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AN ORTHODOX CATECHISM ON THE FAITH AND LIFE OF THE CHURCH

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The Rev. Dr (Father) V. C. SAMUEL

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COVER

Icon of the Holy Trinity painted by Andrei Rublev, the Russian Orthodox Monk, around the year 1422 A.D. is a treasure of the Russian Orthodox church. The Original today is in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. The form is that of the Three Angels who appeared to Abraham, believed to be the Holy Trinity manifesting itself in that form. It is the perfection of the divine tri-une Community, manifested in forms of moving circular spherical dynamics, drawing the human community into the divine community and thus deifying the former.

Foreword

Here is a book which was long awaited for. Our young people who are born and brought up outside Kerala have nothing to turn to for understanding the faith of their fathers with the result that many of them join Sunday Schools and youth groups of other Christian denominations where English is the medium. So it is a great need to bring out a book in English that would explain the faith of the Church and answer the many questions raised by our educated young people.

I find no person more competent in our Church than Dr V. C. Samuel to write such a volume. His deep rooted knowledge of the Syrian Patristics, vast and profound experience in the field of Theological Education, his ability to present Church doctrines in simple and lucid manner, all these have contributed much for this excellent work. He has taken into consideration all important questions that our young people may raise in their effort to understand the faith and life of the Church. The 'question and answer' style is very ancient in the instruction of faith, which still holds its value.

The book deals with all the important doctrines of our Church. Our faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the Blessed Trinity, is explained first. That is followed by questions about the Church, Ministry and the Sacraments. The theology and practices behind each of them are clearly presented. In the section that deals with the discipline of the Church, the place of prayer and fasting is well explained. The last chapter on Mission and Unity of the Church takes care of all relevant questions in relation to other religions and other Christian denominations. The discussion on the Ecumenical Movement will be deeply appreciated by all who want to know about it.

The questions given at the end of each chapter are very useful for group discussion and further exploration.

The whole approach in this book is not polemical, but didactic. There is neither blind conservatism nor unreasonable progressiveness. This volume will be a great blessing and source of help to have a briefing in the faith and practices of the Orthodox Church.

We are most happy that it was possible to have this valuable book published at the PLATINUM JUBILEE OF MGOCSM.

Philipos Mar Theophilus
Metropolitan of Bombay & Ankamali
President, MGOCSM

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INTRODUCTION

This book, as its title indicates, is a catechism.

Question: What is a catechism?

Answer: Catechism is a mode of instruction by means of questions and answers. The questions noted here are the ones which people in general are likely to ask, and in the answers the teaching of the Church in relation to the questions is given.

Q. What subjects are taken up for discussion in the book?

A. The faith and certain aspects of life inculcated by the Church are treated here rather briefly.

Q. Will the discussion of these subjects give a fairly satisfactory understanding of the Church?

A. No, that will need a glance into the history of the Church as well.

Q. How are the three areas of faith, life and history of the Church related?

A. The question is indeed important. In simple words, *faith* signifies the personal affirmation of the reality of God and its implications to life in every situation. God is believed, for instance, to be the creator of all things who brings them all to perfection. God who made the universe and all that it contains will restore them to the final ordering he has set for them. *Life* of the Church has this faith as its driving force, which offers it a character of its own in the various aspects of service in the world. *History* is the stage in which, with ups and downs, the Church lives and serves, both as a community and in its members as individual persons, on the strength of this faith.

Q. What is the Indian (Syrian) Orthodox Church?

A. The Indian (Syrian) Orthodox Church is that section of

the historic St. Thomas' Church which seeks to maintain an Eastern character of Christianity within the Indian context.

- Q. What is the fundamental character of Eastern Christianity which our Church tries to conserve?
- A. Eastern Christianity claims to have continued the tradition of the Church from its beginning in its genuine form, within the life-setting of the East Mediterranean world. We have inherited it through our contacts with Churches of West Asia, whether of Persia or of Syria.
- Q. How does this character affect our Church in its everyday life?
- A. We shall see this more fully as we proceed. Here it may be noted that Eastern Christianity does not seek to promote the idea of an administrative unity for the world Church. It does, however, maintain the unity of the communities in faith and life within different cultural and geographical areas. Administratively, churches of the East are on the whole autocephalous and in many cases autonomous as well.
- Q. What do the words 'autocephalous' and 'autonomous' mean?
- A. An autocephalous church is a self-governing body under the leadership of its own ecclesiastical head, say Patriarch or Catholicos, or even Archbishop or Metropolitan. Both words are derived from Greek roots. Etymologically, whereas 'atocephalous' means having its own head, 'autonomous' means having its own laws or individuality and selfhood. An autonomous church is therefore both self governing and independent in life, worship and even traditions.
- Q. Can these points be illustrated?
- A. During the early centuries the Church spread in the Mediterranean and the West Asian world. In each of these regions the communities evolved its forms of worship and practices in life within the cultural and social setting of the concerned regions. This was in fact necessary be-

cause of the need for relevant communication. In this way there emerged differing traditions in Egypt, Syria, Rome, Persia, Greece, Armenia, Ethiopia, and so on. The churches in these areas thus evolved into autonomous Christian communities.

Q. Were all autonomous churches autocephalous and vice versa?

A. No. The autonomous churches were not in every case autocephalous. The Church of Ethiopia was autonomous from very early in its history, for it had its own forms of worship and church practices, but it became autocephalous by having its own Patriarch only in the present century. On the other hand, there are the churches of Russia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, and so on. They are autocephalous, as each of them has its own ecclesiastical head. But they are not autonomous, because they do on the whole adopt the Byzantine forms of worship and other practices.

Q. What does 'Orthodox' mean?

A. It means holding to the right faith and correct worship. This also is derived from Greek. In a word, it means only 'genuine'. 'Orthodox Church' means Church which hold to the Christian faith and life in its genuine form.

Q. What is the status of our Indian (Syrian) Orthodox Church? Is it autonomous or autocephalous or both?

A. With the tradition of an apostolic foundation, our Church should be autonomous and autocephalous. But in our history we happened to pass through vicissitudes of various kinds, which led it to be dependent on churches abroad. As it is, our Church is autocephalous under the leadership of His Holiness our Catholicos. It is not yet autonomous, as we still follow the Antiochene Syrian forms of worship and Church practices almost invariably.

Q. Should we endeavour to change them, and if so why?

A. This is a large topic, which cannot be answered here adequately. We need say only that these were all produced before the 13th century against the background of a cultural and social setting which was very different from that

of ours today. In any case, we have to translate the forms from Syriac into our language in order that they may be used in churches. If we put a little more effort than we exert in producing translations, we shall be able to procure our own forms of worship more relevant and useful.

- Q. Does this not mean that we do not have to be 'Syrian' in order to be 'Orthodox'?
- A. Yes, precisely. Whatever traditions and forms of worship which we have received from the Antiochene Syrian or other churches should be examined by us on the basis of fundamental theological principles and our life conditions, and adapt them to serve our need effectively.
- Q. What is the criterion to be followed in promoting this goal?
- A. The criterion should be to conserve the Christian truth and to help people individually and corporately to live on the strength of the faith.

God in the faith of the Church

SECTION ONE: WHAT FAITH IS

Q. What is faith?

A. Two meanings of the word 'faith' should be noted. In the first place, faith is an attitude of trusting in somebody. In the present instance it refers to our trusting in God. Jesus Christ gives the illustration of a child in relation to its mother (See Matthew 18: 3; 19: 14; Mark 10: 15; and Luke 13:17). The child trusts its mother without the least reservation. In the same way, he says, we should have unquestioning faith in God. Secondly, faith is a formal statement like the Creed, in which the nature of our faith is recorded.

Q. The sense of the word 'faith' in the first meaning noted above being personal and subjective, how can we speak of a faith of the Church?

A. The Church is a community of believing people. Their belief in God corresponds to the sense in which the Creed affirms his reality. The faith of the individual persons comprising the community and the statement of belief as it is recorded in the Creed, are both included in the expression 'the faith of the Church'.

Q. What need is there for faith?

A. Human nature is such that it does spontaneously seek refuge and protection from a source or sources believed to be capable of offering it. Born at a particular time, the human person lives in this world for a period of time and then passes from hence by death. During this transitory life man is not really the master of his existence, and he longs for assistance from God who, he believes, can give

it all the time. Also, when he departs from this life he hopes to be with God who alone is beyond all earthly limitations. Thus faith gives man a foundation in life, whether in this world or in the world to come.

- Q. Why should the Church have faith?
- A. The Church, as we shall see more fully later, is a community which offers the ground for a life of faith to people, both as individual persons and in their community living. This enables them to live courageously holding to ideals on the one hand, and be witnesses in the world for faith on the other.
- Q. How is the Church's affirmation concerning God related to other emphases in its faith?
- A. It is by affirming the reality of God that the Church views the world and life as a whole in its light. Therefore, faith in God is not merely the mental assent that God is there, but is the basis of a life that touches all aspects of our existence. Thus the faith of the Church regarding matters other than God is expected to be directly consistent with faith in God. The faith of the Church is a totality, in which God occupies the central place.
- Q. What is the value of the Church's faith?
- A. The value is to offer man a way of life which enables him to live without fear, but in hope and brotherly love.

Some questions for you to answer

1. Do you have the faith that God is your ultimate source of hope?
2. How do you seek to keep alive this faith?
3. Do you experience fear about what will happen to you, or to those whom you love, in the future? How can you get over that fear?

SECTION TWO: GOD IN THE CHURCH'S FAITH

- Q. What do we mean by 'God'?
- A. God is the name in the English language for the one and only Reality, which has no beginning and no end.

Existing eternally on his own, without having to depend on anything or anyone else, God is ever perfect in himself. He creates and controls all things ultimately, including all men and women, and is self-existent and everywhere present.

- Q. What do the words 'no beginning and no end' mean?
- A. They mean that *there never was* a time when God was not and *there will never be* a time when he will not be there.
- Q. What is meant by saying that God exists eternally?
- A. God *exists* in the sense that *he is*, and he exists eternally because he is there *always*.
- Q. Is there not a difference between *to be eternal* and *to be there always*?
- A. Yes, there is. To be eternal means to be there beyond time, and to be always means to be running through the entire span of time. The Himalayas we say is there always. It has been there from the beginning of the world and is likely to be there till the end of the world. God is there always, not in this sense, but in that he is there in such a way that he perceives all the vast expanse of time, including the past, the present and the future, as an ever-extending present. Therefore God is eternal in the sense that he is there now as he was from the beginning and will be for ever. This is what we mean when we say in our prayers, 'As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be'. God does not change with time. He is the same always and eternally. (See Psalm 90:1-4; II Peter 3:8).
- Q. How is God present everywhere?
- A. 'When' and 'Where' are adverbs implying time and space respectively. When we say that God is eternal, we mean that he transcends both time and space. Just as he perceives past, present and future as an ever-extending present, he perceives also the entire area of space without being exclusively localized anywhere.

Q. How can this be possible?

A. This is possible because God is *spirit*, with no body.

Q. What is spirit?

A. Spirit is the reality which is not perceived by our physical senses, and yet is discernible by the mind and affirmed in faith as more real and dependable than anything that is perceived.

Q. How do we discern spirit?

A. Spirit is a word which has more than one meaning in the English language. What we refer to in the present context may be illustrated in this way. When we perceive an object we have it physically present before us, and it impresses on our minds an idea which alone does in fact continue with us. What we call 'knowledge' consists of ideas formed by the mind in this way. It does, to be sure, result from the interpretation of perceived facts which the mind offers. Meaning of anything is thus spiritual in character which the mind discerns.

Q. How do we discern God by the mind?

A. Spiritually enlightened persons maintain that we discern God by the mind in two ways. Firstly, by seeing that the ultimate meaning of all things is found only in God, and secondly, by realizing the presence of the divine in us. The first is called the *cosmological* approach, and the second is referred to as the *ontological* approach.

Q. Please explain the cosmological approach further?

A. As we have seen, the meaning of anything results from the mind's interpretation of observed facts. In interpreting raw facts the mind discerns more in them than they are present to the senses. In the same way, by perceiving the world and life in it, the mind is led to realize that all things are held together and made intelligible in God. The somological approach has been expressed in different ways. On the whole all of them aim at conserving this emphasis.

