘Apostolic Fathers’ came into use after the 17th century. The apostolic fathers are those who succeeded the apostles and led the church. Some of them were disciples of the apostles. The Christian writers who lived in the first century and in the early second century are generally known as Apostolic Fathers. Nothing is known about some of them. However, since their works are significant they also are known as Apostolic Fathers.

#### **2. St. Clement of Rome - Life and letter**

After the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul, St. Clement became the third leader of the Christian community in Rome (AD 30-100). Origen and Eusebius say that the fellow - worker that St. Paul refers to in Philippians 4:3 is none other than St. Clement. Tertullian holds that St. Peter himself consecrated Clement as Bishop.

One tradition has it that before becoming a Christian Clement was an outstanding Roman citizen and a high official. His name then was Titus Flavius Clement. Another tradition holds that he was a slave in the family of Flavius Clement. However, when he took the leadership of the Roman Church, Emperor Domitian was killed and the Christians could live in peace for some time. Clement exploited the opportunity and infused alertness and vigour into the Christians. He cared for churches in the region and made every effort to maintain peace and strong faith. A typical example of his care for others is his letter to

the Corinthian Church. Owing to the differences of opinion, the believers in the Corinthian church removed some of their priests from their positions. In his letter St. Clement exhorts that those who cause differences of opinion must stop doing so, that those elders appointed from above must be respected and obeyed (A second letter also was attributed to St. Clement, but now it is generally accepted that he is not its author). For instance, note the following extracts:

1. Paragraph 54:

“Is there a noble man among you who says ‘If I am responsible for the violence, feud and schism, I shall withdraw. I shall go wherever you ask me to go. I shall obey anything that the church says. I want only peace to prevail between the sheep of Christ and their sheperds’. If there is anyone filled with such love, he will win reputation.”

2. Praraph 44:

“The apostles had known, through our Lord Jesus Christ that there might be feud in the church in the name of priesthood. Hence they not only appointed priests, but insisted that persons acceptable to the church must be appointed to follow them.”

The letter of St. Clement used to be read in the churches till at least the fourth century.

There is a tradition about the end of the life of St. Clement. Emperor Trajan exiled him to Crimea where he was a great source of comfort to the toiling miners. It so happened once that people could not get drinking water. But St. Clement made drinking water available through prayer. His words and acts prompted many to become Christians. The Roman Emperor who came to know about it caught him, tied him to an anchor of a ship and sank him in the sea. Tradition has it that his grave, built by angels, at the place where he was sunk, is seen once a year during the ebb tide.

### **3. St. Ignatius of Antioch: Life and Letters**

We read in the Gospels (Matthew 18: 2; Mark 9:36) that Jesus took a child in his hands and caressed him. An ancient tradition says that it was this child who later became St. Ignatius, Metropolitan of

Antioch (A.D 35 - 107). Some have questioned the correctness of this tradition. They say that it is the result of a wrong interpretation of the second name of Ignatius. The second name - Theophorus- in Greek means 'carried by God' or 'bearer of God.' However, in Syriac tradition St. Ignatius is known as 'Ignatius Nuroño' (fiery visionary). Though there might be other myths associated with 'Nuroño' we may think that the Greek Version of Syriac 'Nuroño' (fiery) namely 'Ignatius' has been added to his name, while the meaning of both the words being the same.

Orgien says that St. Ignatius succeeded St. Peter as the Episcopa of Antioch. But Eusebius is of opinion that it was after Yavudios (Eudios), who succeeded St. Peter as the Episcopa that Ignatius became the bishop of Antioch.

We hardly know anything about the history of St. Ignatius before he became the Episcopa of Antioch. There are hints in his writings which make us guess that he had been a slave and that he had a great conversion in his life. He had occasion to be the disciple of Apostles St. Peter, St. Paul and St. John and that was his strong point too. He was an endearing leader and father not only to Antioch but to all churches that existed far and near.

The first victims of the persecution of the church were generally its shepherds. St. Ignatius was imprisoned and taken from Antioch to Rome. Those were the days when Emperor Trajan was persecuting Christians. The long and hazardous journey of Christian prisoners taken to Rome by the Roman soldiers was a common sad spectacle in those days. Ignatius regarded his journey as a triumphant march for the realization of his long - cherished dream of becoming a martyr. He passed through places like Philadelphia, Sardis and Smyrna where he met church members and sent letters to churches. The most remarkable of them is the one written to Rome. He had thought that when he reached Rome, the Roman Church would try to liberate him. Hence in the letter he told them to allow him to become a martyr. He wrote in it, "I am God's wheat. May I be crushed to powder by the teeth of animals and become the bread of Christ's Eucharist." He wrote to St. Polycarpus also who had served him at Smyrna. Not long

after his reaching Rome, he was given a prey to wild animals in a notorious amphitheatre. His earthly remains were kept by the Roman believers; later they were taken to Antioch and buried there.

The seven letters of St. Ignatius (six of them written to churches at Tralus, Magnesia, Ephesus, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna and the seventh to St. Polycarpus) are his invaluable contributions to the Christian tradition.

Some of the references in them are remarkable.

a) He clearly states that Christ is 'God' (Letter to Polycarpus 7:3; Letter to the Church at Tralus 7:1).

b) He says that the clergy of the church must have three sections (Episcopa, Priest and Deacon: Tralus 3:1; Magnesia 6:1).

c) According to him unity of the church must be reflected in the bishop who is the representative of Jesus Christ (Smyrna 8:1-2).

#### **4. St. Polycarpus of Smyrna: Life and witness**

St. Polycarpus (AD 60 - 115) is a father of the early church who shines as a martyr and who produced abundant fruits (The Greek word 'polycarpus' means 'abundant fruits'). It is from his disciple Irenaeus that we get most of the details about him. Another source of information about him is the book written by Pionius who lived in the fourth century.

Polycarpus was born and brought up in Smyrna. Even when he was very young he became a disciple of Apostle St. John. Tertullian says that St. John himself consecrated him as the Episcopa of Smyrna.

Polycarpus had a very hazardous task to perform at Smyrna. Smyrna was a place where unfriendly gentiles had much influence. The Jews who lived there had intense hatred for Christians. Moreover, there were differences of opinion among Christians. Thus Christian life was an ordeal there.

When Polycarpus took charge of the Christians in Smyrna, a heartening event took place. St. Ignatius of Antioch was being taken to Rome as a prisoner. On his way to Rome he happened to stay a few

days at Smyrna, and Polycarpus was able to look after him then. The old saint's unflinching faith and leadership inspired Polycarpus.

Irenaeus relates an incident that shows Polycarpus' firm attitude to heresies. Marcion the gnostic happened to meet with Polycarpus on the way. Marcion asked "Do you know me?" Polycarpus retorted, "Yes I do. You are the first - born of Satan".

In Church Polycarpus stood for conciliation. An example of this is his attempt at finding out one date acceptable both to the orientals and the occidentals to celebrate Easter.

Irenaeus says that Polycarpus wrote several letters, but only one - letter to Philadelphians - is available now. In it he advises the priests as follows:

"Preists must be pitiful and kind, they must bring back those who have gone astray, visit patients, care for orphans and widows and do what is good before God and man. They must avoid anger, must not flatter and must not judge unjustly. They should not be fascinated by worldly wealth. They should not be credulous. They should not judge anyone in haste because we are all equally sinners" (6:1).

The Saint's trial and martyrdom are well - known. The ruler said, " If you swear that you give up Christ I shall release you." But Polycarpus replied, "I have served him for eighty six years. He has done no injustice to me; then how can I disown the king who redeemed me?" (This is quoted from "Martyrdom of Polycarpus", a record that the church at Smyrna sent to the church at Philomilium).

Fire was set to the pyre to burn Polycarpus. But the hot flames did not touch him. Astonished at this miracle, but determined to put an end to his life, the guards killed him with spears and buried the dead body. The christians at Smyrna buried his earthly remains at a special place. It is written in the "Martyrdom of Polycarpus" (17:3) that on the annual day of his martyrdom they assembled at his grave and rembered him and other martyrs. This must be the earliest historical proof to show that mortal remains of saints were respected and festivals were celebrated to honour them.

## Exercises

1. What does the term “Apstolic Fathers’’ mean?
2. Write a breif account of the message of St. Clement.
3. What are the chief contributions of St. Ignatius?
4. Write a paragraph on the martyrdom of St. Polycarpus.

## Lesson 2

### Appostolic Fathers - Part 2

Didache  Letter of Barnabas  ‘Shepherd’ of Hernas  Pappius.

#### 1. Didache

In 1873, the Greek Metropolitan Philotheus Briennius got an ancient writing from a library of a hermitage at Constantinople, belonging to the Patriarch of Jerusalem. The title of this writing was formed by a few Greek words which meant “ the advice given by the lord to the gentiles through the twelve apostles.” Later the book came to be called ‘Didache’ which is the first word of the Greek title.

‘Didache’ though written between 120 and 180 AD, is a collection of the writings that existed earlier. Hence we may say that the New Testamant excepted, ‘Didache, reflects the early Christian life. Modern scholars say that the original of ‘Didache’ was a Jewish book.

St. Athanasius praised this book to the skies and advised the newly converted christians to read it. Clement of Alexandria and later church historian Eusebius had praised it earlier. But nothing is known about its author.

The content of this work, stretched in sixteen short chapters, may be divided into three parts. The paths of life and death are dealt with from the first chapter to the beginning of the sixth chapter. From the third verse of the sixth chapter upto the first part of the fifteenth chapter certain practical aspects of Christian life, especially for the newly converted Christians (like food, fasting, prayers, holy eucharist) are



highlighted. The sixteenth chapter contains an exhortation about the second coming of Jesus Christ.

It is in 'Didache' that we find the earliest instruction in the church tradition to fast on Wednesday and Friday.

"Don't fast on Monday and Thursday as hypocrites do. Let your, fast be on Wednesday and Friday" (chapter 8).

'Didache contains some significant references to the observance of Sunday also.

"When you come together on the day of the lord, celebrate the holy mass. First, confess your sins so that your sacrifice may become holy. Those who have quarrels with others should not participate in the holy eucharist without getting reconciled" (Chapter 14).

Mention is made, in the church hierarchy about episcopa, prophet and deacon. A brief order of the experience of the holy eucharist is also seen in "Didache.' Moreover, 'Didache' makes it clear at the outset that there are two paths in the realm of ethics ( those of life and death) and that the path of life is one that needs great caution.

## **2. The letter of Barnabas (C. AD.70/79 or 117/132)**

One of the cardinal issues that confronted the early Christians is how to reconcile with the Jewish faith and rituals. 'The Letter of Barnabas' is the first work that proves that Christ is the fulfilment of all Jewish hopes and the promise of a new life to the whole world. It is difficult to decide which 'Barnabas' is the author of this work which is believed to have been written in the end of the first century. Clement of Alexandria and Jerome say that the author is none other than 'Barnabas' who was the co-worker of St. Paul.

This work has mainly two sections: i. Theological (chapter 1 - 17) and 2. Ethical (Chapters 18 - 21). The first section is given a Christian theological interpretation. The Old Testament hints about Christ are discussed here. It is stressed here that Christ is eternal and that a new age has started with him. For instance, this new age is referred to in Isaiah 11:1 onwards. The Jewish Sabbath (on the seventh day) is over. The starting of the 'eighth day' is hint at the new age (15:8). Two

ways are referred to in the section dealing with ethics. Whereas ‘Didache’ calls them ‘the way of life’ and ‘the way of death’, Barnabas terms them ‘the way of light’ and ‘the way of darkness.’

### **3. The Shepherd of Hermas (C AD 140/155)**

The content of this work is the vision that a person called Hermas had in Rome who introduces himself as the brother of Pius, Bishop of Rome. In a way this work, composed in symbolic style, is the first fruit of Christian literature. One may doubt the suitability of the title ‘Shepherd’; but a shepherd is referred to in it.

This work may be said to be a chain of moral principles created by imagination. It elucidates that the basis of a virtuous life is repentance and that the degree of repentance varies from man to man. For instance note the beginning of the book given below:

“... I felt love for her when I saw her again. After some time I saw her bathing in the river Tiber. I held her hand and led her to the banks. When I saw her beauty I said to myself, ‘How happy I would be if I get a beautiful and virtuous maiden like her as my wife!’ I thought only this, nothing else did I think. After some time when I was walking towards Koomi praising God a spirit carried me to a place where there was no path.... I landed there and started confessing sins to God. As I prayed the door of heaven opened; she greeted me from heaven and said, “You have been brought here to reveal to the Lord your sins”. I asked her, “Do you say that I accuse you? Did I wrong you....Did I say even an ignoble word about you? Haven’t I regarded you as a goddess? Have I not always respected you as a sister?....” Bursting in to laughter she said, “There was the desire to do evil in you. Such desires should not enter the minds of the virtuous.”

This work gives the message that in thought, even in imagination, one should keep purity. There are in it altogether five visions (as shown above), twelve commandments and ten parables. Hermas got them through two persons, one a woman (in the forms of an old woman and a beautiful woman) and the other, a shepherd, The lofty position of the Church and the relevance of repentance and redemption from sin are stressed in this work.

Eusebius says that this work used to be read in the early Churches. Church leaders like Irenaus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen have quoted from it.

#### **4. Pappias of Hieropolis**

Hieropolis was a city near Colossia in the Asian part of the Roman Empire. Pappius was the Metropolitan there (AD 130). He was a disciple of Apostle St. John and a close friend of St. Polycarpus. Pappias' great contribution is that he codified the unwritten traditions which was a great benefit to the church. Those traditions were arranged in five sections under the title "The Interpretation of the Teachings of the Lord." They existed till the days of historian Eusebius. How they were lost later is not known. However quotations from them are found in the works of Irenaeus and Eusebius.

Pappias speaks about his researches as follows: "I have no hesitation to speak about anything that I learned from the fathers.... Whenever I came across a disciple of the Fathers, I used to ask him about the teachings of the Fathers. What did Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew say? I noted carefully what Aristion and Presbyter John said, reason, I did not think that I would get so much from books as I would get from a living source" (Fragments 29:4). It is from his research that we have got certain information which is helpful in the study of the New Testament.