Q. Do you mean that all people see this meaning for the world by their minds?

- A. No, what is implied here is that the Church and the Christian people in general see this meaning, which alone can in their view make sense of the world and offer a worthy ideal for life.
- Q. What does the ontological approach tell us?
- A. It tells us that the eternal and ever-present God dwells in us and guides us to that which is good and noble, truthful and loving. In fact, it is implied in all that is already noted above about God.
- Q. What shall we do to realize God's presence in us and follow his way in our lives?
- A. We shall take up this question for a fuller answer in discussing prayer, worship and sacraments. In the present context it may be noted that we realize the presence of God in us by developing an attitude of trusting God in times, as much of joy and happiness as of sorrow and struggle in life. This is a subjective and personal experience which we should seek to enjoy continually.
- Q. What is meant by saying that God exists on his own?
- A. The answer to this question will become clearer if we look into our own lives. We have to rely constantly on other persons, things and circumstances of various kinds for the fulfilment of our needs. We are so dependent upon them that if any of them that are relevant fails, our plans also will remain unsuccessful. God is not so. He does not have to depend upon anything else besides himself.
- Q. What is the meaning of the statement that God is perfect in himself?
- A. The answer to this question is implied in what is noted above. We look for assistance from outside, because we do not have in ourselves all the resources that we need. God, on the other hand, has in himself all that is required for him in fulness.
- Q. How is it that God is self-existent?
- A. We have already noted that God exists in the sense that he is. We also can be said to exist in this sense. There is

however a difference. Ours is a dependent existence, because we have to rely upon many things outside ourselves for our life. We need, for example, a house to live in, friends to converse with, food to eat, and so on. God, on the other hand, does not look for anything apart from himself for his existence. He exists in, and is sufficient unto, himself.

God, then, is the one and only Reality, that is eternal and self-existent, independent and sufficient in himself.

Some questions for you to answer

1. How can we be sure that God in whom we put our trust is able to offer us the protection which we need?
2. What is meant by saying that God is eternal and really independent?
3. What effect does this faith have on our lives?

SECTION THREE: GOD IS PERSONAL

- Q. By the word 'God' do we mean only the power that is immanent in the universe?
- A. No, we do certainly acknowledge that God is active in the world, and that therefore he is immanent in it. But we confess that God is more than that.
- Q. How is God more?
- A. God is more in that he is personal.
- Q. What is meant by saying that God is personal?
- A. A person is one who is endowed with the power of reasoning, planning and acting. As personal, God also thinks and plans, and carries out all things towards the attainment of his goal.
- Q. Since man also is personal in this sense, can we say that God is like a man?
- A. It is correct to say that man is a person, but God who is personal is not like man.
- Q. What is the difference?
- A. The difference, in short, is that God is Creator and man

is a creature. As a creature, man is so made that from the state of infancy he grows into full human stature, and the growth never comes to an end. This growth affects man's personality as well. God the Creator, on the other hand, is eternally perfect as person also. He grows neither more nor less, but remains the same for ever. We can say therefore that whereas God is eternally personal in the full sense of the term, man does ever advance into the fulness of personality.

Q. How are we to understand God as personal?

A. The personal God is all-love and all-goodness. He is all dependable and all truthful. In other words, God is the source of all that is good, noble and true.

Q. What do these expressions mean?

A. In the world as well as in our own lives we find a combination of good and evil, love and hatred, dependability and betrayal, and so on. Regarding every such pair of quality, God represents and is the source of the first only. He is untouched by the second.

Q. How can God be said to be so?

A. Though the world witnesses only a mixture of love and hatred, and so on, that which abides is only the first in the series. That alone comes from God.

Q. Where, then, does the other come from?

A. This point is discussed later on. Here it suffices to say that hatred, evil, betrayal, and so on, are qualities of life in this transitory world, which will ultimately come to an end.

Q. What fundamental implications can we draw from this emphasis?

A. God, the eternal who is perfect in himself, is all-love. He is the source of all truth and goodness. He has created the world, and he guides it to the final goal of ultimate love, truth and goodness. The eternal Mind and all-sovereign Lord, God will triumph over all opposition. We

therefore put our complete trust in him and, depending on his power, live in this world, holding to the ideal of love, truth and goodness.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What can we do in order to grow in divine qualities of life?
2. What are the divine qualities which we should seek to inculcate in our lives?
3. Are you able to look upon the weak and the poor with love and care?

SECTION FOUR: GOD IS TRIUNE

Q. Is not God one?

A. Yes, he is.

Q. How, then, do we speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as though God were three?

A. The answer to this question can be given only by taking up a brief discussion of the doctrine of the blessed Trinity. This should include the rational basis of the doctrine as well as its religious foundation. It is on the religious ground that we speak of God as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Q. What is the rational basis of the doctrine?

A. In simple words. God is the ultimate ground of all that there is, the ground of both community and unity. He is not therefore one in the sense of the numerical digit or three in the arithmetical reckoning, but is triune.

Q. What is triune?

A. It means three in one and one in three.

Q. How can this idea be explained?

A. The idea underlying the word 'triune' is not anything strange in our usual experience. Two illustrations may be noted. In the first place, we speak of love. In concrete experience of love there is a person who loves, another person who is loved and the personal relation that binds them to-

gether. Without these three factors being in harmony there is no situation of love. Secondly, a similar point can be made with reference to knowledge. What we call 'knowledge' is based on what the subject derives from the 'object'. Thus in a knowledge situation also we have the knowing subject and the known object and the relation that binds them together. These examples referring to two of the most vital aspects of human experience are enough to show that three in one and one in three is an idea of great importance in our everyday life.

- Q. How can this fact of human experience be ascribed to God?
- A. In answering this question, we must recall the affirmation that God is eternal and perfect in himself, who alone has absolute existence. Man, on the other hand, is subject to time. Endowed with only a dependent status, he enjoys only finite existence. Therefore, in human experience the subject and the object are separate and distinct from each other, who have to be brought together by a third factor. God is indeed different. Being in himself complete and perfect, he lacks nothing. He is at once the subject, the object and the relation that binds them. He does not have to be perfected by the addition of anything from outside of himself.
- Q. What, then, about the world, and God's relation to it?
- A. The world, as we shall see, is created. A created reality has only a dependent existence. It is not therefore of the same type as that of God. Created by God, the world is grounded in and upheld by him.
- Q. What is the connection between saying that God is the ground of community and unity, and that he includes in himself the subject, the object and their link?
- A. The connection is, I think, self-evident. Take, for instance, the illustration of the love situation or the knowledge situation. Each of them is a unity, which brings the three together into harmony. But in neither case, the three parts

are invariably united. God, on the other hand, is invariably united, so that he can be affirmed as being the ground as much of unity as of community.

- Q. What is the religious basis of the Trinitarian doctrine?
- A. We begin our prayers and public worship in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and ascribe glory to the same during the service on a number of occasions. This shows that we call on God as the eternal Father and with him the eternal Son and the eternal Spirit, in other words as the holy Trinity.
- Q. How do we confess God as the holy Trinity?
- A. We confess that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Q. Since God is one, do we mean by these words only that the one God has three names?
- A. No, we mean that the one God is eternally Father, who has with him eternally the Son and the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Father is the eternally perfect God, who has with him the Son who is eternally born of him, and the Holy Spirit who comes forth eternally from him. Each of them is indeed perfect God, and the reality by which he is God, namely Godhead, is the same. Therefore, God is one, and the same is also three.
- Q. If they are three persons, are they not also three Gods?
- A. The question is legitimate if we follow our usual logic. For us three persons are three separate human individuals. But, as we have already shown, we do not speak of God by using that logic. To illustrate the point further, God is the ground of all existence and existents, not one of the existents that constitutes the universe. For this reason, in talking of God, our language and logic should be different. Accordingly, we affirm that God, the ground of all existence, is one, and that the same God is also three. He is at once Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Q. What other implications can we draw from the affirmation that God is triune?
- A. We have shown that the three eternal persons have the

same Godhead. To this should be added that they have the same authority, the same will, the same operation, and the same nature. The divine authority of the Father, for instance, is the same for the Son and the Holy Spirit. In willing and acting also they express the same energy.

- Q. What is the meaning of the statement of the celebrating priest in the holy Qurbana, God the Father who created the world is with us, God the Son who redeemed the world is with us, and God the Holy Spirit who brings all things to perfection and fulfilment is with us? Is not a division of operation implied in these words?
- A. If we weigh the words in question in the light of what we have already noted, we shall see that the division of operation is not anything real. God the Father is eternally and unceasingly with the Son and the Holy Spirit, so that in creating he has the Son and the Holy Spirit with him. In the same way, God the Son redeems the world in the union of will and operation with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also, in bringing all things to perfection, has the Father and the Son with him (See John 14:21-23; 17:21-23).
- Q. How then are they different?
- A. They are different in their respective personal properties. The Father, for example, has fatherhood as his property and he alone is father; the Son has sonship as his property, and he alone is son; the Holy Spirit alone is the spirit who links the Father with the Son, and the Son with the Father.
- Q. What is our basis for making these affirmations?
- A. Our basis, in a word, is God's self-revelation. In himself God is beyond our capacity to know. We can know him only insofar as he reveals himself to us (John 3:33f; 8:23f.)
- Q. How does God reveal himself to us?
- A. God who created the world has a witness to himself in it. In general we can observe it both in nature and in us. The Psalmist proclaims: 'The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork' (19:1).

As for God's revelation of himself in us, we have already noted in discussing the ontological approach that the Spirit of God dwells in us and guides our minds to realize his presence with us. The eternal God is present everywhere and always, pre-eminently in us. (See Ps. 139:1-5; Jer. 12:3; Rom. 11:36; Acts 17:18).

- Q. Has not God manifested himself more fully in Jesus Christ than in anything or anybody else?
- A. Yes, he has.
- Q. How has he done this?
- A. As we shall see later, Jesus Christ was a historical person who lived in this world at a particular time and in a particular place. His immediate disciples and the early Christian community believed and affirmed that he was the Son of God who revealed God the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 1:14;12:45;14:9), worked out the world's salvation from sin, evil and death (Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 3:1f.), and that we realize in faith the salvation which he has thus accomplished through the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15; Rom. 8:22-24).
- Q. Does the Church have any basis in biblical testimony for the affirmation that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- A. The basis is indeed the confession regarding the incarnation of God the Son in Jesus Christ (John 1:14 and 3:16). From the beginning the Church took this faith seriously. Thus those who joined it were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), and the apostolic Church adopted the Trinitarian benediction, 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.' (II Cor. 13:14).
- Q. What is meant by the statement in the Creed that the Son is 'of the same substance with the Father'?
- A. The expression contains an important emphasis concerning God. 'Of the same substance' or 'consubstantial' with the Father is spoken of the Son and the Holy Spirit. What is meant here is that the Son/the Holy Spirit/has the

same substance as that of the Father. The credal affirmation is that the Father and the Son have one and the same substance.

Q. What is substance?

A. *Substance* is a philosophical term with a history that goes back to ancient Greek thinkers and continues to modern times in Western philosophy. There is a serious effort on the part of Western philosophers in modern times to give it up altogether. In Indian philosophy this is a central concept, the Sanskrit equivalent being *sath*.

Q. What does the word mean?

A. The English word 'substance' is derived from the Latin *substantia*, which is a combination of *sub* meaning 'under' and *stantia* from *stare* meaning to 'stand'. Thus *substance* means 'that which underlies'. In other words, *substance* signifies 'the reality which makes a thing or a person what it or he is'. In Greek it is *ousia*, which is used also in Syriac, though the latter has its own word *ithutha*. A less philosophical word would be 'essence'. The substance of God is his essence or being, which in fact is Godhead. The credal statement that the Son is of the same substance with the Father means that the Godhead of the Son is the same as the Godhead of the Father. Though the Father is eternally father and the Son is eternally son, the reality by which each of them is affirmed to be God is the same. The phrase is an attempt to confess that God the Father and God the Son are at once one and two.

Q. What, then, about the Holy Spirit?

A. The Holy Spirit is also of the same substance with the Father and for that matter with the Son as well. God is thus the consubstantial Trinity, an expression which is often found in our prayers. We begin our prayers in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and ascribe the same glory equally to all the three of them. To cite another important example, the third benediction in the holy Qurbana service reads, May the grace and mercy of God, the holy and glorious, uncreated and self-

existent, eternal and adorable, and consubstantial Trinity be with you all.