For instance

1. St. Matthew's gospel was first a collection of the words of the Lord in Hebrew (Aramaic).

2. St. Mark's gospel contains the information that Mark received from St. Peter.

3. Besides Apostle St. John, there was a Presbyter John in the early Church.

#### **Exercises:**

1. Briefly state the significance and the message of Didache.
2. Write a paragraph on the content of the Letter of Barnabas.

3. What is the moral of Hermas?
4. What are the contributions made by Pappias for the study of the New Testament?

## **Lesson 3**

### **Apocryphal Literature**

Apocrypha  Apocryphal Gospels  Apocryphal Acts  
 Apocryphal Revelations  Apocryphal Letters  Other  
 Apocryphal Records.

#### **1. Apocrypha**

The word “apocryphal” has a special meaning connected with the Bible and a general meaning associated with the meaning of the word. The general meaning of the word is referred to here.

The word “apocrypha” means “secret” or “hidden.” “Apocryphal Literature” has two meanings: (1) the literature about “secret” or “hidden” things, and (2) such literature of which the date or the authenticity is unclear. By “apocryphal literature” we mean some writings which existed in the early church which had the two meanings given above. The writings classified as ‘gospel’, history or ‘acts’, ‘revelations’ and ‘letters.’ Come under ‘apocryphal literature.’ They deal with those who sowed and those who watered, who are not included in the New Testament. This brand of literature failed to receive complete acceptance for three reasons: first, it contained many exaggerated details; secondly, the names of apostles were used for propaganda, and thirdly, some tried to propagate heresy in the names of apostles. But many of the writings mentioned above, which do not contain heresies, exhibit the vigour of the early Christian life (The eighth volume of the English version of the “Ante Nicene Fathers” contains most of the works referred to here).

## **2. Apocryphal Gospels**

### **a) The first gospel of James (The Protevangelium of James)**

This book deals with matters from the birth of Virgin Mary to the birth of Jesus. It is in this that the brothers of Jesus are said to be the sons of Joseph by his first marriage. Besides, the book contains matters having a bearing on the birth of Jesus, but which are not included in the gospels. Realising that Mary became pregnant before marriage the priest Annas informs the high priest that Joseph and Mary are wrong - doers.

When both denied any wrong- doing testing water was given for testing them ; but no danger occurred to them. This and a lot of other things like references to the mid - wife who looked after Virgin Mary and the killing of Zachariah the priest and father of John are dealt with here.

### **b) Gospel about the birth of Mary**

The original of this book was written in Latin. As the first gospel of James, this work also begins describing the grief that Joachim and Hanna had for not having a child. Mary was their miraculously- born daughter, as revealed by God. This book deals with matters from the time when she was offered to the temple when she was three years old, till the birth of Jesus. The book clearly states that Mary had in her paternal home a revelation by an angel. Joseph is pictured in it as a venerable old man.

### **c) Gospel in the name of Matthew about Mary's birth and the boyhood of the Saviour**

Matters connected with the birth of Mary are described in this book as in the works mentioned above. But this is different from others in that it refers to Mary's decision to remain a virgin through her life and a discussion about it before the priests. Moreover it contains many miracles and stories like the witnessing by the midwives of Mary as virgin despite her giving birth to a baby, the visit of the magi from the east when Jesus was two years old, the miracles that happened when Mary, Joseph and Jesus ran to Egypt and the wonders that took place in Jesus' boyhood and when he was a student.

#### **d) The gospel dealing with the history Joseph, the Carpenter**

This book is written as if Jesus Christ is explaining matters to his disciples. It describes Joseph as a priest from Bethlehem and as an expert carpenter. Mention is made here of the four sons and two daughters of Joseph by his first wife. It says that the virgin gave birth to Jesus in a cave near the grave of Rachel of the Old Testament. It also contains a long description of the happy end of Joseph.

#### **e) The gospel of Thomas:**

This book gives a very interesting account of the miracles performed by Jesus in his boyhood till he went to the temple for the feast of the pass - over, when he was twelve. The Greek and Latin translations of this work are available. but they have some differences. Coorilos (Cyril) of Jerusalam says without doubt that this was written by Thomas, a manichaen thinker. It was probably written after the fifth century.

#### **f) The Arabic Gospal about the boyhood Jesus**

Most of the anecdotes in this book are found in the works mentioned above. But some stories are new.

#### **g) The Gospel of Peter**

It deals with the sufferings, death, resurrection and miracles of Jesus Christ. It says that it was Herod who sentenced Jesus to crucifixion.

#### **h) The Gospel of Nichodemus**

This book contains details about Pilate who sentenced Jesus to death on the cross, Jesus' death, entry into hell and resurrection. Pilate describes the miracles that ocured at Christ's death, though he justifies himself.

### **3. Apocryphal Acts**

#### **a) Acts of Peter**

Only part of this work is available, which must have been written around A.D. 190. The first part of it deals with St. Peter's trouncing

of the sorcerer Simon, at whose instigation the Roman Emperor persecuted Christians when St. Paul left Rome for Spain. The second part is about St. Peter's martyrdom (Note. St. Peter's martyrdom is dealt with in unit 1. The incident starting from Peter's question to the Lord, 'Lord where are you going?' - Dominic Quovadies - is recorded in this book).

### **b) Acts of Paul**

The book "Acts of Paul and Thekla" is also regarded as a part of this work. The main theme is Paul's conversion of a girl called Thekla, her following him in his missionary work ignoring all oppositions and a description of Paul's martyrdom.

### **c) Acts of John**

This book must have been written around AD 160 somewhere in Asia. The theme is the missionary work of St. John and his death. The book mentions St. John's appointment of Polycarpus as his successor.

### **d) Acts of Peter and Paul**

It is thought that this book was written in the third century. It speaks about Paul's journey to Rome, how the Jews plotted against his entering Rome and how, in spite of the plot, Paul cleverly managed to enter Rome, through God's guidance and finally the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul.

### **e) Acts of Thomas**

This work was written in Syriac, somewhere in Persia in the third century. It deals with the circumstances of St. Thomas's visit to India, conversion of King Gondaporus, execution of Thomas as per the command of King Misdeus and at last the conversion of Misdeus himself.

### **f) Acts of Thaddaeus**

The first part of this work contains the correspondence between Abgar, king of Edessa, and Jesus Christ. The second part is about Apostle Thaddaeus's visit to Edessa and the successful carrying out of his errand.

## **4. Apocryphal Revelation**

### **a) Peter's Revelation**

Clement of Alexandria regarded this work as authoritative. It must have been written around A.D. 130. It reveals the experiences that we would have after death and connected with judgement.

### **b) Paul's Revelation**

Written around A.D. 250, this book has much similarity with the previous one. The imaginative writer deals here with matters associated with heaven and hell, with the temporary relief that the inhabitants of hell would get on the days of the Lord and the services of the guardian angels that protect us.

### **e) John's Revelation**

It may be regarded as the culmination of the Book of John's Revelation. But it contains special references to the observance of Sunday, fasting and the manner of worship.

### **f) Vergin's Revelation**

This book contains the revelation that Virgin Mary had of the agonies of hell and how she was inspired to supplicate her son for those who are tormented there.

## **5. Apocryphal Letters**

### **a) Letter of Apostles**

It is believed to have been written in A.D. 150. It clearly states that no one will be saved by baptism alone. It also contains a description of the events at the end of the ages.

### **b) Paul's Letters to Laodiceans**

Though known by the name of Paul, this letter was written only in the fourth century. It is strongly doubted that this letter was written to propagate heresy.

### **c) Paul's Third Letter to the Corinthians**

This letter is written as if Paul is answering the questions posed



by the Corinthians. It is a powerful argument against gnosticism. It also discusses the future of the whole universe in relation to God.

## 6. Other Apocryphal Records

Though several works are included in this category, the book 'Teaching of Apostels' written in Syriac stands out among them. It speaks as to from which apostles laying of the hand was received in various places. It specially states that the Indian Church received apostolic priesthood from Apostle St. Thomas. It also contains apostolic exhortations about worship facing the east, celebration of the feast of nativity, the observance of forty - day feast and so on.

### Exercises

1. Explain the terms 'apocrypha' and 'apocryphal literature'.
2. Name the apocryphal works that deal with the boyhood of Jesus. Write a paragraph about each of them.
3. Write a short note as to how the apocryphal works can influence the christian art.

## Lesson 4

### Early Martyrs

□ Martyrs □ Martyrs of Leons and Vienna □ Martyrs of Carthage

#### 1. 'Martyrs'

Christian martyrs are those who sacrificed their lives for Christian faith. If the first martyr, Stephen, was stoned to death by the Jews, the blood of many of the later martyrs was shed by the Roman government. The Jews and the idol worshippers awakened the Roman government against the Christian community which emerged with many novel ideas against idol worshippers. As a result most of the apostles and apostolic fathers became martyrs. Some of those who would be

introduced as staunch believers and interpreters also became martyrs. In short, majority of those who led the Christian community in the Roman Empire till the fourth century suffered either persecution or martyrdom. Not only church leaders but common believers, including women, children and slaves, sacrificed their lives. Let us get acquainted with a few such common believers, chosen from the second and third centuries.

## **2. Martyrs of Leons and Vienna**

Many of the apostolic fathers suffered martyrdom under the Roman Emperors Nero, Domitian and Trajan. Marcus Aurelias who came to the throne in A.D. 166 was the embodiment of animosity towards Christians. Those who became martyrs in Leons and Vienna in A. D. 177 constitute most of the victims of his cruelty. They include not only Pontinus the Metropolitan of Leons and Sanctus the deacon of Vienna, but the slave Blandina and her younger brother Ponticus and others.

### **Blandina and Ponticus**

Blandina was a beautiful slave - girl. She and her younger brother, Ponticus, reached the home of a Christian lord at Leons. The lady of the house was a pious good woman. Learning about Christ from the lady, Blandina and Ponticus were attracted towards Christ. They found great joy in worshipping and glorifying Christ with the lady in her room. Stories about those who suffered martyrdom for Christ at various places thrilled them. It was when their minds were full of Christ's light that severe persecution began in Leons. When the lady was being dragged by the soldiers Blandina and Ponticus shouted bravely "We also are Christians, we also are coming." They were imprisoned. Severe torture and cruelty could not shake their faith. Blandina and her brother were hung from a stake. They were shown other Christians being torn and eaten by wild animals, but the terrific sight inspired them to become martyrs. At length brother Ponticus was killed in front of Blandina who saw it all with unflinching courage waiting for her turn. At last she was wrapped in a net and thrown to a bull used for bullfight. She breathed her last suffering the hitting and kicking of the bull.

### 3. Martyrs of Carthage

It was the Christians of Egypt and Africa who suffered most cruel persecution during the time of Severus who came to power in A.D. 197. A group of youngmen of Carthage in Africa also suffered martyrdom around A.D. 202. Perpetua, Felicitus and Sathurus are the most famous among them.

#### **Perpetua, Felicitus and Sathurus**

Born in a rich family at Carthage, Perpetua believed in Jesus Christ. She was a young married woman of twenty two. Hardly had she given birth to her first child when the persecutors imprisoned her. Perpetua bravely went to prison carrying her child. She made friends with the prisoners. Many of them had not been baptised. Revocatus and Felicitus were slaves among them. Priest Sathurus who was with them in prison was preparing them for baptism by giving them lessons in faith.

If Perpetua had given up her faith, she would have been released from prison at any time. But she refused. One day she had a dream which strengthened her faith. In the dream she saw her dead younger brother, Dinocrates, undergoing punishment. She prayed for him in the dream and saw him being saved as a result of her prayer (This is an ancient proof of prayer for the departed). Perpetua anticipated her death with added enthusiasm.

Meanwhile, she had entrusted her son to the care of her mother. One day her father brought her son to the prison and implored her, "Forsake your faith at least for the sake of this young child." Perpetua would not yield. Her father tried to drag her from there, but in vain. He repeatedly asked her to go home after offering sacrifice to the king's idol. He again pleaded with her to obey him considering his grey hair and old age. Perpetua replied that she had dedicated herself for the fulfilment of God's wish. One day she saw her father being beaten because of her, she grew exhausted. But she firmly stood in her decision. At last, Perpetua was thrown, along with other friends, to wild animals on the birth day feast of the prince. After having been attacked by wild animals she was finally stabbed to death.

Felicitus was a slave and catachumen. When she was imprisoned she was eight months pregnant. She stood firm in her faith as her friends did. But one thing grieved her. Normally a pregnant woman would be executed only after delivery. Hence she would be punished only after her friends were punished. But she gave birth to a baby-girl before her time. While she was writhing in labour pain, a guard ridiculed her thus, ‘‘If you cannot bear this pain now how will you bear the agony of being thrown to wild animals?’’ She answered, ‘‘Now I am suffering this pain alone. But then my lord would be with me to share my agony.’’ She entrusted her child to another woman and suffered martyrdom with Perpetua and Saturus.

After giving his friends lessons on faith and baptism Saturus also fell a prey to animals. A great many gentiles were witnessing this and clapping their hands. When the wild animals scratched Saturus and the blood gushed from him, they shouted ‘‘salvum lotum’’ (baptised and saved) ‘‘But Saturus took the ring from Prudence who was the prison guard and a Christian sympathiser, dipped it in his blood, returned it to him and courted death. Prudence became a Christian and kept the ring as an invaluable gift.

### **Exercises**

1. Give a brief account of the martyrs of Lyons and Carthage.
2. Write briefly about the heroic witnessing of the martyrs of Carthage.
3. What is your response to the notion ‘‘A church without martyrs is a failure?’’

## **Lesson 5**

### **Early Apologists**

□ Who are the Apologists? □ Quadratus □ Aristides of Athens  
□ Tatian □ Athenagorus of Athens □ Theophilus of Antioch □  
Justin Martyr □ Miletus of Sardis.

#### **1. Who are the Apologists?**

Much effort had to be made in the second and in the third centuries to remove the wrong notions that the Roman administrators, Greek philosophers and the fanatic Jews had about Christians. There were also some who spread baseless allegations about Christians out of sheer envy. They said that Christians were not patriotic, they met together in the night not for worship but for immoral practices, their faith was irrational, they were atheists and cannibals and that Jesus was a magician. Learned and gentle Christians wrote apologies against this false propaganda to the Roman administrators in particular and to the other opponents in general. It was such apologies that marked the beginning of Christian theology and the authors of these writings were called ‘Apologists.’ Let us acquaint ourselves with a few of the outstanding apologists who lived in the second century.

#### **2. Quadratus**

Quadratus was a venerable Christian leader of Asia (c. A.D. 125). It was Eusebius, the Church historian who first mentioned about him. Quadratus was the first apologist in the Christian tradition, but none of his works is available now. But the quotes given in Eusebius’s Church history throw light on the thoughts of Quadratus. The gist of the apology that Quadratus submitted to Emperor Hadrian was that Jesus was the incarnate son of God. He witnesses that Jesus was not a magician and that he had seen those who had experienced the results of Jesus miracles.

“The acts of the Saviour are true and they are for ever. Those who have been healed and raised by him have not been seen only at that moment. They lived during the Lord’s time and for a long time after

- wards. Some of them have lived upto our times” (Eusebius, Church history, 4.3:2).

### **3. Aristides of Athens**

Aristides was an Athenian philosopher who was devoted to Christ (c. A.D. 140). He is first mentioned by Eusebius. The Aramaic and Syriac translations of his Apology are available. This work is addressed to Emperor Hadrian and it contains an impartial evaluation of Christians.

“In the world Christians have discovered truth more than anyone else, because they worship God who has created all things, his only begotten Son and the Holy spirit. They donot worship any other god. Jesus Christ’s commands are inscribed in their hearts. They obey them and hope for the resurrection of the dead and the enternal life in the other world. They do not commit adultery, do not tell lies, do not covet others’ objects. They respect their parents and love their neighbours. They judge only justly. Things that they do not wish to happen to them they do not wish to occur in others lives too. To those who do evil to them, they talk meekly and win them as friends. They are zealous to do good to their enemies. They are meek and are aware of things. They avoid all injustice and impurities. They show concern about orphans and widows. They share things with the poor. They comfort the strangers. They regard all as brothers in spirit. They are ready to die for Christ. They are always thankful to Christ for their food, their learning and for all other things.”

Thus the earliest apology in the history of Christianity highlights the social and moral life of the Christians.

### **4. Tatian**

Tatian was born in Syria as the son of non - Christian parents (c. AD. 175). He went in search of truth which he found in Christ and in the Christian church. In Rome he learned manythings about Christianity from the Christian philosopher Justinos and finally he became a Christian. He did not like Greek philosophy and Greek culture. Hence he questioned in his work “Dialogue with the Greeks” everything associated with the Greek tradition. Actually, the very

same arguments that the Greeks put forward against Christians were used by Tatian against the Greeks. Moreover, he wrote a gospel called 'Diatesseron' selecting certain portions from the four gospels. Apart from the above two works, Tatian wrote many other books, unfortunately they are not available now. Later, because of certain strange ideas Tatian strayed from the church tradition. He started a community called 'Encretiter' which taught that marriage was prostitution, that Christians must be vegetarians and that even in the Holy eucharist water must be used instead of wine. However, both his works have exerted profound influence on the church tradition.

### **5. Athenagorus of Athens**

Athenagorus was a Christian philosopher of Athens. Not much is known about him. He is thought to be a contemporary of Justinos and Tatian (A. D. 180). Two works are attributed to him: (1) An apology for Christians to Marcus Aurelius and his son Comodus, and (2) An Essay on the Resurrection of the Dead. In them his mature ideas are expressed in elegant Greek. In the Apology he pleaded that Christians are not atheists, nor are they cannibals or traitors. In the essay on Resurrection, he proves why resurrection of the dead is inevitable. He also provides as explanation of the Holy Sprit.

### **6. Theophilus of Antioch**

Theophilus was born of gentile parents near Euphretes. He studied about Christianity and then became a Christian. Later, he became the sixth Metropolitan of Antioch. He had a profound knowledge of the Bible and Greek Philosophy. He passed away around A.D. 190.

Of his works, three are available, and they are addressed to one Outholicos, who must have been his non - Christian friend. Theophilus gives in these works an explanation of Christianity. In the first book he interprets 'Christian' as one who is anointed by God. He also gives here an apt analysis of the worship of God. In the second book he gives a discussion on man in which he concludes that God created man with freedom to become mortal or immortal (2:27). In the third book he gives a short account of the moral standard of Christians, simultaneously ridiculing the immorality of the Greek Gods.

## 7. Justin Martyr

“God will punish those who do not speak the truth after knowing what truth is.” Justin is a martyr who wrote such simple, but thought-provoking dictums as this. Justin was born of non-Christian parents at Flavia Neopolis (Nablus) of Palestine in the second century. Justin sought to satisfy his spiritual thirst by delving into Greek philosophy, but in vain. It was Christian truths that satisfied his thirst. He became a Christian, wrote a great deal about Christianity and in the end, suffered martyrdom for his faith. He spent a fair part of his life as the principal teacher of a school in Rome. Only three of his works are available now: 1. Apology to Antonius Pius, the Roman Emperor, 2. Apology to the Roman Senate and 3. A Dialogue with Tripho the Jew. The following are the highlights of Justin's works: 1. If ‘logos’ unites God and man, the ‘concept of logos’ unites Greek philosophy and Christianity, 2. St. Mary is the second Eve and 3. a clear order for the celebration of holy eucharist existed as early as the second century.

## 8. Miletus of Sardis

Miletus (died c. A. D. 177), who was the metropolitan of Sardis (Lydia) was a bright star in the galaxy of Christian leaders of Asia. His ‘Apology’ explaining Christianity, addressed to Marcus Aurelius, was a famous document of the early centuries. None of his works are available now in completeness. The main objective of Miletus was a theology centred on Jesus Christ; hymns describing Christ as God were a speciality of his works.

### Exercise

- 1) Explain the term ‘apologists.’ Who are the outstanding apologists?
- 2) Write a paragraph on any of the apologists.
- 3) Explain the relevance of apology in the present situation.



## Lesson 6

# Against the Early Heresies

□ Early heresies □ Dionysius of Coirnth against Marcion □ Serapion of Antioch against Montanus □ Hegesipus against gnosticism □ Irenaeus against gnostics.

### 1 Early Heresies

Heresies began to appear when some started to give their our interpretations to the faith of the church. The early heresies came mainly from three sources Marcion, Montanus and the Gnostics.

#### a. Marcion

The tendency of rich men, without any knowledge of church traditon, to tamper with church matters was there even in ancient days. Marcion was a rich businessman. Since his father was the metropolitan he began to poke his nose into the affairs of the church. But when his father stood firm against him, he went to Rome. An eloquent person of unparalleled organising capacity, he could win a large number of supporters. He was soon suspended from the Roman church. But because of his strong personal influence, he started his own church, produced his own Bible and his own philosophy of salvation. Thus in the words of Polycarpus ‘the first - born of satan’ emerged on the scene.

There were metropolitans’ priests and deacons in Marcion’s church. He carefully copied the Roman style of worship.

Marcion’s Bible consisted of a free selection of the New Testament Books. He removed the Old Testament and the New Testament portions related to the Old Testament and divided the New Testament into ‘gospels’ and ‘letters’ and he combined with this Bible his own work ‘Antitheses.’ According to him the Old Testament God is the embodiment of evil who created the world and ruled cruelly. Christ defeated him and saved the world. Salvation is only for the soul. What the body does is immaterial.

## **2. Dionysius of Corinth against Marcion**

The only available source of information about Dionysius is Eusebius and that too is very little. Dionysius was the Metropolitan of Corinth in the second century. He spoke and wrote a great deal for the true faith and peace in the church. He wrote at least eight letters to various churches and individuals about the need to keep the true faith. The most important among them is the letter that he wrote to Nichomidians against Maricon.

### **b) Montanism**

“Montanism” was a movement pioneered by Montanus in the second century. It was aimed at bringing about an awakening in the church. Started at Phrygia in Asia, Montanus said that the movement was formed by the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. Montanus and the two women called Maximilla and Phryska claimed that they possessed so much spiritual vigour as to fill the whole church with it. In a way, Montanism was a spiritual movement characterised by its detachment from worldly affairs. A great many people in North Africa were fascinated by this movement. But it was rejected as heresy because of its extremely disciplined and harsh life, immature social outlook and the work of the Holy Spirit dependent on particular individuals.

## **3. Serapion of Antioch against Montanus**

Serapion is said to be the eighth metropolitan of Antioch. He accomplished his mission when Septimus Severus was the emperor. If Justin Martyr lamented that Montanism spread throughout the world, Serapion said that the whole world rejected it, and how the world rejected, is explained in his letter to Pontius and Caricus.

### **c) Gnostics**

Gnosticism was a movement that spread throughout the world for a long time. Its Christian wing has a history of two centuries. The most famous Christian gnostics are the groups led by Valentinus and Basilidus. The basis of all gnosticism is that 'gnosis' or knowledge is received through special revelation more easily. Christian gnostics

regarded Christ and the apostles as special bearers of revelation. They kept certain special figurative sentences claiming that Christ and the apostles taught them these sentences secretly.

#### **4. Hegesipus against Gnosticism:**

Hegesipus is a remarkable student of history in the second century. Born as a Jew of the Greek tradition, he became a Christian. He realised that Christian gnostics used several tactics to prove that they were the true disciples of apostles. So he decided to conduct an impartial study visiting the various Christian centres. He gathered the Christian life style, ritual and faith and the teachings of apostolic succession in each centre. He collected the details and published them in a book called 'Reminiscences' which highlighted the following aspects:

(1) there is uniformity in the rites and faith in almost all church-centers of Christians other than those of the gnostics (2), in these churches the history of priestly succession received from an apostle or disciples of apostles is kept and (3) there are considerable differences in each centre among the gnostics themselves.

#### **5. Irenaeus against the gnostics**

In a way it was Irenaeus who gave shape to Christian theology. Irenaeus who was born at Smyrna in Asia in the second century (about A.D.150) happened to hear the sermons of St. Polycarpus. Later he became the church leader and metropolitan of Lyons. He worked in the church as the servant of peace and reconciliation till he died around A.D. 202. His works were directed against gnosticism. The Latin translation of his outstanding work against gnostic heresies is available (His other works include Interpretation of the Apostolic Teaching About Resurrection, the Only Authority, About Wisdom etc.) His thought about Trinity is profound. Irenaeus taught that Christ is the centre of salvation of all created beings and that through him all creation is manifested towards God. He also taught that incarnation is the manifestation of God's call to man to become God (i.e, to get identified with God) and that body and the universe have active participation in experiencing salvation.

**Exercises:**

- 1) Write briefly about the early heresies.
- 2) Give a brief account of the significance of Irenaeus.

## Unit 3

# Interpreters in Western and Eastern Traditions

## Lesson 1

### Hypolitus, Tertullian, Cyprian

- Hypolitus: Life and Works
- Tertullian: Life and Works
- Cyprian: Life and Works

#### 1. Hypolitus: Life and Works

Hypolitus (died A.D. 235) has an outstanding place in church history. He is known to be the first who interpreted the biblical books from the viewpoint of the church tradition. It is from him that we get the first clear account of the system of the Christian church especially the ordination of priests. Moreover, Hypolitus is recognised as a saint by the Catholic church although he functioned as a “parallel Pope.”

#### Life

Though he is known as the ‘Hypolitus of Rome’ he must have been born and brought up in the Greek background. His works reflect his profound scholarship in Greek language, philosophy and culture. It was as a result of a controversy that he became noticed in history. Can a member expelled from the church on account of his base sins be taken back to the church? Hypolitus took a tough stand against his readmission. But the Roman Metropolitan Calystus took a lenient attitude to the issue. Hence Hypolitus parted from Calystus, declared himself the metropolitan and claimed the Roman throne. He had a large number of supporters. When matters came to the Emperor, he exiled Hypolitus and the successor to Calystus to Sardinia. However, the issue was compromised after a few years. Hypolitus wrote a lot before and after this incident. At last he suffered martyrdom at Sardinia. Fabian, the Bishop of Rome, brought his physical remains back to Rome next Year.

## Works

Though Hypolitus wrote many books only a few of them are available now. The most important among them are ‘‘Interpretation of the Book of Daniel’’, ‘‘Explanation of Christ and AntiChrist’’, ‘‘Apostolic Tradition’’ and ‘‘Against all Heresies.’’ In his book on ‘Christ and AntiChrist’ he compares the incarnation to weaving and says:

‘‘The bodyless son of God took his body from the virgin. He received it just as a bridegroom wears his beautiful wedding dress. The cloth was woven to save the ruined man, through his suffering on the cross by uniting our mortal body with his strength, mortality with immortality and the weak with the strong. The strong supporting beam of that weaving mechine is his suffering on the cross, the strength of the Holy Spirit constitutes its warp. The body made whole by the spirit is its weft. The soul and the body are united by the thread of grace. Its combs are the word and the weavers are the metroplitans and the prophets. They wove Christ’s beautiful cassock which reached upto his feet (‘‘Chirst.... Antichrist.... 4). In his ‘‘Apostolic Tradition’’, Hypolitus says about child baptism as follows:

‘‘... First baptise children. If they can speak on their own, let them speak (i. e. let them express their faith). Or let their parents or other relatives speak for them...’’

## 2. Tertullian: Life and Works

### Life

Africa was a province of the ancient Roman Empire (This province was only a part of the modern Africa). Tertullian is the most famous thinker and writer of the Christian church of Africa. His full name is Quintus Septimus Florence Tertullianus. He was born at Carthage in Africa around 155. His parents were not Christians. His pilgrimage seeking truth landed him at Christian church. He became a Christian around 193. An advocate, Tertullian started to exhibit his uncanny ability through his writings. He wrote a number of books in Latin. According to Jerome, Tertullian became a priest. But his firm opinions about Christian moral life made him a supporter or follower of

Montanus (See the note on Montanus in the previous unit).