Q. Why is this idea left out in the Creed?

A. The Creed which we recite daily in our prayers and public worship was originally composed in the 4th century, in the face of the teaching of Arius and his followers that the Son was only a creature. The Arian school did not address themselves to the question of the Holy Spirit in the beginning. It was raised only later in the same century, but by that time the adoption of a philosophical term like *substance*, which was not found in the scriptures, in the Church's Creed had come under serious criticism, and it came to be unpopular. Though it continued to be in use with reference to the Son out of respect for the Council of Nicea in 325, where it was introduced for the first time, and though it had a central place in the Christological controversy of the 5th and subsequent centuries, it was not adopted with reference to the Holy Spirit. But the idea that the Holy Spirit is God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son, and that he is worshipped and glorified equally with the Father and the Son, is affirmed in the third para of the Creed.

Q. Would you sum up the discussion of our faith in God attempted so far?

A. We may do it in this way. God is the eternal, self-existent, independent and consubstantial Trinity. At once *One* and *Three*, he transcends the limitations of time and space, and all else. As he is absolutely dependable and trustworthy, we can count on his infinite love and grace, and live in this world courageously holding to the ideals of truth and nobility.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What rational basis do you see for the triune nature of God?
2. What is the religious basis of the doctrine?
3. What implications for everyday life do you see in the doctrine?
4. Discuss the New Testament basis for it.

SECTION FIVE: GOD IS CREATOR

Q. How is God related to the world?

A. God's primary relation to the world is that he is its creator. The Creed begins with the statement that 'We believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible'. The word 'maker' here is an equivalent of 'creator'.

Q. What is creation?

A. Creation refers to the bringing into being of something new which had not existed before in any form.

Q. What do the words 'in any form' imply?

A. They imply that by 'creation' we do not mean the bringing into being of something new from something else that was already there.

Q. In what sense is God the creator of the world?

A. God is creator in the sense that he brought the world into being in the beginning and continues to guide it, so that it ever becomes newer. Thus when we say that God is the creator of the world, we mean that ultimately he is the Lord of the world, of history, and of the universe as a whole.

Q. Are we not making new things?

A. Yes, we are. Insofar as what we make is really new, we are its creators. In fact, within limits, we are co-creators with God.

Q. What is the difference between God's creating and our creating?

A. In answering this question we must recall our discussion in the second and third sections above. God creates on his own, without having to depend on anything outside of himself. Man, on the other hand, creates by using opportunities, materials and circumstances that are available to him. We can say that God's creation is independent, as he himself is independent. But man's creation, however, new it may be, is dependent on many factors.

Q. How did God create the world in the beginning?

A. The question of how is not easy to answer. What we can say is that God brought the world into being originally in his own independent way, and that he makes it possible for it to develop as a living organism under his ultimate control.

Q. On what basis do we make this affirmation?

A. Our basis is the confession of the Church as it is recorded in the Creed and conserved in its teaching. It means that God who transcends all limitations of time, space and everything else, and who is in himself perfect and independent, is the ground of the world which exists in time and space with other limitations?

Q. Is it, then, that God created the world, is only an affirmation?

A. We shall say 'Yes', adding that it may be called a faith affirmation.

Q. What does that mean?

A. It means that the question of how the world came into being and how it continues in existence as a living organism cannot be given a straight answer on the authenticated historical records and undisputedly observed facts. Any answer to it is offered from a particular perspective. Scientists, for example, suggest answers from the point of view of their own respective intellectual disciplines, and different religions and philosophic systems have each of them its own answer. The Church has its stand-point based on its faith.

Q. Does this mean that the Church's emphasis is only one of the possible positions?

A. No, the Church's teaching is consistent with its faith, which alone, as it believes, can ultimately answer the innumerable problems and realities of our existence.

Q. Is it, then, that the other answers are of no value?

A. No, that is not what we really mean to say. On the other

hand we mean that they are all valuable insofar as they go, and in explaining the point the Church does not ignore them. In fact, taking them seriously, the Church offers its faith affirmation as something which completes them.

- Q. What creation is, has not been answered. Do we mean that God puts the world out of himself, say like a spider that creates its web out of the material that comes out of its body?
- A. No, this would imply that the world was evolved from God, and a sort of pantheism would have been the result.
- Q. Do we mean, then, that the material out of which the world was formed exists in some form outside God, and that he used it to create the world?
- A. We have already shown that this is not the teaching of the Church. God is in himself perfect and complete, so that there can be nothing there ultimately apart from God.
- Q. How are we to understand creation?
- A. Creation is indeed a mystery, or better still, a paradox.
- Q. What is a paradox?
- A. Paradox refers to the affirmation of a truth which, though it cannot be expressed in our neat human language, has to be affirmed on account of the force which it implies.
- Q. What about the accounts of creation noted in the book of Genesis in the Bible?
- A. They are, in fact, the faith affirmations of the Hebrew people. The truth emphasized in them is endorsed by the Church as well. It maintains that the world, including the earth and the heavenly bodies, and all that they contain were originally brought into being by God who sustains them ever since.
- Q. Granting the religious character of the affirmation, how does it reconcile itself with the presence of evil and suffering in the world?
- A. The affirmation that God who is all-love and all-goodness has created the world on his own can legitimately lead to

the question how there is evil in it. God who is all-love and all-goodness cannot have made evil. The truth therefore is that evil and suffering are not of God's creation. We should go further and say that evil has no substantial reality. That which is not created by God, and which is contrary to God's plan, cannot be something which has a reality of its own.

- Q. Does this mean that evil is unreal?
- A. No, evil is indeed real, and it causes untold suffering to those who come within its grip.
- Q. What, then, is evil?
- A. The account of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, as noted in the book of Genesis which the Church views respectfully, has an important point to make in answer to this question. It says that the allurements to sin, which leads to evil, suffering and death, results from the misdirected use of the divinely given faculties in us, in the realm of thought, word and deed.
- Q. How is it that we who have been created by God express ourselves in misdirected ways?
- A. As creatures we have two characteristics. On the one hand, we are ever dependent upon the Creator and our fellow creatures for our existence, life and growth, and on the other, we do as a rule tend to assert the creaturely gift of our autonomy, to the neglect of our fellow creatures and the Creator himself.
- Q. Does this mean that creaturehood implies evil?
- A. No, God created everything good (Genesis 1). Of all that God has made, man has rational powers so highly developed that it leads him either to recognize his dependence on God or to assert himself even against the Creator. The pride implied in the self assertion of man is the root cause of sin and evil in us. We tend to seek our own independence, without reference to God or to our fellow beings.
- Q. Is this not tantamount to saying that God has failed in creating man and the world?

- A. It is true that there is a temporary failure ascribable to God, but that is not the final thing about God's dealing with the world.
- Q. What is the final thing?
- A. It is the salvation of man and the world. To save man from a state of sin, evil and suffering is indeed the concern of God. He has expressed it in various ways through history and pre-eminently in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. What was done through him in this way and its culmination constitute the final thing.
- Q. In what ways does the benefit of the work of Christ come to us?
- A. It comes to us through the Church which conserves and proclaims it continually.
- Q. How do we experience it?
- A. We experience it by faith, which is strengthened by an intelligent participation in the life of the Church, and which expresses itself in a life worthy of the Christian calling.
- Q. What is the faith to be thus cherished?
- A. In simple words, it is that God who created the world is guiding it to its final goal. The fact of evil and sin, suffering and death, which obstructs man's progress towards his destiny, is ever being met by God himself definitively, both by the saving work accomplished by his Son Jesus Christ and by the sanctifying and perfecting operation of the Holy Spirit. On our part, we should accept this faith and endeavour to live in its strength. The Church safeguards and proclaims this faith.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What is doctrine of creation in the Christian faith?
2. Do you have the faith that God who creates and sustains all things has a concern for you personally?
3. Do you trust yourself and all your ways into God's care everyday?

SECTION SIX: THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- Q. In the opening verse of the Creed God is affirmed to be 'almighty'. How are we to understand this emphasis?
- A. There are three words used with reference to God by theologians, 'almighty', 'all-knowing', and 'everywhere present'. These are attributes of God.
- Q. What is an attribute?
- A. An attribute is a quality which is characteristic of a person or a thing. The three attributes of God imply the idea - that the eternal, independent and self-existent God is almighty, all-knowing and everywhere present. In Latinized usage, God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.
- Q. In what sense is God almighty?
- A. This question is important. To say that God is almighty in an unqualified sense can land us in difficulties. 'Almighty', for instance, means all-powerful. Is God all-powerful implying the idea that he can contradict himself? If that is the case, God is not dependable. To be sure, this is not what the word intends to say. What it does intend to say is that the power of God is infinite. We creatures bound by time and space cannot fathom him. But we believe that God who made this world guides it to its final goal, and that he is able to accomplish his purpose.
- Q. Is it only with reference to the world that God can be said to be able to carry out his plan?
- A. No, God has his concern for all his creatures, individually and collectively (Matt. 10: 29-30; Luke 12: 6-7). He is almighty in the sense that he overrules all hindrances in the way of both individual creatures and the world as a whole in their progress towards the final goal. The power of God referred to in the Creed is thus purpose-oriented and not might-based. God, the supreme love and all-goodness, has his power to accomplish his purpose of love and goodness by triumphing over all forces of opposition.
- Q. If God is supreme love, who is all-powerful to achieve his purpose of love, how is there evil in the world?

- A. We have already noted that evil has no substantial existence, but that it springs from the misdirected use of created abilities in man and other creatures. God who confronted human sin and selfishness on the cross in Jesus Christ, his incarnate Son, helps man to meet it with courage and confidence.
- Q. How is 'almighty' referred to in the Creed in its original form?
- A. In the Greek original of the Creed the word for 'almighty' is *pantocrator*, which means 'all-controlling' or 'all-sovereign'. It is the same idea that is found in the Syriac version of the Creed as well.
- Q. What is meant by saying that God is all-knowing?
- A. That God is all-knowing and everywhere present should be considered together. These attributes indicate that he is not bound by the limitations of time and space. Our knowledge, for instance, of other persons and things, of nations and countries, of the past and the present, and so on, is limited by various factors and circumstances. Our presence is also localized in time and space. God's knowledge is not localized, neither is his presence under any limitation. God who transcends time and space and all other limitations knows everything directly and immediately as an ever-extending present. Therefore he is all-knowing and present everywhere.
- Q. What, then, about the future? Does God know all that is going to happen in the future to individual persons and nations, to things and the world as a whole?
- A. The answer to this question is also a definite 'Yes'.
- Q. If God knows all the future, are we not bound by what he knows? In that case, has our freedom any real meaning?
- A. This question has exercised the minds of Christian thinkers a great deal. Some of them have tried to answer it conserving human freedom by drawing a distinction between fore-knowledge and fore-ordination. God has fore-

knowledge, but he does not fore-ordain or predetermine a person or a thing, or even the world as a whole, to condemnation. These thinkers admit that there is a fore-ordination on the part of God, which is that all God's creatures should ultimately come to eternal life and salvation. Therefore, a knowledge of what is going to happen does not in itself imply a decree that it *should* happen the way it does as a matter of fact. In other words, it is not because God has decreed something to happen that it comes to pass, but it is because something is going to happen that God knows it in advance.

- Q. Do you think that this answer is really satisfactory?
- A. There are certain aspects of the Christian faith which cannot be answered in a straight way. As we have seen with reference to the doctrine of creation, in regard to them we have to use the language of paradox. This has in fact led several responsible theologians in the West to propound theories, ignoring the paradox involved in this crucial issue. Accordingly they have maintained a position which amounts to saying that God has the foreknowledge by which he has decreed some people to salvation and some to damnation. We do not accept this view, which is known as 'double predestination', but we recognize the problem and acknowledge the paradox.
- Q. How are we to understand the view that those who commit evil and never repent will go to hell?
- A. 'Hell' refers to the state into which a person who unceasingly moves away from God. The idea implied here is that life comes from God, and that heaven indicates the abode of his supreme presence. To be cut off from God is death and hell signifies the state where it reigns. To be with God, whether now or in the future, is to be in heaven, and to be outside God's presence is to be in death and hell.
- Q. In the light of the discussion about God so far made how can we conceive of 'an outside' of God's presence and control?
- A. Regarding creation there are two affirmations to be borne

in mind. In the first place, creation has a standing of its own granted by God, in which it can function on its own within limits, even over against the Creator. This is what may be called the created realm. Secondly, in bringing out creation, God does impose on himself a voluntary self-limitation. Therefore it is possible for the created reality to adopt for itself a basis of life other than God.