Tertullian's writings exerted a great influence on the western Christian world. He passed away around 220 as a venerable old man.

### **Works**

Tertullian is, perhaps, the first to compose theological works in Latin from among the Christians. He was the authoritative thinker and writer in the western church till the advent of Augustine. Tertullian's writings may be divided into three categories. 1. Regarding Christian Faith, 2. Against heresies and 3. the moral and spiritual system of the church. Among Works supporting Faith include 'To Gentiles', 'Against Jews' and 'To Scapula.' He proves in them that the wrong notions of the Roman rulers, the Jews and the gentiles about Christians were baseless. Heresies like Valentinianism, Gnosticism, Marcianism, Modalism that deny belief in the Trinity are refuted. He stresses that no one should waste the opportunity to become a martyr, that Christians should be patient through and through, and that fasting is the basis of moral life. He also advises that none should remarry if the life - partner is dead, that Christian should not serve in the army. Tertullian's works possess some theologically special characteristics. One among them is that Christian theology has nothing to receive from Greek thought (How far this is acceptable is a different matter!). This has led to the maxim "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" (Against Heresies 7). Moreover, it was Tertullian who first used the Latin expression 'Trinitas' (Trinity) in theology.

### **3. Cyprian: Life and Works**

#### **Life**

Cyprian is the profound thinker and writer of the ancient African church after Tertullian. Tatus Chechilus Cyprianus was born in a rich family at Carthage around 200. His parents were non - Christians. His acquaintance with a Christian priest called Chechilius led to his conversion to Christianity. His life was full of simplicity and charity so much so that he gave away all his wealth to the poor. He was loved and respected by all. He was elected metropolitan when he was

ministering as a priest at Carthage. No sooner was he consecrated a metropolitan than Christian persecution started again under the orders of Detius, the Roman Emperor. Soon Cyprian went into hiding. Some people disliked his going in to hiding. When the persecution was over another problem cropped up - should those who compromised their faith (the Lapsed) be readmitted to the church? While some were for admitting others were against it. Cyprian was for readmitting them on certain conditions. Certain rites of repentance constituted the conditions. When an epidemic spread in Africa, Cyprian was in the forefront of relief work. His selfless service and organisational skill surprised all. Meanwhile there arose a serious dispute between Cyprian and the Metropolitan of Rome about baptism of heretics. It led even to the verge of a schism in the church. Emperor Valerian, unleashed persecution on Christians and Stephen, the Metropolitan of Rome, had to suffer martyrdom. Cyprian was exiled; next year (September 14, 258) he was beheaded near Carthage.

### **Works**

Cyprian's works concentrate on the problem that cropped up inside and outside the Church. Tertullian's works had a great influence on Cyprian's writings. His outstanding works include "Unity of the church." "To Donatus", "Summons to Martyrdom", "About the Fallen" "the Lords prayer" etc. About unity of the Church Cyprian says:

"Christ's bride must be chaste and holy. She knows only one home. She keeps her only bridal chamber with nobility and chastity. It is she who protects us for God. She seals her children for God's kingdom..... The man who gives up Christ's Church is an alien to Christ's blessings. Just as nobody out side Noah's arc was saved, none outside the Church will be saved..." (6)

The relation to the church and to the bishop and the continuation of the apostolic succession are the cardinal topics in his works.

### **Exercises**

1. Give a brief account of the life and contributions of either Hypolitus or Tertullian or Cyprian.



2. What is the special significance of Hypolitus in church history?
3. What are the distinct contributions of Tertullian to theology?

## **Lesson 2**

### **Clement and Origen of Alexandria**

Preface □ Clement of Alexandria: Life and works □ Origen of Alexandria: Life and works

#### **1. Preface**

Hypolitus, Tertullian and Cyprian, referred to in the previous lesson, have laid the foundation for western Christian theology. But eastern theology, shaped mainly by Clement and Origen of Alexandria, was slightly different from the western theology. Even before Tertullian asked “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” Clement had showed that Athenians could reach Jerusalem through Athens itself. In other words, Clement taught that Greek culture and philosophy are the guide or teacher or handmaid that would lead one to Christ. Origen, who came later, supported this view and exemplified.

#### **2. Clement of Alexandria: Life and works**

**Life:** The full name of Clement was Titus Flavius Clement. He was born of Greek parents at Athens around 150. After the primary education at Athens he went in search of a teacher who could teach him the real truth. He visited Italy, Syria and Palestine and finally came to Alexandria. His spiritual thirst was satisfied when he heard the sermon of Pantaenus, a teacher in a Christian school at Alexandria. He learned from Pantaenus that the latter had been a Greek philosopher before he became a Christian and that Christian faith had great relevance against the back ground of Greek thought and culture. Clement became Pantaenus’ disciple and accepted Christianity. He learned much from Pantaenus and succeeded him as the chief leader of the Christian school of Alexandria around 200. However, since the Roman Emperor Severus unleashed cruel persecution, Clement

was forced to go into exile after two years. Later he reached Cappadocea with his disciple, Alexander. Meanwhile he had produced a number of works. He died at Cappadocea about 215.

### **Works**

Clement wrote philosophical works like ‘Exhortation to the Greeks’, ‘Teacher’, ‘Stomatheis.’ He also wrote interpretations on certain biblical books and works doling out moral advice. A few of the ideas of his works are specially noteworthy: (1) God who is the ‘word’ is the basis of existence of all creation. The same ‘word’ appears in Greek thought too (Exhortation to the Greeks 6.68. 2). (2) The person who knows himself knows God and achieves likeness to God (Teacher 3:1,1) (3) One has to face more tests in family life than in monastic life. The discipline thus obtained is more valuable than that got through lonely life (Stroma 7, 12, 70, 4).

### **3. Origen of Alexandria: Life and Works Life**

We can gather many facts from Eusebius's church history about Origen who is known as the ‘iron man’ of Christian tradition. He was born at Alexandria about 185. His parents were Christians. His father, Leonides, was a learned teacher. His mother might have been of Jewish origin. Origen was the eldest among the Seven sons. He had already had opportunities to listen to the preachings of Pantaenus and Clement.

When Origen was only 17 his father became a martyr. Hence the burden of supporting his mother and the brothers fell on him. In the young age of 17 he accepted the job of a teacher.

He drew everyone’s attention with his great personality, deep faith and profound scholarship. Demetrius entrusted to Origen the whole responsibility of the Alexandrian school when he was only eighteen. He served without receiving any reward. He sold even his library to satisfy his personal needs. He led a life of extreme unselfishness. Since so many students - both men and women - came to him, he literally obeyed Matthew 19:12 and made himself a eunuch to escape from scandals. His fame precipitated envy in Demetrius, the Metropolitan.

Origen visited many places to explain matters of faith. Eusebius refers to such visits to Rome, Arabia and Antioch. He was a frequent visitor of the thinker Ammonius Saccus who influenced him profoundly.

Origen went to places like Caesaria and Jerusalem during the religious persecution by Emperor Caracalla. Since the metropolitans of those places were very friendly to him he preached in the churches in the midst of service. Demetrius, the metropolitan of Alexandria, became angry when he heard it, and he wrote in protest, "That a layman would preach in the presence of metropolitans is quite unusual." Soon he was called back and Origen reached Alexandria.

Origen did not get a favourable time to work after his return. Hence he engaged himself in writing books. A few years later, on his way to Greece, he reached Caesaria, where he was ordained a priest by the metropolitans of Palestine who were his old friends and, thus, removed his unfitness of not being a priest. Metropolitan Demetrius grew more angry when he came to know about it. He summoned two provincial synods and excommunicated Origen on the ground that either a eunuch is unfit to be a priest, or he violated the administrative jurisdiction of the church or he taught heresies.

Origen then went to Caesaria and started a school there as in Alexandria. He was respected by all there. A great many students learned under him. One among them was Gregorius who later came to be known as 'wonder-doer'. When Gregorius completed his studies he made a speech which threw light on the teacher and his style of teaching. According to that speech, Origen took great care in each student; he never imposed his views on them; he advised them to see that philosophy, science etc. are in harmony with biblical truths. Origen was put in jail during Decius' persecution. His prison life affected his health. Though he was released after a year he died at Tyre in his 69th year (A. D. 253).

After Origen's death Methodius, Epiphanius and Theophilus accused him of heresies in his writings. They said: 1. Origen taught that Jesus was a creation, 2. that the Holy Spirit was a creation lower than Christ, 3. that there was no bodily resurrection, 4. that there were no judgement and hell, 5. that devils would be saved and 6. that

there was 'rebirth'. But later theologians have expressed doubt whether Origen's works contain any such heresies.

### **Works**

Eusebius, Jerome and others say that Origen wrote numerous works. But only a few of them are available now. His works can generally be classified into five groups: 1. Critical study of the Bible, 2. Interpretations, 3. Theological, 4. In Support of Faith, (5) Practical. The most well-known works are "First Principles" (Peri Arcon Deprincheplus). 'Against Celsus' (Cata celsu - Conthra - Celsum) and Commentaries (Interpretations) on St. John's Gospel' and Song of Songs. 'When he interpreted he usually stressed metaphorical meanings. When Origen recommended Greek philosophy for primary study and the Bible for main study, he was correcting Clement's approach to Greek philosophy. The following are Origen's main Contributions:

1. He laid the foundation for a Christian cosmology with a bearing on contemporary thoughts.
2. He established the relevance of philosophy and rationality in theology.
3. He was the first who attempted to formulate a concept of history which has rational validity.
4. He initiated a thought which stipulated that man and the world started from God and would reach back God.
5. He laid the foundation for the eastern Christian spirituality, which aims at materialising the ultimate aim of man, namely, getting deified in 'God - Man' Jesus Christ.

### **Exercises**

1. What is the main difference between Terullian and Clement.
2. Write briefly about the life and works of Clement.
3. Write a note on the life and contribution of Origen.

## **Lesson 3**

# **Dionysius of Alexandria Miracle working Gregorios (Gregory Thaumaturgus)**

☐ Dionysius: Life and contributions ☐ Gregorios: Life and Message.

### **Life**

Dionysius - known as Dionysius the Great - was a father respected both by the western and the eastern churches (248 - 265). A disciple of Origen, he was the principal teacher of the school at Alexandria and later he became a metropolitan.

Dionysius was born in a rich non - Christian family. Origen must have influenced him to become a Christian. When Heracles became the metropolitan of Alexandria the responsibility of the school fell on his shoulders. The church thought that he was fit to be the metropolitan after Heracles.

It was when he was acting as the metropolitan that Novetian functioned as parallel Pope in Rome. Dionysius tried to dissuade him from doing so. Moreover, when he studied the theological concept of faith in the Trinity, Dionysius proved that the Son is there eternally with the Father. Above all, he bravely led the Egyptian Church when it was being persecuted by Detius and Valerian. During the first persecution he led the church from hiding and during the second persecution he came forward to suffer martyrdom. But soon he was exiled and during the exile he had a natural death.

### **Works**

It is from Eusebius and Athanasius that we know about the works of Dionysius. Only two of his letters are available in completion. But we have partial information about the following letters: (1) Reply to Dionysius of Rome, (2) About 'Nature' defying the Epicurean theory of Universe and (3) About the 'Promises' with reference to the interpretation of Revelations. The first letter is a reply to Dionysius of Rome's allegation that Dionysius' theology gives only an inferior

position to God the son. Dionysius says in it as follows:

“There was not a time in which God was not the father..... Since the son is the lustre of eternal light, he also is eternal. Reason, if always there is light, its lustre also will always be there.....”

Many used this logic later. He states openly in a letter to Novatian:

“It is unbelievable if you say that you assumed the position (of another Pope) not because you wanted to keep your own interests but because you were forced by others..... I believe that it is better to become a martyr by fighting against heresy than by fighting against idol worship. In the letter case a person becomes a martyr for the sake of his own soul, where as in the former case he suffers martyrdom for the whole church.”

## **2. Gregorios - the Miracle - worker**

### **Life**

Gregorios Taumaturgus (or miracle- working Gregorios; 213-275) spread the gospel in Capadocea which produced Capadocean Fathers. He strengthened the Capadocean Christians in true faith through his miracles in his life time and even after death. Hence St. Baselios and St. Gregorios and others spoke highly of him. Gregory of Nysa himself wrote the life history of this saint who bore his name.

Gregorios was born at Neo - Caesaria in Pontus in about 213. His first name was Theodorus. From his own writings we gather that he had a brother called Athenodorus and an elder sister. After his primary education in his native place he thought of going to Phoenecia for higher studies. But his sister took him to Caesarea in Palestine, where her husband was a Roman officer. At Caesarea he happened to listen to the sermons of Origen which effected a change in his life.

Later, in his farewell speech Gregorios said that at the very first sight of Origen he was attracted by that divine person. The question whether he should choose a pleasurable earthly life or enriched spiritual life cropped up in his mind by the influence of Origen. He considered the five years he spent with Origen the golden period of his life. At last he became a Christian by the name Gregorios.

Gregorios was consecrated metropolitan of Neo - Caesaria before long. As a metropolitan he mingled with the believers and won their love and respect. His simple life, theologically correct perspective and sincere love made him a performer of miracles. He died around 275.

### **Letters**

Though his writings are few, they have a clear message. The best - known among them is his farewell speech to Origen. Though it is an evaluation of a teacher by a student it dwells on the factors that helped shape his personality. It also says how much significance should be given to reason and Greek thought in relation to Christian theology. He holds that Christianity gives importance to experience rather than to reason. He speaks about the creed, “There is nothing created or inferior in the Trinity, nothing newly made or which came into being that had not existed before. Trinity is the same always without change or difference...”

### **Exercises**

- 1) Briefly narrate the life and contributions of Dionysius of Alexandria.
- 2) Write briefly about the message of Gregorios.