- Q. Can this possibility be ever-lasting, so that a hell which never comes to an end be conceived?
- A. The answer to this question is a delicate one. In fact, it has to be hypothetical. God respects the autonomy which he has granted to the creation, so that as long as the creation does not submit to him hell will be there as a possibility.
- Q. Does God know the inward thoughts and the secret plans of individual persons and nations?
- A. Yes, he knows (Psalm 139: 1-4; Hebrews 4: 13).

Questions for you to answer

1. Is there any thought or private deed which you want to hide from God? Do you think you can hide anything from him?
2. How can we say that the all-loving God allows man to suffer in a never-ending hell?
3. What lessons should we learn from the emphasis that God is all-knowing, all-sovereign and everywhere present?

Man in the Faith of the Church

SECTION ONE: MAN, A CREATURE OF GOD

- Q. How does the Church understand man?
- A. Man is primarily a creature of God.
- Q. How is he different from other creatures?
- A. Of a number of points in this regard, two may be specially noted. In the first place, man is a creature in whom the rational and intellectual powers are most developed. Secondly, man has an awareness of the moral and spiritual dimension of life.
- Q. What are the consequences of rationality in man?
- A. Rationality enables man to think and plan his life and relations in a consistent manner. Whereas other creatures are led on the whole by the instinct of self-preservation, man is capable of organizing his life and activities from the point of view of definite goals.
- Q. What concrete effects can we observe as a result of this ability?
- A. The effects of human rationality are obvious. The growth of human civilization, achievements in the area of science and technology, knowledge and vision, medicine and health, and so on, are clear examples of what human rationality has accomplished.
- Q. How does man's moral and spiritual consciousness help him?
- A. Man's moral awareness helps him to lead a life of inward purity within himself and of good relations with his fellow beings. His spiritual consciousness leads him to acknowledge his dependence on God and on his fellow creatures.

- Q. What are the effects of man's moral and spiritual awareness?
- A. Behind the progress made by man in the areas of science and technology, medicine and health, education and social well-being, it is not merely his rational powers that have been at work. His moral and spiritual powers have also played a significant part in all of them. Kindness, fellow-feeling, honesty and truthfulness, sympathy and service-mindedness, and such other qualities in man, are indeed the consequences of human moral and spiritual consciousness.

Some questions for you to answer

1. Do you have a genuine concern for the well-being of other people?
2. Do you want to be a good neighbour, and a good citizen?

SECTION TWO: MAN-WOMAN RELATIONS

- Q. In our discussion so far, we mentioned only man. What about woman?
- A. We used 'man' to refer to *the human* for the same of convenience only. In fact, both man and woman are equally human. Whereas man is the male human being, woman is the female counter-part.
- Q. How can the relation between them be stated?
- A. That man includes woman, but not vice versa, is the Semitic view, which we have inherited to a large extent from the Old Testament as well as from the Syrian churches of West Asia. In our use of the word 'man' although we may have given the impression that this is the view which we also put forward, that is not really what we intend to do. As a matter of fact, in our use of the word 'man', we may as well say 'man/woman' or even 'woman/man'. For we assume the equality of the sexes.
- Q. What does the Semitic view that man includes woman, but not vice versa, really imply?
- A. This question may be answered by noting the story of the creation of woman in the book of Genesis. In Genesis

2: 18 and 21 there are two ideas. According to one of them, while creating woman, God said, "It is not good that man should be alone: I will make him a help fit for him". Here the emphasis is that woman has no standing of her own, except to be 'a help fit for him', namely for man. In support of this idea we have the story in the second passage that woman was created out of a rib taken from man. As regards man, it is shown that he was independently created. It is the dependence of woman on man and not also the other way that is noted here. St. Paul refers to these ideas in I Corinthians 11: 8-9. That woman should be subordinate to man is the emphasis here.

- Q. Is this the only emphasis in the Bible?
- A. No, in Genesis 1: 26f. it is noted that man and woman complement each other. God created them together. St. Paul also approves this idea in I Cor. 11: 11-12 and Gal. 3:28. The stress on man-woman equality can be seen here.
- Q. What is the purpose of sex-differentiation in human creation?
- A. The purpose is twofold. It is expected on the one hand that men and women come together and build up families as the smallest units of the human community, and on the other that the union of husband and wife may enable the propagation of the human race.
- Q. Why should there be families?
- A. It is families that form homes for people, where children are brought up in the context of love, protection, discipline and good nurture. Home offers the locals for mutual love, care and fellowship to the adults and older people.
- Q. How are families formed?
- A. Families are formed by men and women, who are being united in holy Matrimony, a subject which we shall discuss later.
- Q. Sex being divinely given in creation, is there any place for celibacy in God's plan?

- A. Marriage is the normal way of human life. But in exceptional cases, men and women who feel called to serve God without being tied to a life in family have a right to choose for themselves the celibate vocation. Such men and women attach themselves to monastic communities, which become their homes.
- Q. Does this mean that the single life of the individual person without being attached to a community, cannot be justified?
- A. Not necessarily. To marry or not to marry, or again when to marry if one so chooses, is for the individual person to decide. It is indeed left to the convenience and choice of the individual in question. The Church is concerned however that its members are provided with facilities for their well-being and that the efficiency of their services are assured. Accordingly, the Church directs its members as a rule to the matrimonial life and those who choose to serve without marriage to celibate communities, in order that both vocations may find their respective healthy fulfilment within its communion.

Questions for you to answer

1. Do you think it possible to argue for the excellence of man over woman?
2. What is the advantage of life in which men and women marry and live in healthy families?
3. What basis do you see for celibate life?

SECTION THREE: MAN IN COMMUNITY

- Q. How is the individual person related to the community?
- A. Every human being is born into a community, in which he/she grows into the fulness of the human stature. The child, for instance, learns language, social manners and a way of life from its interaction with the community. Along with this learning, it develops its power of thinking, moral sensitivity and spiritual awareness. Thus the child, though it is born of particular parents, is deeply indebted to the community at large for what it is.

- Q. What is the concrete effect of the community on the individual person?
- A. The individual person acquires his/her character.
- Q. What effect can we observe from the multi-religious and multi-social communities in which we live?
- A. This leads us to acquire ideas and ideologies, manners of life, and so on, from our environments. These may not always be either Christian or even healthy.
- Q. How can such possible unhealthy effects be corrected?
- A. The Church maintains that this can be done by our constant participation in its life, by our regular family prayers in homes, church attendance, and above all communication in the sacraments. Another important means is the devoting of some time each day for the reading of the Bible and other edifying literature.
- Q. Do we have to give up every non-Christian contact in order to be loyal members of the Church?
- A. No, we can and should learn many things of value from our non-Christian neighbours. We should in fact be willing to befriend them as much as possible. What we should abandon is evil. However, in all our social interactions we should seek to remain loyal to our Christian calling and our obligation to the Church. We live in the world healthy lives as Christians, by cherishing the values of our faith.
- Q. What duty is the individual person expected to fulfil towards the society?
- A. In what we have noted so far, we have referred only to the work of the community on the individual person. There is an equally important side to man's social relation. He should also contribute to the improvement of the community. Among the many members who constitute it, there are some who have special gifts which make them more perceptive and discerning than others. There are others whom education and experience qualify to help the community's progress. Thus the individual person who is

indebted to the community for what he/she is, should in turn assist the community in its forward movement.

Some questions for you to answer

1. Can you point to some unhealthy influence that come to us from social interaction?
2. How can we get over them?
3. What do you think we can do in order to contribute to the improvement of our homes, neighbourhood and society at large?

SECTION FOUR: MAN, A BODY-SOUL ENTITY

- Q. How do we say that man is composed of a perishable body and an imperishable soul?
- A. When a human person dies, he/she is buried, and the body is decomposed into the earth. "You are dust, and to dust, you shall return" (Gen. 3: 19). But by this death the human person or the soul does not come to an end. We may say that the body dies, but the person continues in life. It is this emphasis that is meant when we say that man is composed of a body that perishes and a soul that does not perish.
- Q. What is the soul?
- A. "Fear not those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Mathew 10:28). This injunction shows that there is a reality in man which is not put to death when the visible body meets its end.
- Q. Does this mean that the body and the soul refer to the same reality looked at from different points of view?
- A. Not precisely. The body is material, but the soul is spiritual. To look upon them as two entities is in agreement with the ancient Greek view of man. It is also similar in emphasis to the Indian view. The biblical position is more subtle.
- Q. What is the biblical idea?
- A. In the English Bible the word 'soul' is a translation of *nephesh* in Hebrew, which in Syriac is *naphsho*. It means

'person'. The human person is a combination of the body and the spirit, or the material and the spiritual.

- Q. How is the soul different from the spirit?
- A. The soul, as we have shown, is person. The spirit is wind, as it means in both the Hebrew and the Syriac languages. By the breathing in and the breathing out the spirit enlivens the body and quickens the soul. Whereas the spirit is the life in man, the soul refers to the human entity.
- Q. In saying that the spirit is wind, are we to understand that it is the same wind which blows around us?
- A. Yes and no. Yes in the sense that the spirit in us functions like the air that moves. No, in the sense that it gives life to the person.
- Q. Where does the spirit come from?
- A. The spirit, as we have seen, is life. The source of all life is God (Gen. 2:7; Ecclesiastes 12:7). He breathes into man the breath of life and man becomes a living being.
- Q. What is mind, and how is it related to the spirit?
- A. Mind refers to the faculty of thinking, on the basis of which the human person plans his words and deeds, and expresses them concretely. Thus the mind is the centre of the human person or the soul. It is capable of controlling the human entity, including the spirit.
- Q. What is man in his totality?
- A. The man/woman, say Mathew or Mary, whom we see out there is perceived as a body. That is the visible figure of a soul, which is enlivened by the spirit and controlled by the mind.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What is the human person?
2. Can we neglect the body and its needs for mental and spiritual well-being?

SECTION FIVE: MAN AND SIN

- Q. Why do we say that man is a sinner?
- A. In simple words, we say that man is a sinner because he commits sin.
- Q. What is sin?
- A. In the Greek language the word for sin is derived from a verbal root which means 'to miss the mark'. In Syriac it means 'to err'. We are created by God in order that we may reflect him by performing his will. But when we miss this goal in life, we are subject to sin. Thus we may say that all our thoughts, words and deeds in defiance of God or in violation of the rights and well-being of our fellow beings constitute sin.
- Q. Why is it that we fall into sin at all?
- A. The root of all sin is self-assertion. Every human being, in fact every creature for that matter, is led by a longing for selfpreservation, which lies at the back of his search for sufficiency in wealth and position, pleasure and recognition, and so on. This is not in itself wrong or sinful. But he/she often tries to gain his end by ignoring the divine dimension and neglecting his fellow beings. In other words, whether God and his plans are recognized or not, whether others also obtain a due share of the good things of life or not, man seeks them for himself and his kin. The selfishness which lies at the root of this kind of man's life is the basis of sin.
- Q. Is not the violation of the commandments a sin?
- A. Commandments themselves have been given with a view to inculcate in man love of God and love of man (Matt.22: 35-40,) so that their real purpose is to restrain the selfish ways of man. Following the commandments is not the ultimate ideal of life for man, but it has a significant role to play in our lives. Thus by adhering to the commandments, we should develop in us a character which will express itself spontaneously to love God and love our fellows.
- Q. What is God's attitude to man's sin?

- A. Sin is in fact a violation of God's plan of life for man, and as such he does not think lightly of it. But as supreme Love, God seeks to liberate him from his sin and the evil which it causes.
- Q. How does God show his love and mercy to the sinner?
- A. God shows his love and mercy by forgiving the sinner the wrong things which he/she commits.
- Q. What is forgiveness?
- A. Forgiveness is, in a word, the restoration of personal relations which have been marred in consequence of the wrongly committed actions of a person or persons.
- Q. Is forgiveness possible?
- A. This is an important question. Forgiveness, for instance, has serious implications. Human selfishness expresses itself in innumerable ways, some of which have consequences in varying degrees for other persons, the community as a whole, or even for the future course of human life in the world. Though some actions are trivial and can be ignored, so that the offended person or persons may be brought to reconciliation easily, this may not be possible in all cases. To say that God forgives sins is therefore a matter of much deeper significance than we often take it.
- Q. What is the deeper significance?
- A. Human sin, to be sure, amounts to challenging the sovereignty of God over the world, and it disturbs and distorts the world's order which in his infinite love he has intended for it. But God who made the world, knowing that this would happen, is constantly remaking it by taking upon himself the consequences of human sin. We may say, figuratively indeed, that God suffers in himself the pain which the sin, both of the individual man/woman and of the human communities corporately, is bringing about constantly.
- Q. How can we say that this is so?
- A. This is the essential emphasis of the teaching contained in the Bible. The noblest tradition of the prophets in the Old

Testament proclaims it unequivocally. They maintain that suffering and humiliation have a redeeming value, relatable to God himself. The New Testament sees in the passion and death of Jesus Christ on the cross a continuation of this prophetic emphasis. The idea affirmed here is that Christ's suffering and death constitute the manifestation in history of God's own travail for the world.