## **Lesson 4**

### **Palestinian Heritage**

☐ Pamphylus of Caesaria ☐ Eusebius of Caesaria: Life ☐ Eusebius of Caesaria: Works.

#### **1. Pamphylus of Caesaria**

The first spring of Christian church tradition was in Palestine. Even later, Caesaria of Palestine contributed much to theology. The school that Origen started at Alexandria was the inspiration behind such contributions. Origen’s great collection of books became later

the prime basis for discussions and research. After Origen, Pamphylus of Caesaria gave leadership for the growth of the library and the discussions conducted there.

Pamphylus was born at Berytus in Phoenicea. After the primary education in his native place he went to Alexandria for higher studies. He then reached Caesaria and read books on theology and philosophy from the library of Origen. He became a priest and votary of Origen. He took copies of many important works and added them to Origen's collection of books. It was at this time that a few writings appeared criticising Origen's thoughts. Pamphylus responded immediately by publishing a book highlighting the greatness of Origen's theology. Maximinus had started his persecution and had imprisoned many Christians including Pamphylus. Prison life was to him a blessing in disguise, for he could compose then the book mentioned above, which became beneficial to many. He made many copies of the Greek Bible which later led to the propagation of the Bible. Pamphylus's chief contribution was that he shaped Eusebius into a student of history who later became the father of church history. Pamphylus suffered martyrdom by 309.

## **2. Eusebius of Caesaria**

### **Life**

Had there not been Eusebius, the history of the early church would have been shrouded in darkness. Therefore, Eusebius is known as the father of church history. Eusebius was born at Caesaria between 263 and 265. Caesaria was then a greater centre of learning than Alexandria and the learned and saintly Pamphylus was the teacher there. Eusebius grew as the disciple and spiritual son of Pamphylus and he got good education and training in research. When Pamphylus was imprisoned Eusebius followed him. But later Eusebius reached Egypt from Caesaria according to the advice of his teacher. Meanwhile, he had received the name Eusebius Pamphyli (Eusebius, the son of Pamphylus).

Eusebius again reached Caesaria by 313 where he was consecrated a metropolitan. It was at this time that the disputes about Arius's heresy rocked the whole church of the Roman Empire. Eusebius also



participated in some discussions. He put forward a proposal to solve the problem. Unfortunately it created three groups in the church: those who favoured Arius, (2) those who favoured Athanasius and (3) those who favoured Eusebius, the mediator.

Though Arius was declared a heretic in the Nicene Synod of 325, Eusebius had clear differences of opinion in the management of affairs. It also gave rise to misunderstanding between Eusebius and Athanasius. Eusebius was a close friend of Emperor Constantine. In spite of all the storm around him, Eusebius could produce works with an uncanny concentration of mind. He died around 340.

### **Works**

Eusebius's best - known work is his church history. It contains the history of the church from the first century upto his own times. It is an invaluable contribution not only to the early history of the church but to theology also. It contains ten books. The first book is a historical analysis about Jesus Christ. The remaining books contain facts connected with the growth of the church. Importance is given to the description about martyrs. In addition to the church history Eusebius is known to have written many other books; but they are not available now. However, many parts of books like "Preparation for Gospel", "Witness of Gospel", "Theology of the Church", "Life of Constantine" are available now. In "Witness of Gospel" we find the following words about Malchizadek.

"Malchizadek was a heathen priest. Normally, heathen priests sacrificed blood offerings. But here Malchizadek offers bread and wine. Thus Malchizadek became the forerunner of Jesus Christ by starting spiritual offering without blood...." (5, 3).

"Life of Constantine" is an inspiring work. The circumstances of the conversion of the persecuted church into the royal church and the transformation of the heathen temples into Christian churches are specially noteworthy.

### **Exercises**

1. What are the chief contributions of the Palestinian church tradition?
2. State the chief contribution of Pauphilus.
3. "If there had not been Eusebius there would have been a vacuum

in the study of church history'' - Briefly state your response to this statement.

## **Lesson 5**

### **St. Athanasius**

☐ Birth, boyhood ☐ Education, training ☐ Against heresies ☐ Metropolitan of Alexandria in Nicene Synod ☐ Plaintiff became defendant ☐ Persecution and banishment ☐ Return and death ☐ works ☐ Theological contributions.

#### **1. Birth and boyhood**

Athanasius was the great soldier of faith who fought bravely for truth. St. Basil describes him as 'the divine doctor given to the church'. St. Gregorios of Nazians depicts him as the 'pillar of the church'. His life was eventful and he became famous as the fighter against Arius' heresy.

Athanasius was born in Alexandria around AD 295. In those days Alexandria was a great centre of learning and Athanasius was able to become familiar with the various branches of learning. He had heard a great deal about Christian heroes who had faced persecution with unflinching courage. He had also heard about the saints who spent their lives in contact with God in the deserts and forests of Africa. Therefore, he decided to become a Christian full of saintliness, knowledge and faith.

When he was boy, he once told his friends about Christian faith. The force of his words made them accept baptism. Alexander, the Metropolitan of Alexandria was surprised at this. Thereafter, Athanasius's studies and training were pursued directly under his supervision.

#### **2. Education and training**

Metropolitan Alexander made Athanasius stay with him and taught

him theological books, logic and physical sciences and gave him training in spritual life. Subsequently Athanasius decied to have first - hand knowledge of the ascetic life of African forests and deserts. He went in search of St. Antony with the blessings of Metropolitan Alexandrios. He met him and stayed with him for some time as his disciple and helper. This contact with the saint helped him produce the work 'Life of Antony'.

Athanasius returned to Alexandria. Metropolitan Alexander made him a deacon in 319 and appointed him his secretary. It was at this time that he produced the works 'Against Heathens' and 'About Incarnation'.

### **3. Against Heresies**

Those were the days when Arius' heresies were rocking the church. Athanasius realised that Arius' denial of Christ's divinity will ruin the basis of chrisitan faith. Immediatly he started using his tongue and pen against Arius. He argued that the basis of christian faith is that God saved man by incarnation, and that if Jesus Christ is not God, we have not been saved. In the end, Emperor Constantine convened the Synod of Nicae to resolve the issues including this.

### **4. In the Nicene Synod**

Athanasius also attended the synod as the secretary of Metropolitan Alexander. The synod lasted for three months and Athanasius' voice reverberated in it. It was very difficult to take decisions against Arius. Athanasius stood firmly for the phrase 'Homoousion to Patri' to qualify the Son ('of the same substance with the Father'). He was not ready to accept even the phrase "Homoiousion to Patri," (of the similar substance with the Father) suggested by moderates like Eusebius of Caesaria. The essential parts of the creed about faith in the Son of God was written in the Nicene Synod under the leadership of Athanasius.

### **5. Metropolitan of Alexandria**

It was the last wish of Metropolitan Alexander that Athanasius should be his successor. Accordingly Athanasius became his

successor. He visited the churches under his jurisdiction and confirmed the believers in true faith. The problems created by Arius and the Militian heretics were a head-ache to him. (The Militian heretics created a dissenting group claimed the post of the Metropolitan of Alexandria and meddled with the affairs of the diocese of Alexandria).

## **6. The plaintiff becomes the defendant**

Some who sided with Arius were highly influential. They influenced the emperor and brought forward many allegations against Athanasius. At last the exiled Arius and his companions were called back. Athanasius was accused of theft, adultery and murder. But they failed to prove their allegations. Later he was accused of treason and false witnesses were presented against him. The allegation was that Athanasius blocked the ship bringing corn from Egypt to Byzantium. Hearing the words of the false witnesses the Emperor ordered Athanasius to be exiled to Trier.

## **7. Persecutions and banishment**

Then followed the days of insecurity for Athanasius. He was banished four times and brought back four times according to the disfavour or favour of the rulers who succeeded Emperor Constantine in the east and in the west. During his banishment he got ample time to visit the sages who lived in the deserts of Egypt. It was at this time that he wrote many of his works. The followers of Arius who seized the churches wanted to bring him to the cathedral of Constantinople with great celebration. But Arius' stomach burst and he died before entering the cathedral. Athanasius had to spend seventeen years in banishment suffering persecution. But he was not prepared to give up his faith or compromise it in any adversity. Once some one told him, "The whole world opposes Athanasius." But he retorted, "Athanasius contra Mundum" ('Athanasius opposes the world').

## **8. Return and death**

People realised the way in which Arius and his followers abused Athanasius and they prevailed upon Emperor Valence to call Athanasius back (366) and entrust him with the administration of Alexandrian church. Thereafter, Athanasius enjoyed peace in life.

The great Athanasius consecrated Peter as Metropolitan to succeed him and died on 2nd May 373.

## **9. Works**

Though Athanasius wrote commentaries on many books of the Old Testament, only the commentary on Psalms is available now. His books ‘Against Heathens’ and ‘About Incarnation’ are among his early works. It is from his notable work against Arius and his followers that we get a clear picture of his christological thinking. Other works by Athanasius include ‘The Declarations of the Synod of Nicene’, ‘The Spiritual Biography of St. Antony’ and certain other articles.

## **10. Theological contributions**

The greatest theological contributions of St. Athanasius are his explanation about Jesus Christ’s divinity and his declaration that Jesus is equal to the Father in divinity. He also explains rationally how sin affected human beings and how Jesus remedied it. He says in his book about Incarnation, “He became man to make us divine, he was seen in body so that we might see the glory of the unseen Father, he suffered cruelty by man so as to enable us to enjoy the right to immortality” (54, 3).

## **Exercises**

1. Write briefly the life history of St. Athanasius.
2. Write a short note on the works of Athanasius .
3. Can the mutual relation of the persons in the Holy Trinity be interpreted on the basis of reason ? Give your views about it.

## Lesson 6

# The West Against Arius Hilary and Ambrose

□ Life of Hilary, □ Hilary's works and contributions, □ Life of Ambrose, □ Ambrose's works and contributions.

### 1. Life of Hilary

Hilary of Pwasiers (315-368) may be called the Athanasius of the western church. He was born of non-Christian parents in a rich family. Even as a boy he showed great interest in free thinking and in writing well. His free thinking led him to the faith in Jesus Christ in whom he saw the ultimate truth, and he wrote beautifully about that truth.

Hilary received baptism when he was thirty years old. He was married and had a daughter. He was leading the model and sacrificial life of a Christian when the need of a metropolitan in Pwasiers arose. People chose him as the metropolitan. Hilary knew that the voice of the people was the voice of God; he and his wife, therefore, earmarked the rest of their lives for the work of God's kingdom.

As soon as Hilary was consecrated he realised that the followers of Arius were conquering the whole of the west and that if he did not side with them he would have to suffer a lot. However, he decided to stand firmly for true faith. Hence he did not participate in the Arlace synod of 353 and the Milan synod of 355 which were convened by the followers of Arius, with the support of the Emperor. As a result of the intrigues by some people, Hilary was exiled to Phrygia. He could read many works of Origen and Athanasius besides other works, during his loneliness. The important works that he wrote during this time include 'Holy Trinity' and 'Synods.' Hilary continued to vehemently oppose Arius' heresy, and before long the Emperor sent him to his own native place, Pwasiers.

Hilary was given a royal welcome by his own people. His strong opposition to Arius found success this time. He reached Italy from Pwasiers. But Oxantius, the Metropolitan of Milan, was a supporter

of Arius and, hence, he had to return from Italy.

Hilary had a peaceful time towards the end of his life. He spent that time in studies, meditations and exhortations. He passed away around 367.

## **2. Hilary's works and contributions**

Hilary's writings were elegant. He wrote commentaries on 'Psalms' the 'Book of Job' and to some other books in the New Testament. The most important of his theological works is that on 'Holy Trinity' written in twelve volumes. He points out in the following passage the limitations that humans face in the narratives of the Holy Trinity.

“You yourself decided the names of your character: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If anything is enquired above this, that is beyond words, observation and human comprehension, that is inexpressible, inaccessible and incomprehensible. The very nature of the subject makes words meaningless. Its powerful light makes observation impossible ” (Holy Trinity: 2, 5).

Hilary gives an explanation of the Nicene creed in his work on Synods. The books that he wrote to the emperors and to the metropolitans who sided with Arius also are significant. In addition to his literary service, he composed and encouraged others to compose hymns which could be used in worship. He knew that hymns containing the key points of true faith could attract human hearts.

## **3. Life of Ambrose**

Ambrose played a significant role in strengthening the position of the church in the western world. He had such a powerful personality that he once said to the Emperor, “The Emperor is below the church, not above it.”

Gaul was a western province of the Roman Empire. A Christian called Aurlius Ambrose was the governor of that Roman province. Ambrose was born as his third son in 339. Even when he was young he said to his sister, “I am the Metropolitan, you may kiss my hand.” Ambrose's father died before long and his mother went to Rome with her children.

Ambrose completed his education in Rome. He particularly learned law and philosophy. On account of his efficiency and powerful personality he was made a member of the administrative body of the city. Subsequently he was made the governor of the provinces Liguria and Emilia. His office was in Milion and he stayed there.

Ambrose could win the love and respect of all. Though a civil administrator, he sincerely participated in church matters. When Oxentios the Metropolitan of Milan died, another metropolitan had to be consecrated. Oxentios had sided with Arius. There was a dispute between the believers and the followers of Arius on the selection of the metropolitan. When Ambrose came to the church to keep law and order someone shouted, ‘Let us make Ambrose the Metropolitan.’ This proposal was accepted by all. Ambrose tried to evade, but at length he was baptised and was consecrated metropolitan.

The church experienced a new vigour when Ambrose took over the administration of the diocese of Milan. He took the oath of poverty and gave away everything he had to the poor. Before long he acquired deep knowledge in matters of faith and won titles like eloquent speaker, the metropolitan of the people, the refuge of the destitute and so on.

He realized the dangers of Arius’ heresy when he learned deeply the faith of the church. He brought back to the church many of the followers of Arius with his advice, personal contact and reforms in worship. The hymns that he composed to be used in worship won the admiration of all.

The Emperors who saw the immense popularity of Ambrose, respected him. His influence was so great that he once made the Emperor beg pardon, in the midst of the people, for a mass - murder.

Ambrose was one of the chief reasons for the repentance and baptism of Augustine. He found time to read and write in the midst of his busy work as a shepherd.

Ambrose passed away on Good Friday in 397.

#### **4. Works and Contributions of Ambrose**

Ambrose wrote many books on the Bible, spiritual life and matters



allied to faith. He also composed many speeches, articles and hymns. Many of his works are available now. The notable works on the Bible contain his interpretations on the persons or topics selected from the books of the Old Testament, (Examples, Cain and Abel, Noah and his Arc; Abraham, Jacob and the Holy Life, Naboth, Tobias etc.) The most important of his spiritual and moral works are 'Duties of Priests', 'Virginity' and 'Widows'. He wrote in general about faith and in particular about the incarnation of Christ and the Holy Spirit. He also wrote theses about the sacraments and about the right of the priests to give absolution.

The steps that Ambrose took in the relation between the church and the state and in matters connected with the unity of the church constitute two of his most important contributions. He never wanted the church to be subservient to the state. He believed firmly that the unity of the church must be highlighted in history.

### **Exercies**

1. Compare the style of functioning of Hilary and Ambrose.
2. 'Many problems will be solved if men of integrity become church leaders.' Elucidate this statement in the light of the contributions by Ambrose.

## Unit 4

# Ascetics and Heroes of faith in the western and the Eastern Traditions

## Lesson 1

### Some Ascetic Leaders - Part 1

- Paul and Antony of Thebes
- Pakomios
- Makarios
- Ephrem
- Epiphanius

#### 1. Paul and Antony of Thebes

Though Paul of Thebes is known as the first Christian monk, St. Antony is regarded as the father of the movement of monks. Once Antony thought that there was no monk as perfect as him. But then he saw in a vision that there was a greater monk than him in the same desert. The ninety- year- old Antony searched for him and found out the 130 year - old Paul. St. Jerome has written the biography of the first monk. In like manner, St. Athanasius has written the history of St. Antony who attracted the monks towards him and pioneered the monastic movement.

St. Paul was born at Thebes in Egypt. He lost his parents when he was only sixteen. They may have suffered martyrdom. His only sister was married. Those were the days of persecution by Emperor Decius. Paul gave up everything he had and went to the desert to lead a lonely life. He ate very seldom; he spent his time in fasting and prayer. Very often God provided him with food and fruits through birds. The desert animals were his faithful servants and friends. There flowed a wonderful stream in his cave. It was this Paul who was full of spiritual glory and power of penance that Antony met.

Antony also was born in Egypt at a place called Koma around 251. His parents died before he was 18. He had a younger sister. He was extremely rich. His aim was to attain perfection in Christian life.

One day he went to the church to worship. The verse read by the priest touched his heart. It was as follows, “If you want to be perfect go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me” (Matthew 19:21). Accordingly, he earmarked a portion of the wealth for his sister and gave the rest to the poor and lived a poorman’s life. His sole aim was to find out saints and hear spiritual matters from them. At the same time he worked with his own hands to earn his living. Whatever remained was given to the poor. His sacrifice and philanthropy attracted many to him. He lived in this manner for fifteen years and then went to the hills of Pispir on the other side of the Nile. The desert was not far away. He lived there the next twenty years of his life. Many monks came there before long to listen to St. Antony. They all accepted him as their spiritual father and came together for worship on Sunday. Once during persecution he visited the town to encourage Christians, which caused quite a stir.

He went to the middle of the desert for a more intense spiritual life. At times some desert - dwellers gave him food; occasionally he ate dates and spent most of the day fasting. Devotees visited him there too, and witnessed the miracles that he performed. It was at this ripe old age that he heard about the heresies of Arius. He came to Alexandria to preach against Arius, which was a great victory for true faith.

St. Athanasius was a great friend of St. Antony. While he was living in exile Athanasius had often visited Antony.

It was in his old age that St. Antony saw St. Paul of Thebes in a vision, as mentioned earlier. He undertook a long journey in search of St. Paul of Thebes. Guided by many miracles, he came to the cave wherein Paul lived. Seeing Antony, Paul closed the door of the cave. Antony begged, “You know who I am, where I am coming from and why. I know that I am not worthy to see you, However, I won’t go back unless you allow me to see you. You welcome animals, then why dont you welcome a man? I have found out whom I was searching for, now I am knocking to be opened. If you do not open the door, let me die here. You will have to bury me.” Paul opened the door with a

smile and said, “Such prayer is not a threat. There is no hypocrisy in this tear. But there is no wonder in not welcoming those who came to ‘die’.” However, when Paul died, Antony had the good luck to bury him Antony used to wear, on special occasions, the clothe he had received from Paul.

As he was nearing the end of his life Antony visited the nearby monks and bade farewell to them. He asked his disciples not to embalm his body but to bury him and give some of his clothes to Athanasius and Serapion. He died in 356 when he was 105 year old.

Nothing is known about the works of St. Paul of Thebes. But some letters by Antony are available. Most of them are exhortations to his disciples to practise asceticism staunchly and to attain perfection in life.

St. Paul of Thebes is portrayed in some ancient pictures as living together with lions. Pictures of St. Antony depict him as a holyman standing unwaveringly amidst temptations.

## **2. St. Pakomios**

If St. Antony is known as the 'Father of hermits,' St. Pakomios is renowned as the father of the movement of Christian hermitage. Through this movement he gave the hermits the discipline of living together. Hermits used to live alone till that time.

Pakomios was born of non-Christian parents at Esna, in the southern part of Egypt around 290. While he was serving in the Roman army the loving behaviour of certain Christians drew him towards Christ. He learned more about Christianity and became a Christian when he was relieved from the army. Before long he came into contact with Palimon, a great Christian hermit and became his disciple. The teacher and the disciple together established a hermitage in Tabenna. Subsequently, hermitages and monasteries were established on the banks of the Nile, where hermits lived together under a common discipline. Pakomios made certain rules for their practice, common work and worship. They constitute the first rules of hermits. Among other things, these rules included instructions as to when the hermits who live in isolation in caves should come together and work, and

when they should assemble on all days for worship and sharing of food. Moreover, he arranged exhortations and biblical lessons for the spiritual growth of hermits. Special care was taken for their education. Methods for scrutiny were fixed up for the selection of new disciples; special training in obedience, poverty and celibacy also was fixed up for them. Certain anecdotes about Pakomios extant among his disciples relate how he taught meekness to those who were proud about their piety and work. He once said to such a proud hermit, 'For a few days you should eat from the mess hall. You should not pray except in the church'. Another hermit who prided himself on his hard work made two mats instead of one and hung them before his room. Pakomios told him, "You carry this mat to the church and to the messhall. Then everyone will understand that you as a hard - worker". The hermit got the message. Pakomios died in AD 346.

The Rules for hermits written by Pakomios are still the basis for such rules extant in the east and in the west. The rules that St. Baselius formulated also are based on those of Pakomios.

### **3. St. Makarios**

St. Makarios was the divine light of the Settis community which was a renowned community of monks in Egypt. Even in his old age he was so full of shrewdness, wisdom and vigour that he was called the "old youngman."

Makarios was born in a village in about AD 300. He went alone as a monk to the desert of Settis when he was thirty. He came into contact with the Settis community of monks and was later accepted as their spiritual teacher and leader. The divine vigour of his face attracted many towards him. Divine power was visible in him from his fortieth year. He prayed for the sick and they were healed. He gave instructions to people about their future. Subsequently, he was ordained a priest; he became famous as an eloquent preacher. The monks of Nitrian mountains often invited him to listen to his sermons. He used to visit St. Antony. Makarios was exiled on account of his powerful speeches and actions against Arius and his followers. But Makarios soon returned; he breathed his last in his ninetieth year in his own community of monks.

‘Spiritual Discourses’ by St. Makarios are very famous. The important bits of advice that Makarios gave to other monks also are noteworthy. One of them is as follows. Some one told Makarios that a woman was made a mare by witchcraft. Makarios retorted, “The trouble is with you. Your eyes are under the spell of magic. Such things will happen to sinners.”

#### **4. St. Ephrem**

St. Ephrem is the great leader of the Syrian ascetic tradition. He was a spiritual poet, theologian and teacher. He was often called the “flute of the Holy Spirit.”

Ephrem was born at Nisibis, a city in the ancient Roman Empire, in about A.D. 306. His father was the priest of god Apollo. The boy Ephrem was driven away from home when his father knew that the boy was in touch with Christians. He went to Jacob, the metropolitan of Nisibis, who baptised him and brought him up. He showed great interest in the study of theological books and in doing kind deeds. So he was ordained a deacon and made the secretary of the Metropolitan. In his capacity as the secretary he also participated in the Synod of Nyecea. Later he was appointed the principal teacher of the Nisibis school. He accepted the hard and strict life style of a monk while working as a teacher there. Then he lived a solitary life. He shone as an ideal model of a monk. He ate simple food and wore simple clothes. Though living alone, he was concerned about the problems of the society around him and tried to solve them. He was gifted with elegant language, brilliant imagination, fine tune in music, spiritual vigour and singular analytical power of a theologian. As a result he produced many beautiful literary works.

The attack by Persians and immigration to Eddesa were two important incidents in Ephrem’s life. The people of Nisibis prayed, under the leadership of Ephrem, when the Persians made preparation to attack Nisibis for the first time. Miraculously the Persians retreated back. But when the Persians attacked Nisibis again, the people of Nisibis immigrated to Eddesa. Ephrem gave them leadership in their long journey and in their settling down there. He also shifted his school from Nisibis to Eddesa.

St. Ephrem and St. Baseluis respected each other (the story of their meeting together is famous). Ephrem was living alone in his old age in a cage outside the city of Eddesa. Suddenly famine and epidemic broke out in the city. Ephrem came out of the cave and gave active leadership to the relief measures. He was nearing his death when he gave the following message to his disciples, “Don’t make any speeches praising me, don’t sing any songs extolling me, don’t arrange any pompous burial, don’t make memorials for me, don’t keep my remains. I am a sinner.” Ephrem died at Eddesa in 373.

Ephrem wrote in Syriac many valuable works of prose and verse about the Bible, theology and about the life of monks. Some of his prayers and hymns are included in worship. He explains a theological matter with the sweetness of music in one of his hymns connected with the ‘Denha Festival’ (Feast of Epiphany). It is as follows:

“Good God is careful about two things.  
The loving He does not deny our freedom;  
He does not allow us to spoil our freedom in any way.  
Had he denied it, our freedom would have been weak.  
Had he not considered it, we would have lost His help.”

## **5. St. Epiphanius**

St. Epiphanius, who later became the Metropolitan of the island of Cyprus, was the great leader of the monastic settlement of Plestinian monks. Though he shone as a great monk, he could not attain success in church administration and theology.

Epiphanius was born near Elutheropolis in Palestine in A.D.315. His parents must have been Christians. When he was young he took great care in learning languages like Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Coptic and Latin. Since he was interested in the movements of monks, he conducted a pilgrimage to visit the Egyptian monks and learn about their movement. He went back and started a hermitage near his own birth place. He lived there as a teacher and father the next thirty years. His saintly life drew many towards him. The Metropolitans of Cyprus chose Epiphanius as their Metropolitan; he was consecrated as the Metropolitan of Salamis, which was then known as the Roman

metropolis of Constantia. His thinking in theology was not deep. He thought that all that Origen wrote was absurd, and this endangered him in two ways. First, it led to a split in the church, secondly, he was used as an instrument by some people who hated one another. He died while on a journey in A.D. 403.

The most important works of Epiphanius are 'Anchored Man' and 'Panarion'. The latter is meant for treating those who have been bitten by serpents of heresy.

### **Exercises**

1. Compare the contributions of St. Antony and St. Pakomios.
2. What are the messages of St. Makarios and St. Epiphanius?
3. "St. Ephrem was a multi - faced genius": Elucidate.

## **Lesson 2**

### **Some Ascetic Leaders - Part 2**

St. Basilius: Life and works  Social Activities of Basilius  St. Makreana and the Movement of Christian Nuns.

#### **1. St. Basilius: Life and Works**

St. Paul of Thebes, St. Antony, St. Pakomios and St. Makarios were the leaders of the Egyptian church tradition. St. Ephrem was the leader of the Syrian church tradition and St. Epiphanius was the leader of the Palestinian church tradition. But St. Basilius was the first ascetic leader of the eastern (Greek) church tradition. Mar Basilius the Great is the Senior venerable member among the three Cappadocian fathers. Also called "Second Athanasius", he proved his personality not only in the ascetic movement but also in the realms of church administration and theology.

Basilius was one among the ten children of a rich family of Caesaria in Cappadocia around A.D.330. His father, Basilius, was



known as a scholar and eminent writer throughout Capadocea. His mother Emilia, was a house - wife, full of piety and discernment. Her father was a Christian martyr. The perfect devotion of their grand - mother, Makreena, helped them to grow in faith and devotion. The grand - mother's influence must have occasioned the dedication of the lives of four of them to God's work. Three of them became metropolitans: Baselius in Caisaria, Gregorios in Nisa and Peter in Sebesty respectively. The eldest sister Makreena became a nun and started a nunnery.

Baselius was educated in his own native place of Caesaria Constantinople and Athens. In Athens he had a great friend and support in Gregorios who later became the Metropolitan of Nasians. It was Gregorios who saved him from 'ragging' by senior students. By 356 Baselius returned to his native place and started work as a language teacher. But he was always perturbed by an indefinable urge for something else. It was only when he was living alone in the family property at Annesy that he had some peace of mind. His sister Makreena had started a nunnery at Annesy. Baselius took a decision to devote the whole of his time for God's work. Perhaps his sister influenced him in taking such a decision. He received baptism, and visited the hermitages of Egypt, Syria and Palestine. He came back, sold his property and other belongings and gave the money to the poor. He started a hermitage on the bank of the river Iris, opposite to Annesy. It was a delectable piece of land. The number of hermits gradually increased and Baselius formulated a few rules for them. He invited his bosom friend, Gregorios, to the hermitage. Gregorios came there and stayed with him for some time. Both together codified Origen's spiritual exhortations under the title 'Philokalia'. They also tried to reform and enlarge the rules for monks. Thus, the first five years of his ascetic life were joyful.