- Q. How can the death of Christ bring about the world's forgiveness?
- A. In his passion and death Christ faced the sin of the world on the one hand, and manifested God's suffering for the sin of the world on the other. In the resurrection he proclaimed God's victory over the sin. This indeed is the basis of all forgiveness. We appropriate to ourselves the power that worked in Jesus Christ, on the one hand to face the cross, and on the other to rise from the dead victoriously. We believe that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, accomplishes the work of reparation that is necessary to be made in the world on account of the sin.
- Q. What should we do in order to experience God's forgiveness?
- A. Forgiveness calls for at least three things on our part. *One*, a real change of heart or repentance, in which we feel sincerely sorry for every thought, word or deed, whereby we may have ignored God and our fellow beings; *two*, an inward act of casting ourselves in faith on the mercy of God and of receiving from him the power to lead a new life; and *three*, a genuine determination to make amends in whatever way we can for our wrong deeds. In this way we can feel assured of the divine forgiveness in our personal lives.
- Q. How is this related to the life of the Church?
- A. Repentance and renewal in life are inward experiences which we should undergo constantly. The Church provides the means for realizing them in the sacrament of Confession and holy Qurbana, which we shall discuss later.
- Q. Can we say that the role thus being played by the Church will solve the problem of the world's sin?

- A. This is a very big question. The Church does not maintain that the role which it is playing in the world will solve all problems. However, it proclaims the hope that the crucified and risen Christ will ultimately solve them.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What do you understand by forgiveness?
2. Do you have an inward experience that God has granted you the pardon of your wrong doings in the past, and that he gives you the strength to lead a transformed life?
3. What can we Christians do in order to help the creation of a new world?

SECTION SIX: MAN AND DEATH

- Q. How can the death of man be explained?
- A. When the breath of life, which is the spirit that has been blown into man by God separates itself from the body, it falls dead (Ecc. 12:7).
- Q. What consequence does it bring on the human person?
- A. At death the body becomes lifeless and it gradually decomposes into the earth from which it had originally been taken, and the person continues in existence (Philip. 1:23).
- Q. Are we not born of our mothers in consequence of the procreative process in which our fathers have their natural role? How then can we say that our bodies were originally taken from the earth?
- A. All creatures on earth, when life departs them, die and in course of time turn into the earth. From the earth often living things sprout and grow. But the life that is in them passes on into creatures of the same species through the seed that is in them. In this way the species continue. While the physical structure in which its reality is embodied turns into the earth, others which it had procreated continue in life. The ultimate source of all the embodiments is the earth. The same thing happens to man as well.
- Q. Is there any difference between man and other creatures in this respect?

- A. Yes, there is. Whereas man is a soul, other creatures are not souls.
- Q. What is the consequence of this difference?
- A. Consequence is indeed great. Whereas creatures in general continue in existence in the various species, man goes on in life as individual souls also. Soul, as we have already noted, refers to the individual person. Though his existence comes to an end with death, he continues in his personality even beyond the grave. This is not the case with reference to other creatures.
- Q. What is our basis for holding this faith?
- A. Our basis here is primarily the testimony of the Bible. Psalm 16:10, for example, expresses the faith that God does "not give me up to *Sheol*", or let his "godly ones see the *Pit*". *Sheol* is the abode of the dead and the *Pit* refers to the grave. In fact, this idea is repeated in Ps. 49:15 and 86:13. Apostles Peter and Paul note these passages in support of the proclamation that Christ rose again from the dead. More than the references in the Psalms is the New Testament witness in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That Christ rose again from the dead is the central emphasis made in the New Testament in commending faith in him to those who joined the Church (I Cor. 15).
- Q. How does the resurrection of Christ offer us the basis for the belief that our souls will survive death?
- A. Jesus Christ, as we believe, is God the Son who became incarnate by uniting to himself manhood in its fulness. It is as man that he was born into this world and lived a life under the conditions of the mundane existence. Again, as man he died on the cross and rose again from the dead. The fact therefore about him is that he became a brother to every human being, and as such his resurrection exemplifies the goal awaiting us as well. Just as death was not his end, it will not be our end either (John 11:25-26).
- Q. Since the departed human beings do not rise from the dead immediately, what status do they have?

- A. They have gone away from earthly existence and await the final consummation of all things (I Cor. 15:24), in which they will attain to the destiny ordained for *them* by God.
- Q. Where are they now?
- A. The question of 'where' and 'when' applies only to the spacetime world, which they have left by death, so that it does not bind them any more. We can say only with St. Paul, that they are with Christ (Philip. 1:23; II Cor, 5:8; II Tim. 1: 18). This means that they are upheld by Christ.
- Q. Why do we insist on the resurrection rather than on the immortality of the soul?
- A. The Church affirms that man is created as a body-soul entity, which he will continue. Though the unity of the two realities is disturbed at death, this is restored in the resurrection. In fact, following the New Testament tradition, the Church sees in the resurrection of Jesus Christ deeper significance than in any other event connected with his life. Resurrection signifies the creation of the new. Immortality of the soul does not see this truth.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What difference is there between the doctrine of bodily resurrection and the soul's immortality?
2. What hope does the resurrection of Christ give us in life?
3. When we say that we have the life eternal, what do we really mean?

Jesus Christ in the Faith of the Church

SECTION ONE: JESUS CHRIST, A HISTORICAL PERSON

Q. Who is Jesus Christ?

A. Jesus Christ is the historical person, who is affirmed to be the foundation of the Church.

Q. What is meant by the expression, 'historical person'?

A. It means that Jesus Christ lived in the historical realm at a particular time and in a particular country among its people.

Q. What is important about Jesus Christ, is it that he lived in this world and passed from hence, or that his teaching contains the greatest possible ideal for man to emulate?

A. The idea that the teaching of Jesus is of universal validity and relevance is affirmed by the Church. But it is insisted that the greatness of his teaching is the result of the sublimity of his person. He gives the grace, which alone helps men and women individually and the human community corporately to follow his way. In other words, he and his teaching go together. Authority is attached to him as much as to his teaching.

Q. How is the personal authority of Jesus Christ to be understood?

A. This is done on the strength of the faith which the Church holds concerning him. The Church, for instance, confesses that he is the contemporaneous Lord, not merely as one who lived in the past and passed from hence leaving a legacy in his teaching for us to continue. But he is beli-

evaded to have lived in the past, who is alive now, and from the ultimate point of view he rules the world at large and the hearts of men and women individually. On this belief the Church swears its loyalty to him and seek to lead people to follow him in their life every day.

- Q. How is the person of Jesus Christ who lived in the world many centuries ago is affirmed to be alive now and in control of all things ultimately?
- A. This question is answered more fully later. In the present context it may be noted that Jesus Christ is not confessed by the Church as one who has died and gone, but as one who died, rose again from the dead, and is alive and active for ever.
- Q. What does the stress on the historicity of Jesus Christ seek essentially to conserve?
- A. It aims to affirm that God who made the world as a real thing reveals himself in it and works out its salvation from sin, suffering and death definitively through Jesus Christ.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What significance do you see in the emphasis that Jesus Christ lived in this world?
2. How does this faith help you in life, particularly in the face of the many realities that confront you?

SECTION TWO: OUR SOURCE OF INFORMATION

- Q. What is the source of our information concerning Jesus Christ?
- A. Our primary source of information is indeed the New Testament. It includes the four Gospels which deal specifically with the life and activities of Christ. The other books in it commend faith in him.
- Q. What are the four Gospels?
- A. They are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
- Q. Who are these authors?
- A. The traditional view about them is that Matthew and John

were the two apostles of Jesus Christ known by these names in the list (See Mat. 10: 1-4), and that Mark and Luke belonged to the body of seventy who were appointed subsequently (See Luke 10:1). This identification of the persons has been called in question by many critical scholars in modern times.

- Q. Do these authors hold the same view regarding the life and activities of Jesus Christ?
- A. In the main there is agreement among them, though each of them has his own approach.
- Q. Why are the first of them called the Synoptic Gospels?
- A. They are called synoptic because they give the same general survey of the life and ministry of the Lord.
- Q. How can this fact be explained?
- A. It is quite reasonable to conjecture that following the Pentecost and the formation of the Church, Christian disciples carried on a search to collect as much of available information regarding the Master as they possibly could. As a result of the work they did they made several collections of materials, which may well have been used by the writers of the Gospels.
- Q. What evidence do we have of collections of this kind?
- A. Analysing the materials included in the Gospels, scholars who have worked with them have specified four of such sources. These are:- the Gospel of Mark, a source commonly used by Matthew and Luke referred to as 'Q', and special sources drawn on respectively by Matthew and Luke, known as 'M' and 'L'. Mark was a disciple of Apostle Peter. He may have received the materials for his Gospel from the Apostle himself and other sources. Most of *Mark* is found incorporated by both Matthew and Luke, each with slight verbal and other changes. Between *Matthew* and *Luke* scholars have seen a common source or sources. Thus *Matthew* can be taken as a combination of *Mark*, Q, and M. *Luke* on the other hand is a combination of *Mark*, Q, and L. *John* on his part, is dependent upon the other Gospels, particularly on *Luke*.

Regarding *Matthew*, some scholars have maintained that it is an enlargement of *Mark*. It is also suggested that originally *Matthew* was written in the Hebrew language, which some other unknown person enlarged in the present form using the Greek language.

Q. Can we say that these Gospels are trying to give a life of Jesus Christ?

A. The answer has to be 'Yes' and 'No'. 'Yes' in the sense that they are using available materials to compose the Life of the Master, from the point of view of the faith that in and through him God has sent to the world his Messiah or Christ to work out its salvation once and for all. But 'No' in the sense that the authors do not try to offer a strictly connected history of the Lord.

Q. What dates can we assign to these writings?

A. We cannot answer this question accurately. For one thing there was no universally acknowledged dating system in those ancient times, and writings produced then seldom carried a clear indication as to when they were composed. Thus tentative dates have to be assigned to literary productions on the strength of evidences that are available. Biblical scholars have suggested on the basis of internal and external references that *Mark* is the earliest of the four Gospels, composed possibly around 65 A. D. They assign *Matthew* to about 75 A. D. and *Luke* to a little later date. *John*, in their opinion, is the last, being composed probably during the nineties of the 1st century.

Q. What are the other New Testament writings?

A. They are:- the *Acts of the Apostles* which was composed by Luke who wrote the third Gospel, thirteen epistles of Paul, the epistle to the Hebrews, seven Catholic epistles, and the book of Revelations.

Q. What do these books say about the life and work of Jesus Christ?

A. They do not discuss the life and activities of the Lord, as the Gospels do. Their purpose, on the other hand, is to

commend faith in him. They contain interpretations of the meaning of Jesus Christ and his saving ministry, as the early Christians understood them.

- Q. Are there no non-Christian sources which refer to Jesus Christ and his work?
- A. These are indeed very few. Yet we have references going back to the 1st and the 2nd centuries of the Christian era in the extant works of Jewish and non-Jewish writers.
- Q. What do they say?
- A. Josephus, a 1st century Jewish historian, notes the fact that Jesus lived in Palestine. The *Talmud*, which means teaching, of the post-biblical Judaism also notes the fact of Jesus' life in Palestine. There are two non-Jewish writers of the 2nd century who speak of Jesus. One of them, Pliny who was Governor of Bithynia for a short period during the second decade of the 2nd century, writes that Christians "sang hymns to Christ as to a god", and Tacitus a contemporary, says that "the originator of that name, Christ, was put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate."
- Q. What do we learn from these sources?
- A. We learn that Jesus Christ existed in history at a particular time and a particular geographical area, and that he came to be recognized as the spiritual leader of a community. It is this community which grew into the Christian Church, with many branches in the world.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What are the sources of our information regarding Jesus Christ?
2. What books are there in the New Testament?