Metropolitan Eusebius of Caesaria (not the historian Eusebius) heard about Baselius and invited him to be his assistant. Baselius agreed. Eusebius ordained him a priest and gave him the responsibility of the diocesan administration. His friend Gregorios teased him for accepting the administration. However, Baselius soon returned to his own hermitage. But Eusebius called him back. When Metropolitan

Eusebius died Baselius was chosen to succeed him. As the Metropolitan he assumed the charge of administration of Caesaria and the whole of Pontus. In those days, there were around fifty dioceses under the Metropolitan of Caesaria. Baselius emphasised two things in administration- protection of true faith and social activities. He fought against Arius' heresy, against the political interferences occasioned by it and against the heresy by Macedonius. Emperor Valence once sent an officer to persuade Baselius by hook or by crook to accept Arius' faith. But he is reported, by Gregory (of Nasians), to have said to the officer as follows:

“If you confiscate the property of a man who has nothing of his own, he does not lose anything. I have nothing but a few books and a tattered cassock. I don't care even if you exile me. All places are the same to me. The land to which I am exiled is just like my own place, because the whole earth belongs to God. I am only a temporary dweller in it. Persecutions also do not harm me. My body is not my own..... Death brings me nearer to God. If you are killing me you are showing mercy to me” (Discourses 43, 49).

He spoke and wrote against those who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, after Arius. When there were certain power struggles, Baselius appointed Gregorios (of Nasians) as the bishop of a problem - ridden border diocese; this led to some misunderstanding between the two bishops.

Baselius the Great died on January 1, 379 after completing his duty as a shepherd in a problem - ridden period.

Baselius's works may be classified as books supporting faith, works about the Bible, those related to ascetic life and personal letters. 'Against Eunomius' and 'On the Holy Spirit' are the two important works among books supporting faith. He refutes in both the heresy of Arius and his followers and supports true faith. He says as follows casually in his discourse on the Holy Spirit.

“We all pray facing the east. Very few remember that we are then looking towards our old kingdom of paradise established by God in the east. Not many know why we are standing while praying on the first day of the week. By praying standing on the resurrection day,

we are reminding ourselves of the grace of resurrection’’ (27, 66, 29, 30).

He wrote once as follows against corruption in society:

“The exhortations of true faith are thrown to the winds. Greatness of priesthood is lost. There are hardly any shepherds who give the sheep the food of discernment. The conceited man misappropriates the money, meant for the poor, for his own luxury and to give presents to his own men. None obey the law. Freedom to sin seems to be rampant everywhere. Those who got appointment by trick give presents to their masters. The best present that they are fond of is the sin that they like most’’ (Letters, 92, 'Holy Fire, 153).

## **2. Social Activities of Baselius**

Among the church fathers there seems to be none who gave more importance to social activities than Baselius did. Baselius established a chain of social service that spread throughout the length and breadth of Capadocea. He established hospitals, rest houses and centre to give training in jobs. He also started institutions to help those who suffer from famine and poverty. He started Ptocho Tropion (centre to help the poor) in each small town, and appointed Cor - Episcopas to supervise each of them. The centre at Caesaria was greater than all other centres. The enterprises in Caesaria grew into the small town of Basiliad. It also came to be called the new town.

There was terrible famine in Caesaria subsequent to the drought of A.D.368. People ran about in a panic for water and food. Many money-grubbing men hoarded food grains. But Baselius talked to them in strong and persuasive language which made them open their shops and give away their hoard. It was nothing less than a miracle.

## **3. St. Makreena and the Movement of Christian Nuns**

St. Makreena, the elder sister of St. Baselius, is perhaps, the first to establish a nunnery not only in the eastern church, but in the church as a whole. Markreena’s grand mother, Makreena the elder, was a devotee of the wonder - working St. Gregorios. From her early days, Makreena developed dependence on God and a simple life style under

the influence of her pious grand - mother and her mother Emilia. They taught her one thing: to chant again and again Psalms when she got time. She continued this till the end of her life.

When Makreena attained youth, her parents found out a groom for her - youth who had profound scholarship in language and literature. But the groom died unexpectedly before marriage. Makreena was persuaded to marry another person. But she answered, “No. Man has only one birth and one death. In like manner she should marry only once.”

Thereafter Makreena started a more holy life. She was the friend, teacher, servant and above all the spiritual adviser of her younger brothers and sisters. The elder sister enjoyed the practical wisdom of Baselius, the spiritual zeal of Naucratis, the dreams of Gregorios and the innocence of Peter. But Makreena realized the transience and instability of earthly life when first her father died and then her brother Naucratis and her dear mother.

From then onwards she began to spend more time in prayer and fasting in the nunnery for virgins she started at Annesy. She did many things for the poor. She could get time to co-operate with Basiliad started by her brother, Baselius. There occurred famine in which the whole of Capadocea suffered. Makreena and her younger brother Peter used all their earnings and properties to feed the poor.

Makreena had been recognised as a saint by the time her end drew near. Some miracles also occurred because of her. The eye - disease of a child was cured by her prayer. She lay on a wooden plank. She had only one outer garment. The only ornament she had was an iron cross tied on a string which hung from her neck.

Gregorios of Nyssa was with her in her last moment.

### **Exercises**

1. Evaluate the social actions of Baselius.
2. What is St. Makreena's testimony to life ?

## Lesson 3

# St. Gregorios of Nazianzus

☐ St. Gregorios : Life ☐ Works ☐ Important Contributions

### 1. St. Gregorios: Life

Among the Capadocean fathers there is only one definitely known as ‘theologos’ (theologian). That appellation applies to St. Gregorios because it was he who dealt authoritatively with God (theos) who is the Word (logos). He was also known as the ‘Demosthenes of the Christian tradition.’

Gregorios was born around AD 330 at Arians near Nassians in Capadocea. His father was Gregorios who was the metropolitan of Nassians (In those days there were metropolitans who led family life). His mother, Nonna, was an ideal woman. Her parents also were Christians. Gregorios says in one of his speeches about the profound influence his mother had on him. “My mother dedicated me to God even before I was born.”

Gregorios was educated first at Caesaria in Capadocea and later at Caesaria in Palestine, Alexandria and Athens. He became acquainted with Baselius for the first time when he was studying language and literature at Caesaria in Capadocea. They kept that warm and intimate friendship till the end of their lives (thogh there was occasional displeasure between them).

When Gregorios returned to his native place after completing his education, Baselius invited him to his hermitage on the bank of river Iris in Pontus. The time that Gregorios spent there with Baselius forms the priceless moments of their spiritual life. There both together codified Philokalia and rules for hermits.

When Gregorios returned from Pontus his father invited him for church service and to help him in his work as the Metropolitan. The father persuaded him to become a priest, but he was dead against that idea. But at last he yeilded to others’ compulsion and was ordained a priest. Once he was ordained, Gregorios started thinking seriously

about his calling. He did not have the courage to remain where he was and do his duties. He again went back to Pontus. He was really stealing out of the place. But he returned from Pontus with new decisions. First he gave his people an explanation why he stole out of the place. Actually his explanation contains christian theological insights about priesthood. The young priest started helping his father in church affairs. His fame began to spread far and wide. He was a deep scholar who led a meek, ideal and simple life. He was liked by all.

Meanwhile, certain disputes about authority cropped up in Caesaria between Baselius and bishop Antimus. Baselius consecrated Gregorios as bishop and sent him to the diocese of Sasima to establish his right. But Sasima was unfit for human habitation and Gregorios was unhappy. He thought that Baselius was cruel to him, so he did not go to Nasima to assume the responsibility. When his father died, Gregorios administered the diocese of Nasians for two years and then went to Selucea for solitary life. But when Baselius died, the whole church demanded the service of Gregorios.

In 379 the believers of Constantinople invited him and he went there. Most of the believers in Constantinople were the followers of Arius. Gregorios lived in a small house, used it as a church and started his work. Gradually circumstances became favourable to him. Thousands assembled to listen to his speeches against heresy. Emperor Theodosius gave him back the important churches of Constantinople. It was when he was working as the bishop of Constantinople that Emperor Theodosius convened the second universal synod in 381.

The tussle for authority is always there. Some opposition cropped up about Gregorios's position in the church. But he never supported feud and abandoned his position in the church. The farewell speech that he made then has become famous. His health was declining, so he started a life of rest. He produced literary works staying in the estate of Arians which was his paternal property. He died in 389.

## **2. Works**

Gregorios's works about theology and those highlighting his spiritual experiences maintain a high standard. His works may be put

into four categories:

1. Theological 2. Discourses on special occasions 3. Letters and 4. poems. There are two theological works: “Theological Discourses” and “In Defence of my flight to Pontus.” The first is a collection of his speeches against Arius and the second is about priesthood. The most important among the discourses on special occasions are the funeral speeches he made when Baselius died. He wrote numerous letters to his friends and they reveal his personal relationship with them. He tried to narrate the story of his life in poetry.

### **3. Important contributions of Gregorios**

It was St. Gregorios who completed the interpretations on the Holy Trinity started by St. Baselius. It was Gregorios who, in the second universal synod of Constantinople effectively refuted the last shoot of Arius’s heresy, namely Mecedonianism. Gregorios had started much earlier to call St. Mary “the mother of God.” He never fought for position and power but withdrew willingly from tussle for them. He strongly believed that rational thinking has a significant place in theology. He says as follows in one of his theological discourses.

“Rationality is a gift from God. God himself has planted that in us. That is our first creed. We are all partners in that. That itself leads us to God through visible matters”. (Second Discourse 28, 16)

### **Exercises**

1. Compare the style of working of St. Gregorios and St. Baselius.
2. Analyse briefly the works of St. Gregorios.

## Lesson 4

# St. Gregorios of Nyssa, Golden tongued Ivanios

☐ Life of Gregorios ☐ Works and Contributions ☐ Life history of Ivanios ☐ Works and contributions.

### 1. Life of Gregorios

St. Gregorios was the third among the Capadocean fathers. He was known as the “star of Nyssa.” His elder brother Baselius was ceaselessly attached to work, his friend Gregorios of Nassians was an eloquent speaker whereas the younger one, Gregorios of Nyssa was the embodiment of spiritual vigour. He was a devotee who became eloquent in silence and a spiritual spark burning in devotional ascents.

Gregorios was born at Ceasaria in Capadocea in A. D. 335. His father, Baselius was a famous writer and language teacher. His mother was Emilia, a house - wife, the embodiment of all virtues. He studied under the guidance of his father and the elder brother, Baselius. Hence he sometimes called his brother “my teacher.” He does not seem to have received any formal school education.

Gregorios liked to visit and stay with the hermitage started by his elder brother, Baselius. Persuaded by Baselius, he became a deacon. But ignoring the work of the deacon, he did the work of a language - teacher. It is believed that at this time he married a young woman called Theosebaya.

Soon Gregorios realised that worldly work and family life could not quench his spiritual thirst. At the same time he received a number of letters from Baselius and from his friend Gregorios urging him for a life in a hermitage. Accordingly, he went to the hermitage on the bank of river Iris. There his life became brilliant, purified in the crucible of spiritual experiences. He got a lot of time to read, study and write.

It was at this time that Baselius appointed Gregorios as the Bishop of the small town of Nyssa. Since he had no experience or skill he



was not successful in administration. But he tried his best to confirm the believers in the true Nicene faith. Hence the followers of Arius deposed him once. Realising that his life was in danger he was forced to run away from Nyssa. But he was given a rapturous welcome when he came back to Nyssa at the death of Emperor Valencius who had sided with Arius.

Gregorios was given the responsibility of the greater diocese of Sebasta too. He played a significant role, along with his friend Gregorios, in the Synod of Constantinople in 381. He was often invited as the special guest and spiritual advisor of the royal palace in Constantinople. Generally his physical health was not good; he died in 394.

## **2. Works and Contributions of Gregorios**

His works are replete with literary elegance and spiritual vigour. They can be classified into five groups: 1. Works interpreting the Bible, 2. Books Supporting faith, 3. Spiritual and ascetic works. 4. Discourses and 5. Letters. The most important of the biblical interpretations are his work on the creation of man, that on the *Life of Moses* and his commentary on the Song of Songs. Prominent works supporting faith are Against Eunomius, Against Apollinaris and those dealing with spirit and resurrection (The discourse on Virginitly which has a close bearing on ascetic life is well-known).

St. Gregorios had made profound philosophical analysis of human freedom, and in this respect he is, perhaps, unparalleled among the eastern fathers. According to him, human freedom highlights that God gave man the possibility of becoming divine when he was created. The inner meaning of the fact that man is created in God's image, is that man is given partnership in God's freedom and goodness.

In his discourse on virginitly he says as follows about man's spiritual growth:

“When we remove the unnatural from us we come back to the virtuous state that ends happily. Which means that we come back to the state in which we were created in the beginning. This state bears similarity to God. But the attainment of that state is beyond our power

and ability. It is only the gift of God's generosity. He gave it to us during the first creation. What we can attain through our effort is only this: wash away the stains of sin and allow the soul to shine in pristine beauty.'"

### **3. Golden tongued Ivanios (St. John Chrysostom)**

#### **Life - History**

Ivanios of Antioch succeeded Gregorios Nassians as the Patriarch of Constantinople. Both had brilliant personality. But both failed to please the envious and those in authority; hence they had to give up their positions. The life history of Ivanios is the history of his unflinching fight against injustice.

Ivanios (John) was born at Antioch in AD 344 or 347 as the son of Secuntus and Auntusa who were Christians. He had his primary education under the great scholar, Libanius. He learned Christian faith from Miletus of Antioch and received baptism in 369. His father died leaving his mother who did not encourage him to lead an ascetic life. Meanwhile the Metropolitan advised him to become a priest, but Ivanios stayed away. After his mother's death Ivanios went to a mountain and lived as a solitary hermit for two years. He came back to Antioch due to ill - health. He was ordained a deacon by the Metropolitan who was also his teacher. After some time he was ordained a priest by Flavianos. He was a person of unparalleled eloquence. The Emperor of Constantinople also came to know about him. When Nectarios, the Patriarch of Constantinople died in 397, Ivanios was chosen as his successor. Theophilus of Alexandria was envious of this choice. But he himself gave leadership to the consecration ceremony under the instruction of the Emperor.