SECTION THREE: LIFE AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

- Q. What do our sources say about the birth of our Lord?
- A. We have two direct references in Matt. 1: 18f. and Luke 1:26-39; 2: 1-38 about the birth of Jesus Christ. The story in them is that Mary, his mother, was a virgin who

had no male connection for her pregnancy. Though this story is not found recorded in other New Testament writings, it is not contradicted there. We may say that it is corroborated in a way by John in 1:13 and Paul in Gal. 4:4.

- Q. The occurrence of pregnancy in this way being against nature, it must imply a meaning. What is that?
- A. The meaning implied is obviously that the birth of Jesus Christ was different from the birth of men and women in general, as he himself was in a significant way different from them.
- Q. How was he different?
- A. We shall discuss this point later.
- Q. What evidence do we have in the New Testament for saying that Jesus Christ was different from us?
- A. The Gospel of John speaks of Jesus as the Only Son of God in 3:16. In the Greek original of the Gospel, the word used for 'Only' means 'the only one in a class', or unique. Again in 20:17 we have the story of Mary Magdalene seeing the Lord after his resurrection. It is noted there that our Lord is the Son of God in a sense different from the sense in which his disciples are the children of God. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ is the central emphasis of St. Paul. The epistle to the Hebrews is clear that he is the Mediator between God and man, and that he is the same yesterday, today and for ever more.
- Q. If this is the emphasis. can we have any real relation with Jesus Christ?
- A. This important question will help us to clarify the meaning of our Lord's Virgin birth in relation to our life in the world. Mark 1:15 shows how Jesus began his public ministry. He did this by proclaiming: The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel. It is clear from here that any one desiring to be a disciple of Christ must have a change of heart and a new outlook on life. St. John notes this truth in his conversation with Nicodemus, by connecting it with baptism

(3:1-5). St. Paul also makes a similar emphasis in a number of places in his writings, the most important of which is Romans 6: 1-4.

- Q. How is the newness called for in Christ's disciples which baptism symbolizes related to the Virgin birth of our Lord?
- A. The Virgin birth can be taken to imply that the Lord who demands a change of heart in us in order that we may be his disciples, is himself the embodiment of that newness. By being born of a virgin without male cooperation, he is the new man. We, on the other hand, by a natural birth from our parents have been born into this world, where sin and evil abound, must have a new birth and a new life in God. The Virgin birth of our Lord signifies that his was that new birth, as the pregnancy that went before it had taken place exclusively by the power of God. To be sure, his life on earth was a continuation of what had begun at his birth.
- Q. What do we see in the life of our Lord before his public ministry?
- A. In order to answer this question there is only one incident noted in the Gospels (See Luke 2: 41-52). In this passage verses 49 and 51-52 deserve special attention. They show that the boy Jesus had a deep awareness of a mission, and that till his public ministry he lived a normal human life at home.
- Q. How did he begin his ministry?
- A. According to the Synoptic account Jesus was baptized by John the baptist. He then had a time in the wilderness, which he spent in prayer and fasting, thereby preparing himself for the ministry. He triumphed over the temptations that came to him and set out to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God to all people.
- Q. What did Jesus do during the public ministry?
- A. After an initial period of general preaching, he organized a band of disciples called the apostles and began in them a movement aimed at transforming the Judaism of his day.

He taught that God should be recognized at the centre of life and that his demands should be acknowledged as of primary importance. In the light of this teaching he insisted that the Jewish adherence to the letter of the Law and the legislation concerning Sabbath implied a very denial of the principle underlying them, that the sick and the poor whom they neglected deserved genuine care and attention, and that God respected inward purity and honesty rather than any outward show of pomp and ceremony. While teaching people in this way and directing the disciples to carry on his ministry, he testified to God's infinite love in word and deed.

- Q. Why was such a person crucified?**
- A. The teaching and other activities of Jesus implied a radical criticism of the way in which Judaism had been conducting its religious and social life. This aroused the feelings of the conservative sections under their leaders, who saw in him a challenge to their very existence, and they developed an attitude of extreme opposition against him. In their hatred they decided to do away with him by an ignominious death, and they had him crucified.**
- Q. So Jesus died for a cause. Was he not, then, dying the death of a martyr?**
- A. The Church sees in the death of Christ more meaning and significance than in that of a martyr.**
- Q. What is that?**
- A. A martyr is one who undergoes suffering and death for a great cause. Jesus also stood unwaveringly for the truth, to which he came to bear witness. In his death the Church recognizes the rejection of God by men/women everywhere and God's owing them, without counting their trespasses against them.**
- Q. Were not the Jewish leaders solely responsible for the death of Christ?**
- A. Yes, immediately they were the people who rejected him and clamoured for his removal from the earth. But the**

principle which he raised in criticizing them is one which can with equal force be brought against almost any human individual and human community. Therefore it is the universal human trend in life that Jesus opposed, and for which he died.

- Q. Do we not blame the Jews for crucifying Jesus, as though they were exclusively responsible for his death?
- A. It is true that we can find evidence in several parts of the Antiochene Syrian prayers and hymns for the holy Week and elsewhere, which are in use in our Church, for it. But that is not the only emphasis in the forms of worship of the Church.
- Q. How then are we to understand the significance of Christ's death?
- A. Though the people who were responsible immediately for the killing of Jesus were the Jewish leaders of the time, what they did would be done by sinful humanity everywhere. Therefore, to blame the Jews for Christ's death exclusively is to miss the point implied in it. As we have already noted, Christ died on the cross the death which humanity inflicts on God and fellow human beings. This signifies the suffering which God undergoes on behalf of man caught up in sin.
- Q. What role does the resurrection play in the ministry of Jesus?
- A. The resurrection proclaims God's ultimate victory in the face of all human opposition to his plan.
- Q. What did Jesus Christ accomplish by his earthly ministry?
- A. Through his death he signified the end of the old world dominated by sin, evil and death, and through his resurrection he inaugurated in his person a new way of life for mankind.
- Q. What happened to it since his time?
- A. This question is discussed later. We may say here only that the Church exists in the world as a community to realize it and pass it on to others as a living reality.

- Q. When do we expect the new way of life to be effective with reference to the world as a whole?
- A. We expect this to happen in the *eschaton*, or the final end of all things, when all creation will come under the direct sovereignty of God, who will be everything to everyone (See I Cor. 15:28; Revelation 21: 1-4).

Some questions for you to answer

1. What theological idea does the Virgin birth of our Lord seek to conserve?
2. How is the death of our Lord considered important in the faith of the Church?
3. What significance can we see in the resurrection of our Lord?

SECTION FOUR: JESUS CHRIST IS GOD THE SON WHO HAS BECOME INCARNATE

- Q. How does the Church understand Jesus Christ who died and rose again from the dead?
- A. He is understood by the Church as God the Son who has adopted an incarnate state for the salvation of the world.
- Q. What is incarnation?
- A. The English word 'incarnation' means to be in the flesh. It is based on the Johannine statement, "the Word became flesh" (1: 14). The Gospel which begins with the statement, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God", goes on to say that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Then it speaks of the 'Son', identifying the Word with the 'Son'. Thus by incarnation is meant that the Word or the Son of God took upon himself a life in the flesh and lived in the world as Jesus Christ.
- Q. What does 'flesh' mean?
- A. The word 'flesh' means here man. The Church has never taken it in the sense of just flesh without the faculties of manhood. We can say therefore that the Word or the Son

became man, or even a man, but this expression is not favoured by the fathers of the Church because of a theological reason which we shall see later.

- Q. God the Word or the Son *being* an eternal person, how can he *become* man or a man? Can God who already *is*, in himself perfect, *become* as though he is to be perfected? Or, can he come to be something else?
- A. This question raises a very subtle point. God, as we have already shown, is eternally perfect and beyond all limitations including those of time and space. Therefore, the word *become* here involves a paradox.
- Q. What is that?
- A. We have already noted what a paradox is. What is implied in the present instance is that, though the ascription of 'becoming' with reference to God is inadequate to express the idea to be affirmed, it is retained to conserve an emphasis which cannot be expressed otherwise because of the poverty of human language.
- Q. What is that idea?
- A. The idea is that Jesus of Nazareth was in reality a *man* who lived in this world of ours. But he was not merely that, he was God the Son manifesting himself in the world to work out the salvation of man from sin, evil and death. In other words, in and through him was disclosed the divine *economy* for human salvation.
- Q. What need was there for a divine economy of this kind?
- A. Man, as we have already noted, is a creature of God, endowed with creaturely freedom. As a creature, he has a beginning and the possibility of an end. Yet, unlike other creatures, he/she is created to attain to eternal life, which God grants him. To gain this goal man is called upon to live his life on earth in communion with the Creator and follow his way, using his creaturely autonomy. However, man took advantage of his personal freedom to follow his own plan in life. This led to his fall from the Source of eternal life, to which he had to be restored. This restoration required an absolute self-surrender to God

on the part of man, which was possible only by God himself helping man to do it. Therefore, the coming together of God the Son and man into union was necessary, and God accomplished it in Jesus Christ.

- Q. Does this mean more than saying that Jesus Christ was an inspired man?
- A. Yes, it does. Inspiration should be understood in different ways. In one sense, everything that we do beyond the ordinary course of actions is inspired. Thus a poet, an artist, a scientist, a political or social thinker, and so on, are all inspired persons. When we use the word inspiration in a religious discourse we mean a special gift which enables a person to have an extraordinary spiritual discernment. If we say that Jesus Christ was an inspired man, what we imply is that he was in essence a man who had a perception of the religious dimension of life beyond what other human beings generally have. There are indeed such persons, like the prophets, sages and saints. Jesus Christ was not like one of them only. He was unique and *sui generis*.
- Q. How was he unique?
- A. He was first and foremost God the Son, manifesting himself in a real human life. God the Son chose to show the erring man the way of life and give him the confidence of God's love and care. So, by enabling the human that was united to him to live as God wants man to live, he has shown the way which men/women should adopt in life. He is indeed the way, the truth and the life (John 14: 6), the same yesterday, today and for ever more (Heb. 13:8).
- Q. Did you say that Jesus Christ was a man with whom God the Son established an unceasing union, and if so how was he different from an inspired man?
- A. No, I did not say that Jesus Christ was *a man with whom God the Son established an unceasing union*. What I did say on the other hand, was that Jesus Christ is God the Son living a real human because he united to himself and thereby united himself to manhood. There is a subtle idea here which we should take care to understand. The Church

is keen to conserve the emphasis that the manhood of Jesus Christ had not become *a man* before it was united to God the Son. The aim here is to exclude the possibility of a division between God the Son and the man. This indeed is the reason why preference is given to the Johannine expression, "the Word became flesh", to saying that the Word became a man.

Q. What is meant by the expression "manhood had not become a man"?

A. The differentiation between 'manhood' and 'a man' is based on the Greek philosophical emphasis that the particular person or thing is the result of an individuation of the universal. Here 'manhood' signifies the universal, and 'a man' the particular. The latter is concrete, and the former is discerned only by the mind. The point made is that in the incarnation God the Son united to himself manhood, the universal, and that it became particular only in the union. In the case of any man, manhood, the universal, is individuated into the particular human being that he/she is. In Jesus Christ, on the other hand, this individuation of the universal took place in the union with God the Son.

Q. Why is it that God the Son is called the 'word of God'?

A. From the earliest days of Christianity the Church was faced with the task of clarifying the meaning of Christ's person conserving his uniqueness. Since the early Christians were dedicated monotheists, the idea of proclaiming him as a second God was not acceptable to them. The term 'Word' or *Logos* in Greek gave them the needed linguistic tool. It meant for the Greeks the principle of rationality in man and of order in the universe. The *Logos*, as they believed, was operative in the universe by furnishing its order and in man giving him his rational powers. Early Christians saw in the *Logos* the principle of reasoning and its expression in God, and identified it with the Son.

Q. How is it that the teaching concerning Jesus Christ led to divisions in the Church?

A. The most important point which, as we have just noted,

the Church sought to define theologically had reference to the question who Jesus Christ was. The issue had two aspects. The first, namely that he was God the Son who became incarnate was settled in a more or less acceptable way during the 4th century. The councils of Nicea in 325 and Constantinople in 381 were important landmarks in this movement. Then in the 5th century the question how the incarnation was to be affirmed came up for serious discussion and settlement. The two councils of Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 451 took up the subject for decision. But by that time the Church had developed three traditions on the issue in three areas, namely Alexandria, Antioch and Rome. Men representing them could not agree on a formula, and this led to two divisions in the Church and three ecclesiastical groupings from those times.