Patriarch Ivanios was much grieved when he saw the corruption and immorality rampant in society. He started speaking against them. He criticised the emperor, empress and the prime minister also. The displeasure of the palace and the envy of the Metroplotan of Alexandria conspired together to expel him. But on the day of his exile a terrible earthquake occurred which filled the palace with fear. Suddenly, Ivanios was called back. His return was a great event.

Thereafter, Ivanios' speeches and actions became very powerful. He spoke publicly against queen Eudoxia who erected her own statue and this initiated action against him. Though believers were with him he secretly left the place to avoid bloodshed. Meanwhile, the order to exile him also had been issued. He was exiled continuously from one place to another. He died at Pontus in 407. Later his mortal remains were brought to Constantinople during the rule of Theodocius II under royal escort.

#### **4. Works and Contributions**

Ivanios' works may be divided into four groups:

1. Works interpreting the Bible, 2. Discourses, 3. Moral and Ascetic Essays and 4. Letters. But the most important of all are the six books on priesthood. They deal with the loftiness of priesthood. They offer an explanation of his shirking priesthood. In one of them he says:

“Though the service of a priest takes place on earth it should be considered as taking place in heaven. This holy service was established not by man, angel or any other creation but by the Holy Spirit. He calls us who are earthly for the service of the angels. Hence we should be holy like the heavenly hosts to perform the holy rites.... When you see before your very eyes the Saviour as a sacrifice...

... when you see the participants in the sacrifice wrapped in divine glory caused by sacrificial blood, how can you think that you are on earth?... This miracle is due to God's grace for man. The one who is with the Father in heaven is at the same time being embraced in our hands....”

In one of his speeches based on the Acts of the Apostles Ivanios says: “This is what destroys the church. You don't like to hear the speeches that touch your hearts. You like speeches that give delight to your ears. You hear speakers as if you are listening to singers or those playing the lute.”

The greatest contribution of St. Ivanios is his practical application of the uncompromising Christin spirit against injustice and immorality.

## Exercises

1. 'Gregorios of Nyssa is the spokesman of spiritual experience.'  
Elucidate.
2. What is the message of life of St. Ivanios?

## Lesson 5

### **Coorilos of Jerusalem** (Cyril of Jerusalem) **Coorilos of Alexandria** (Cyril of Alexandria)

Coorilos of Jerusalem : Life history  Coorilos : about sacraments  
 Coorilos of Alexandria: Life history  Coorilos about mother of God and Incarnation.

There is no historical connection between St. Coorilos of Jerusalem and St. Coorilos of Alexandria, even though their names are the same.

### **1. Coorilos of Jerusalem: Life history**

Coorilos was born in Palestine around AD 313. He must have completed his education in Jerusalem and Caesaria. He became a deacon in 345. He was raised to the position of a priest by Maximus II in 345. Since he was a great scholar, the duty of teaching the candidates about the sacraments fell on his shoulders. The talks that he held on sacraments are still invaluable. Coorilos was consecrated the metropolitan of Jerusalem when Maximus died. Coorilos was a scapegoat of many wrong notions and so he was exiled many a time.

It was during his time that a great famine occurred in Jerusalem and its suburbs. Coorilos had to sell even the things of the church to support the helpless who came to him.

Coorilos was a spiritual father to the pilgrims who came to Jerusalem and to the hermits who lived there. He attended the Synod at Constantinople in 381 and signed the final decision against Arius and Macedonius. He enjoyed the peace that followed the synod for four or five years. He died in 386.

## 2. Coorilos about Sacraments

We have received from Coorilos about twenty four lectures on religious matters. Candidates were normally given baptism on the Easter day. An explanation used to be given before baptism about faith, especially about the sacraments they were going to receive. The five lectures on sacraments give such an explanation. These lectures give us an idea about the order of sacraments and worship that existed in the fourth century. From the lecture on baptism we can understand the meaning of that sacrament and the important rites in it: turning to the west the repudiation of the evil forces; turning to the east the declaration of faith in the Holy Trinity and in the only baptism, smearing of the holy oil, procession to the church and experience of the holy eucharist etc. are the important parts.

He gives the meaning of baptism as follows: “The saving water becomes your grave and mother at the same time. You participate in the death and resurrection of Christ through baptism and imitate Christ. You become the image of Christ.”

He emphasises in many places that the holy eucharist constitutes the blood and body of Christ.

“Who doubts Christ’s declaration that this is my body? Who doubts his confirmation that this is my blood ? His body in the shape of bread and his blood in the form of wine are given to you....”

St. Coorilos asserts that the holy qurbana is a sacrifice (23, 8-10).

## 3. Coorilos of Alexandria : Life History

Coorilos of Alexandria was a person who fought bravely against Nestorian heresy. We hardly know anything clearly about his life till he became the Metropolitan of Alexandria in 412. He must have completed his education at Alexandria staying with Metropolitan Theophilus, who was also his uncle (his father’s younger brother).

As soon as he became a metropolitan Coorilos started showing an uncompromising attitude to heresies. He said firmly that the true faith and security of the church were his important concerns and that he would do anything to protect them. In matters related to church

disputes two things influenced him much: 1. When Constantinople grew into a 'Second Rome', the position of the Metropolitan of Constantinople also was raised accordingly. As a result the importance of Alexandria was reduced; it was the anxiety caused by this development that the Alexandrian Patriarchs Theophilus and Coorilos had against golden-tongued Ivanios. 2. It was Alexandria alone that once gave chief contributions to the study of Christian theology. Alexandria had its own continuous line of thought too. It was at this time that another centre of Christian thought, with several differences developed in Antioch. Gradually there occurred disputes, feuds and rivalry among Christian thinkers on account of these two basic traditions; this rivalry, in a way, influenced the attitudes of various groups to the heresies. The toughness that Coorilos showed to Nestorius was to some extent due to this rivalry.

What we see in the life of Coorilos is the hard attempt to reestablish the vanishing glory of Alexandria.

Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, conceived of Jesus' divinity and humanity as two separate aspects. He opined that Virgin Mary has relation only with Jesus' humanity and, therefore, she cannot be called 'Mother of God.' Coorilos declared him a heretic in the Synod at Ephesus in 431 and had him excommunicated from the church.

Coorilos took great care in protecting the true faith. He also spent a lot of time in biblical studies. Gradually he withdrew from his eventful life and died in 444.

#### **4. Coorilos about the Mother of God and about Incarnation:**

Most of the works by Coorilos are biblical interpretations. He wrote two books to refute Arius's heresy and produced occasional writings against Nestorius. In addition to these, some of his discourses during Lent and a few other speeches also are available.

The basis of Nestorius' heresy was a wrong understanding of Christology. The principal mission of Coorilos was to correct it and propagate the appellation of "Mother of God."

Coorilos is of opinion that the union of the nature of God and man in Jesus Christ is beyond human comprehension. But the incarnate word of God is one nature of the one person who is the union of the nature of God and man. There was not a single moment in which the divine nature of Jesus existed differently from the human nature. Therefore, Coorilos argued that Virgin Mary must be called the ‘‘Mother of God’’ in that she gave birth to God on earth, and that was accepted as the official interpretation of the Church.

### **Exercises**

1. What is the principal contribution of Coorilos of Jerusalem to the Church ?
2. State the part played by Coorilos of Alexandria in the protection of true faith.

## **Lesson 6**

### **Jerome, Augustine**

Life history of Jerome    Works by Jerome    Life history of Augustine    Works by Augustine.

Jerome and Augustine are two church teachers and fathers who are particularly respected in the western church tradition. They were contemporaries. It is not sure whether there existed a sincere personal relationship in between them.

#### **1. Life history of Jerome**

Sofronius Eusebius Hieronimus (Jerome) was born at Stridon near Dalmatia around AD 349. Since his parents were rich, he received all possible education available then. He acquired profound scholarship in Greek and Latin languages and literature. While studying in Rome he observed well both the natural and spiritual aspects of life and chose the spiritual path. He received baptism from Liborius, the Metropolitan of Rome.

From Rome he went to the university at Trier for higher studies.

There he took the decision to become a monk. He started a social life at Aquila in the company of a few young men. In the vigour and purity of youth, they worked together to lead a perfectly saintly life. But they had different ideals. One among them was Rufinus. However, they could not live together for long. The society came to an end and Jerome set out to visit the hermitages and church centres of various places. He spent some time in Calsis desert where he received hard training in ascetic life. He learned Hebrew also at this time. When he returned to Antioch he was ordained a priest by Metropolitan Paulinus.

It was at this time that Jerome heard about Gregorios of Nassyans. He went to Constantinople to meet him, and spent some time with him studying the Bible. There in 381 he got acquainted with many well-known church fathers including Gregorios of Nyssa.

Once Jerome was invited to Rome to participate in some consultation. Damasus, the Metropolitan of Rome was so much impressed by his abilities that he appointed him as his secretary. A few years later he went from Rome to Palestine. A rich lady called Paula and her daughter travelled with him in search of a suitable place to lead an ascetic life. Paula and her daughter started a society for nuns; Jerome gave leadership to men for ascetic life.

Jerome wrote majority of his works staying in Bethelhem. It was at this time that Epiphanius visited Jerusalem and a dispute about Origenism started. As a result there grew illfeeling between Jerome and Rufinus. Another event that troubled Jerome's mind was the burning of his hermitage by Pelegian monks. When he came to realise that so many of his bosom friends were passing away, he felt that he also must be ready to go. He passed away in 419.

## **2. Jerome's works**

The important works of Jerome are related to the Bible. He prepared the Latin translation of the Bible under the title 'Vulgate.' Moreover, he wrote commentary for many biblical books. He wrote the biographies of great men who had lived before him. In addition to these, many of his speeches and letters have been collected.

## **3. Augustine: life history**

Thagasthe was a small town of Numedia in Africa. Aurelius



Augustine was born in AD 354 as the son of a Roman officer called Patricius at Thagasthe. His mother Monica was an ideal Christian. He had his primary education at Tagasthe. He learned Greek and Latin languages. He went from Thagasthe to Madaura for further study of language. After completing his study there he joined the university of Carthage for higher studies. His life in Carthage was a testing time for him and he succumbed to temptations. Augustine who was eighteen years old had a son, called Adeodatus, in a concubine.

Monica was very anxious that her son was going away from God and from his parents. She shed a lot of tear; she prayed ceaselessly for her son. Seeing her in tears the Metropolitan comforted her, "A son for whom so much tear was shed would never perish".

In his autobiography Augustine says that nothing could give peace to his agitated mind. He sought various ways for peace away from worldly pleasures. He read the holy scriptures, but in vain. He became a follower of Manichaeus and sought peace for nine years, but that too was in vain. He went again to Carthage after serving as a teacher at Thagasthe for some time. There he won fame as a good teacher of language and literature. He then reached Rome and became the principal teacher of language and literature in the university of Milan. But during all these years his soul was crying for peace.

Once he went to the church unwillingly and heard the sermon by Ambrose which influenced him profoundly. Meanwhile Monica had come to Milan in search of Augustine. Her aim was to persuade him for a legal marriage. Though that did not materialise she was happy to note considerable change in her son's character. Ambrose's sermons and Pontianus' accounts of the change of mind of various persons had touched his mind. In an agitated state of mind he heard the words, 'Take and read.' Immediately he opened the New Testament and read the 13th and 14th verses in the 13th chapter of Romans. The warning of those verses went deep into his heart. He seemed to experience peace that could not be expressed in words. That was the turning point in Augustine's life.

He gave up his job in Milan. He went to a solitary place with his mother and the son, to spend his time in Bible study, meditation and

prayers. By and by, he got ready to receive baptism. He and his son used to visit Bishop Ambrose and listen to his advice. Both received baptism on the Easter day of 386. Monica's joy knew no bounds; before long she passed away.

Augustine returned to Rome after his mother's death. In Rome he learned theology for about one year and then reached Carthage. Augustine, together with a few friends, established a hermitage at a lonely place near Thagasthe. The spiritual and theological knowledge and experience of Augustine increased. An expert teacher of language he proved his dexterity in spiritual field too. Metropolitan Valerius of Hippo wanted him to become a priest and he obeyed. Later Valerius himself consecrated him as his assistant metropolitan. When Valerius died Augustine became the metropolitan of Hippo and in that capacity he looked after the sheep well. He devoted his time to literary works also. Meanwhile he had to fight against Manichaeian philosophy and against the heresies of Donatus and Pelagius. His eventful life came to an end in 430.

#### **4. Works by Augustine**

The owner of a very powerful and clear style of language, Augustine produced many works. Some of them are autobiographical and philosophical. Some support faith. He wrote commentaries on the faith of the church and on biblical books. Another category of books contain his views on church service. We get a close view of his personality from his autobiographical work "Confessions". His "Confessions" may be taken as an explanation of the principle contained in the following: "God, you created us for you. Our heart is restless till it finds consolation in you." His most important work is the "City of God", where his philosophy and theology meet together. In the works supporting faith Augustine refutes, the Manichaeian philosophy that matter is evil, it is not God's creation, The heresy of Donatus that only saints should become members of church, the result of sacraments are brought about by the purity of the priest and the Pelagian teaching that man can attain perfection of holiness by his own effort. His sermons are based on moral principles. When it is said that mature love brought God to men, Augustine says about the mature love amidst human beings as follows:

“Those who have mature love do not love anything that does not deserve love. They cannot but love those things worthy of love, even though they do not deserve love”.

It was the works of Augustine that laid the foundation of the western theology of the Middle Ages.

### **Exercises**

- 1) When did the ascetic life of Jerome actually begin? What were the events associated with that?
- 2) What were the factors that led to the change of mind of Augustine?