Q. What are these groupings?

A. These are:-(i) The Church tradition which respects the teaching of the Antiochene Theological School represented by Nestorius; (ii) The teaching of Church fathers who follow the tradition of the Alexandrine Theological School in opposition to the council of Chalcedon of 451; and (iii) The tradition built up on the foundation of the doctrinal formula offered by the council of Chalcedon.

Q. How do these ecclesiastical groupings define the doctrine?

A. Each of them has its own technical language for affirming the doctrine. We need not go into them adequately here. In a general way we may state the positions something like this. The *first* insists that Jesus Christ is the one person, in whom God the Son and the man Jesus remain united. Though he is one person, the duality between God the Son and the man Jesus is preserved in such a way that the title 'Mother of God' with reference to Mary is not affirmed. The *second* emphasizes the unity of Christ. Composed of the two natures of Godhead and manhood which continue in him without confusion or division, Jesus Christ is confessed to be the one incarnate nature or person of God the Son. Mary is indeed 'the Mother of God'. The *third* maintains that Jesus Christ is one person

made known in the two natures of Godhead and manhood. The expression 'the Mother of God' with reference to Mary is accepted.

- Q. Is not the expression 'Mother of God' misleading and if insisted beyond a limit even dangerous?
- A. Yes, indeed, unless it is properly explained. 'Mother of God' does not mean that in his being God has a mother, from whom he is born. The purpose behind the term is not to extol Mary, but to confess that he whom she gave birth was God incarnate. Since the manhood which he united to himself was derived from Mary, she has a place of honour in the incarnation. The union of Godhead and manhood is affirmed to have taken place in her womb at the very moment of the conception. The embryo was formed along with the union, and it had the natural process of development. Mary brought forth the infant Jesus, who was indeed the God-man. Therefore, she is spoken of as the Mother of God.
- Q. What is the word corresponding to this expression in Greek and Syriac?
- A. The word in Greek is *Theotokos* and in Syriac it is *Yoldath-Aloho*. Both these terms mean 'one who gives birth to God' and as such they are less misleading than the English 'Mother of God'.
- Q. Which of the three ecclesiastical groupings noted above is the one to which our Church belongs?
- A. Our Church belongs to the second grouping.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What is the mystery of the Incarnation?
2. What biblical basis can we find for affirming it?
3. State the faith which our Church holds, and how can we affirm it convincingly?

SECTION FIVE: JESUS CHRIST, THE REDEEMER

- Q. Why did God the Son assume an incarnate life ?
- A. Who Jesus Christ is and what he did were the two

questions which the early Church took up for elaboration in its proclamation from the beginning. The New Testament is clear on this point. Jesus Christ himself, it says, impressed on his close disciples that he was to undergo a rejection by the Jewish leaders as a means of salvation for all. (See Mat. 16: 16-23; Luke 24: 25-27; Acts 8: 32-35; Romans 5: 6-11, 17).

Q. What is Salvation ?

A. In the passage from Paul's epistle to the Romans, the apostle employs the word 'reconciliation'. He says that "while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son". The emphasis here is that by sin we become estranged from God, so that a restoration to relationship with him is necessary for us. By the death of Christ God has effected this reconciliation from his side. Christ accepted rejection by the human race, and proclaimed on the cross God's forgiveness. To be reconciled to God is salvation, which enables us to realize peace with God and with our fellow beings.

Q. How does the death of Jesus Christ enable us to realize this peace in life ?

A. This crucial question has engaged the minds of systematic theologians from ancient times. Without going into the points made by them, an answer implied in the holy Qurbana service may be noted. The most important point made in the service is the remembrance of Christ's death, the confession of his resurrection, and the joyous anticipation of his second coming. We say: Lord, we remember your death, confess your resurrection, and look forward to your second coming, in every celebration of the Liturgy. What is implied in this confession is that by the death of Christ God has reconciled the world to himself (II Cor. 5:19), and by his resurrection he has triumphed over sin and death, namely all forces of evil (Acts 2:24; Rom. 6:23; I Cor. 15:55; I Tim. 1:10; I John 3:14). He has given us the assurance of a final victory (I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:20 f.) The death and the resurrection of Christ enable us to have this confidence in God and live in its strength.

- Q. How is that the Jewish did not understand Jesus?
- A. The assumption behind the question that the Jews did not understand Jesus is not entirely correct. A large body of them accepted him as the expected Messiah. In fact, a majority of the early Christians, including the Apostles, were Jews. It is only a section of them, particularly of the ruling class and the conservative fraction, that refused to understand him. The ruling class had their vested interests and the conservatives were religious fanatics. Both these groups saw that the ideal in life for which Jesus stood was liable to damage their reputation and religious ideology. The situation of these people was not radically different from our situation today.
- Q. Is there no difference between the Jews who rejected Jesus and us today ?
- A. There is one obvious difference. Many Christians today, though they accept Christ in an external way, very seldom want to follow his leadership in life.
- Q. Did not the prophets of the Old Testament hold the ideals preached by Jesus and even promote them ?
- A. That the prophets of the Old Testament prepared the ground for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be effectively proclaimed is not questioned either by the New Testament or by the Church. But what they did was partial, and moreover they were led by the ideal of Jewish nationalism. In fact they had entertained the hope that their nation would be restored by divine intervention and that it would lead all nations in the way of truth, justice and righteousness, in a historical sense. This hope of theirs was indeed belied.
- Q. What difference is there between the prophets and Jesus Christ ?
- A. Whereas the Jewish prophets limited the horizon of their thinking and concern to their nation and their restoration, Jesus was led by the idea of offering the means of salvation and liberation of all men/women and nations in a cosmic sense. Also, his concern for man is not limited to time

or to race and nation. The Church believes that this universal dimension is the result of the fact that Jesus Christ was not merely a man. He was the incarnate Son of God. Thus he started his mission in the world aimed at the restoration of all, both individually and collectively. The prophets did not do this.

- Q. What is meant by the 'Gospel' of Jesus Christ ?
- A. The word 'Gospel' means 'good news'. Jesus Christ brought to the world the good news of God's love and care for every man/woman. "Those who are well", he said, "have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 1:17). All those who feel the need are assured of divine help. God so loved the world, affirms John, that whoever believes in his Son will not perish, but will have eternal life (John 3:16). Jesus himself proclaims the good news, as Matthew reports, "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest" (Mat.11:28-30). *Gospel* also can mean the books in which the story of Christ's life and of the way in which he proclaimed the good news is told. As we have noted, there are four of them included in the New Testament.

Some questions for you to answer

1. How can we say that we have been saved by Jesus Christ ?
2. How is Jesus Christ different from the prophets of the Old Testament ?
3. What is the central prayer we say in the holy Qurbana regarding the death, resurrection and second coming of our Lord ?

SECTION SIX: CHRIST'S REDEMPTION CONTINUED IN THE CHURCH

- Q. Is it not that the work of Christ which happened at a particular time and historical context came to an end with his appearance from the world scene?
- A. That this would happen was the expectation of the Jewish

leaders who were keen to do away with him. However the good news of God's love which Jesus proclaimed and which he exemplified in his life was to continue. God who accomplished his work of salvation carried it on through the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit, according to the commission of Christ himself.

Q. What is our basis for saying this?

A. Our basis is the testimony of the New Testament. It is noted there that Jesus Christ himself had taken the necessary measures for the continuance of his mission.

Q. What are these measures?

A. Two of them deserve mention. *One*, before bringing his earthly life to a close, Jesus entrusted his disciples with the task of carrying on his mission to the end of the world (Mat. 28: 16-20; Acts 1: 6-9). Led by them, the earliest community of believers took over this commission. *Two*, in committing this task to them, Jesus Christ assured them of the gift of the Holy Spirit, which they were to receive soon. He told them that the Spirit would guide them into all truth, so that they need have no fear or diffidence in confronting the world (John 16: 12-15). The apostles, supported by the community of believers, spread the Gospel in their generation.

Q. In what ways did they do this?

A. First of all, they built up communities of believers in various parts of the Mediterranean world by communicating to them the faith in a way which convinced them of the power of the crucified and risen Christ. Secondly, they engaged themselves in proclaiming the Gospel to people outside, both to Jews and to non-Jews, baptizing those of them who believed and adding them to the community. Thirdly, in the Church they provided for regular meetings for prayer and praise, and above all for the celebration of the holy Qurbana. This gave them an opportunity for the commemoration of the death and resurrection of the Lord for registering the hope of his coming again, in the context of participating in the mysteries. Fourthly, they

were keen to see that the peace of God that transcended human rational understanding was passed on to everyone. In so doing, the sick were visited, the poor were cared for, the bereaved were consoled, and the departed were committed to the Lord.

- Q. What role did the Holy Spirit play in this movement?
- A. This question is taken up in the next chapter. Here we may say only that it was the Holy Spirit who guided the Apostles to lead the communities and to propagate the Gospel to those outside. Besides, he inspired the Apostles and the body of believers in order that they may show forth a life based on the faith in the Gospel. In short, the Spirit of God guided the Church into all the truth that was relevant to every situation.
- Q. Does this mean that there was a totally uncorrupt and ideal Christian community in the beginning?
- A. The answer to this question has to be indeed delicate. It is to be admitted that the situation of the early Church, as also of the Church later was paradoxical. That every member of the Church was utterly pure and holy, and that the community itself was completely without blemish, has never been the case. This point is discussed later. As we know, even one of the twelve Apostles of our Lord had turned a traitor. But the ideal was there and it was consistently preached in order to mould the individual members and the community as a whole in its light. In fact, there were many who could testify to the fact that the peace from above sustained them and that they could live victoriously on the strength of the faith.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What did Jesus Christ do in order to continue his mission in the world?
2. How did the early Church propagate its mission?
3. Can we say that there is a totally uncorrupt Church in the world at any time? If the answer is 'No', which naturally it should be, how can we speak about the Church as 'holy'?

The Holy Spirit in the Faith of the Church

SECTION ONE: THE MEANING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Q. Who is Holy Spirit?
- A. As we have seen in the section above on the holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the blessed Trinity.
- Q. How is he related to Jesus Christ?
- A. The New Testament refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ as much of the Father (See Rom. 8:9-11; John 14: 16-17). We may recall here our discussion on the doctrine of the holy Trinity. We have noted there that God, the eternal Father, has his eternal Son and his eternal Spirit. In all that the Father does the Son and the Holy Spirit are with him; in all that the Son does, the Father and the Holy Spirit are with him; and in all that the Holy Spirit does, the Father and the Son are with him. Keeping to this central emphasis concerning the Holy Spirit, we affirm that, though the incarnation was *Primarily* the work of the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit are with him. When the Son's incarnate life on earth was brought to a close, the work which he did is continued *Primarily* by the Spirit in the unity of will and operation with the Father and the Son himself (John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:7-15).
- Q. God being Spirit, is not the holy Trinity itself Spirit?
- A. Yes, God is Spirit (John 4:24). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, all the three of them are Spirit.
- Q. Why, then, is the Holy Spirit alone referred to as the Spirit?

- A. It is true that the third person of the blessed Trinity alone is called 'the Spirit' or 'the Holy Spirit'. He is called 'holy' because he *is himself* holiness, and he imparts holiness to creatures. He is called 'Spirit' in order to distinguish him from the Father and the Son.
- Q. What is the special appropriateness about the 'Spirit' with reference to the third person?
- A. For one thing, the Bible, particularly the New Testament, refers to him as the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19; and II Cor. 13:14). We may note two points about the Spirit. *One*, the eternal who transcends time, space and all limitations, though he is in himself beyond us and the world, is also present in us and the world through the Spirit. Here it is the Holy Spirit who is primarily active in the unity of will and operation with the Father and the Son. *Two*, the Spirit is the person who links the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father eternally. He abides in the world and us, enabling the creation to seek the Creator. For these reasons' the word 'Spirit' is specially appropriate to the third person.
- Q. Does the ascription of the adjective 'holy' to the third person mean that it is not referable to the Father and the Son?
- A. Not at all. The adjective 'holy' is in fact used with reference to the Father (John 17:11) and to Jesus Christ (Acts 4: 27.30).
- Q. Why is it that the Son is said to be born, and the Holy Spirit to proceed, from the Father?
- A. In both cases the language employed is indeed human. The word, for instance, suitable to describe the relation of a son to the father in human experience is that the former is born of the latter. The same word is used to describe the relation of the second person of the holy Trinity to the first person. The Spirit is said to proceed from the Father (See John 15:26). The Greek original of this word can be rendered as 'come out' or 'come forth'. In our experience the wind comes out or comes forth. In

both cases, the emphasis is that the second and third persons have both of them the first person as their source.

- Q. Why is it that we do not confess that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son?
- A. Our position here has scriptural, historical and theological reasons. The New Testament passage referring to the procession of the Holy Spirit speaks only that he come forth from the Father (See John 15:26). Historically, the Creed in the original form had only the affirmation that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. In fact, the words, 'and from the Son' (*Filioque* in Latin) were added unilaterally in the West much later, and the churches of the East rejected the addition on theological grounds.
- Q. What are those theological grounds?
- A. The Creed which we use has behind it a theological standpoint regarding God. In its first clause it speaks of God as the Father. Then in the second and the third clauses it affirms faith in the Son and the Holy Spirit. The idea emphasized here is that the Father is the eternal God. The Son and the Holy Spirit derive their respective standing as God from the Father. They have, each of them, the same Godhead as the Father, and are co-eternal and co-equal with him. In other words, the Father is the Source of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, to say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son is to affirm a double source in God, which will distort divine unity.
- Q. How is it that the Churches of the West are not seeing this important point?
- A. It is wrong to assume that they do not see it. In fact, there is a clear move in many Western Churches today to restore the old position on this point.
- Q. What is the correct way to confess the faith?
- A. It is that the Son is born of the Father eternally, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father eternally and is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son.

- Q. Though we do not say that Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, we do affirm that the Spirit who proceeds from the Father takes from the Son. Is not this *taking* the same as proceeding?
- A. The basis for saying that the Holy Spirit takes from the Son is John 16: 12-15. Verse 14 reads, "He will glorify me for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." The passage here affirms that there is a fundamental unity in the Triune God, so that the work of Holy Spirit in guiding the disciples "into all the truth" is an unbroken continuity with what the incarnate Son has accomplished. The passage does not refer to the 'procession' of the Holy Spirit from the Son. Regarding his procession, John 15:26 states the position in clear terms.
- Q. What precisely is the work of the Holy Spirit?
- A. We have already referred to this point. Here we may say this summary. The Father, who is eternally the Source of the Son and the Holy Spirit, creates all things and redeems them through the Son; he sanctifies and perfects them through the Holy Spirit. The entire creation is thus grounded in and sustained by the Triune God.
- Q. Can the emphasis here be explained further?
- A. There are four steps to be borne in mind for the understanding of this emphasis. *One*, God created the world and everything in it in such a way that they are to grow into perfection. *Two*, the capacity for growth implies also the possibility of its misuse, which leads the creation to a downward movement instead of an upward ascent. This has happened and is happening, and that accounts for the presence of evil and suffering in the world. *Three*, God who made the world is redeeming it from this predicament. *Four*, God is also perfecting the world and sanctifying it.
- Q. What about man in this cosmic process?
- A. As the crown of creation, the process is pre-eminently centred in man. Though there is imbalance in the world scene, it is experienced primarily as good or bad by man.

He/she makes the situation better or worse in consequence of his/her self assertion.

Some questions for you to answer

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?
2. What is the relation between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?
3. What is the theological basis on which the Churches of the East object to the view regarding the Holy Spirit that he proceeds from the Father and the Son?

SECTION TWO: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

- Q. What function does the Holy Spirit fulfil in the Church?
- A. This question can be answered more fully only after discussing the Church in the next chapter. Anticipating what we shall see there, we may say that the Church is the realm in which the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ in his ministry is being carried on.
- Q. Since the redemption worked by Jesus Christ is complete, what need is there for its continuation?
- A. By redemption we do not mean merely some action or event that happened outside of us, which we seek to acknowledge. On the other hand, we mean that redemption calls for a change of outlook in us and a life consonant with it. We should be transformed in order that we *become* redeemed. What Jesus Christ accomplished should become ours by our transformation into his likeness. Between what *Christ achieved* and what *we should become* there is a gap, as it were. This has to be overcome. The Holy Spirit is at work through the Church to reach this goal (Col. 1: 24).
- Q. What is our role in this?
- A. Our role is to dedicate ourselves in faith and personal commitment to be led by the Holy Spirit to participate in the life of the Church.
- Q. Does this mean that so far as it concerns us, faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour is not enough?

- A. The answer has to be 'No'. As a matter of fact faith in Jesus Christ is itself possible for us only by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (John 3: 27; 6: 44, 65; Rom. 8: 26). Thus those who believe and join the Church take this step in consequence of the work of the Spirit in them. Having become members of the Church, they should be guided by the Spirit, both individually and as a community, in order that they may live in conformity with the will and plan of God. Understood in this way, there is no dichotomy between faith in Jesus Christ and our commitment to be guided by the Holy Spirit. The emphasis here may be stated in brief words. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we are being led to believe in Jesus Christ. This belief is the basis on which we seek membership in the Church, and in the Church it is the same Spirit that guides our lives, both as individual persons and as a community of believers. In this faith we understand Jesus Christ as God the Son incarnate, who is with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our salvation?
2. How is the Holy Spirit related to the Church?
3. How are we to understand and experience the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

SECTION THREE: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON

- Q. How does the Holy Spirit work in the individual person?
- A. The Holy Spirit is there in every human person. He inspires the person concerned to noble living and good behaviour.
- Q. How is it then that we are not led to goodness and nobility, everyone of us always?
- A. We have already noted that as finite creatures, there is in us the tendency to seek our own good, without reference either to God or to our fellow beings. As a matter of fact this tendency often obtains the upper hand in our lives, so that we need the assistance from God to transcend it.

So long as we are not led by God in this way through the Holy Spirit, we can fall into sin and evil ways.

- Q. What does the Holy Spirit do in our personal lives?
- A. Three things may be noted here. In the first place, the Holy Spirit enables us to triumph over all evil tendencies. St. Paul mentions this truth (See Gal. 5: 16-18). He says there, Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh. Secondly, the Spirit helps us to grow in goodness. God, as we have already noted, is the Source of all that is good and noble. His Spirit helps us to advance in these qualities of life. Thirdly, the Spirit enables us to be his agents to transform all life.
- Q. Should we understand such passages in individualistic terms?
- A. Not merely. These should certainly be taken as offering guidance to individual persons. But they also imply a clear reference to our social living as well. Our societies should change by transforming themselves into divine likeness. However, the change should begin with the individual persons and Christian homes.
- Q. What does the Apostle say about the evil living of individual persons and societies?
- A. He does this in many places of his writings. He continues the Galatian passage noted above (see verses 19 to 21) and says that the human nature, which is opposed to the Spirit, shows itself in "immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness" We should eschew all these and seek to build up our societies in such a way that these do not have a place in them.
- Q. What effects are produced in us by the work of the Holy Spirit?
- A. The Apostle answers this question in a classical way (see verses 22 and 23). He speaks there of the fruits of the Spirit in us. They are nine qualities, which he counts as

“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”. He then goes on to say that a person who possesses these qualities is never brought to judgment. The Spirit has given us life; he must also control it.

- Q. How are we to obtain these qualities in our lives?
- A. As the Apostle testifies, there are two ways in life which we tend to follow. One of them springs from selfishness, and the other comes to us from the Spirit. By prayer and self-dedication we shall give up the first and cling to the second. Thus we shall realize the qualities mentioned by the Apostle.
- Q. How does this work in our everyday lives?
- A. We are engaged in various kinds of activities. Some of us, for example, may be students, some teachers, some farmers, some lawyers, some doctors, industrialists and so on. In all these and other vocations, we are expected to be guided by the Spirit. If we seek to follow the life in this way, we shall experience a qualitative difference in us.
- Q. Will this lead to success for ourselves in life?
- A. This is the question which many of us often ask. If by success we mean earthly benefits, that is not the criterion for us to adopt. On the other hand, we are asked by our Lord to seek first the kingdom of God (Mat. 6: 33; Luke 12: 31) and leave the rest to God's wisdom to administer to us in his own way.
- Q. Is not earthly success and advancement necessary for us?
- A. Yes, it is. By following the way of God, which the Holy Spirit unfolds to us, we shall obtain what we really ought to get. God only knows what is best for us, even from the point of view of earthly success.
- Q. Is not the ascetic way better suited to a life in the Spirit?
- A. This is a delicate question. Both the ascetic way and the way of life in the world have their possibilities and pitfalls. As a matter of fact both need the guidance of the Spirit. Neither is better nor worse than the other.

- Q. Is not the life of the clergyman more effective for a life in the Spirit?
- A. Here also, the answer is the same as the above. The service of a clergyman is one of great opportunities to guide people to a life in the Spirit. Those who live in the secular occupations also have opportunities to fulfil such responsibilities in various ways, though less than the clergy. What is to be emphasized is that God gives grace necessary to everyone who seeks to lead the life in the Spirit.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit?
2. Is earthly success a worthy criterion to judge the life of a man, from the point of view of God's blessings?
3. To be a Christian do we have to give up secular occupations?

SECTION FOUR: SPEAKING IN TONGUES

- Q. What is meant by the statement of St. Paul concerning the speaking in tongues?
- A. St. Paul notes it in his first epistle to the Corinthian Church (See I Cor. 12: 30; 14: 26). It is clear from the writings of the Apostle that he is referring to the phenomenon which led devout people to praise God by using some language and expressions that are not readily intelligible to others. This was there among early Christians. St. Paul himself had the gift of tongues, so that he had a direct understanding of the fact. This may be the expression of an inward religious experience, which had been known possibly in Old Testament times (See I Sam. 10:11).
- Q. What is St. Paul's assessment of it?
- A. This is clear from I Cor. 14, where Paul writes, the one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to others but to God, because no one understands him. He is speaking secret truths by the power of the Spirit (v. 2). On the other hand, says Paul, he who gives God's message to people gives them help, encouragement and comfort (v. 3). Without dissuading people from speaking in tongues, Paul rates it lower than the gift of preaching.

Q. Is this the only reference to the speaking in tongues in the New Testament?

A. No, there is another reference in connection with the day of Pentecost (See Acts 2). It is noted there that the Apostles together with the early Christian community received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that they began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak (v. 4). The Apostles spoke, and the crowd which gathered there, "each one of them heard them speaking in his own language." (v.6)

Q. What can we make out of these two instances?

A. These are indeed two phenomena. The one which happened on the day of Pentecost was indeed unique. We have no record of such an event after it. This may in fact be compared to the birth of our Lord from a virgin, and his resurrection. But the other was based on an experience which some people had in the early Church.

Q. Is this not something that supports the position of the Pentecostal people?

A. It is a fact that the Pentecostals put a great deal of emphasis on the Holy Spirit. They need not be blamed for it. We should remember however that almost all their stress on the reality and operation of the Holy Spirit is there in the life of the Church in a formal sense. But the Church does not endorse some of their teaching.

Q. What are they?

A. Four of them may be noted here. 1) Their undue insistence on the speaking of strange languages. 2) Their unconcern in matters affecting the transformation of life in the world. 3) Their refusal to take advantage of available medical and such other facilities. 4) Their separation from the Church

Q. Can you explain these points further?

A. As regards speaking in strange language, it was never considered indispensable by the Church. On the contrary, it follows the teaching of St. Paul that the gift of speaking in tongues will cease (I Cor. 13: 8). Concerning the second

point, it should be noted that the Church is not interested merely to lead people out of the world into an exclusively spiritual realm. The world itself is created and ultimately sustained by God. To this end, God is working for its transformation, in the sense of establishing better social and political orders, of administering justice and equity for everyone and of reaching the benefits of convenient living for all persons. Regarding prayer healing, it is not objected to by the Church. On this ground, it does not agree that the use of medical service should be given up. On the other hand, the Church sees in the advancement of medicine and the function of doctors and paramedical personnel the work of God for the improvement of life in the world. Lastly, the emphasis on the Holy Spirit can be made by the members of the Church without breaking away from its fellowship.

- Q. What can we say about the so-called 'Liberation Movement' in our Church, which claims to receive special authority directly from God?
- A. This movement also, insofar as it emphasizes the need for divine guidance deserves commendation. But its insistence that those who join it should give up all social and personal relations in order to keep to their Christian calling and identity cuts at the root of the New Testament teaching.
- Q. How is that?
- A. Those of the 'Liberation Movement' seem to take I Cor. 5:9-13 out of context and build up a theory concerning the Christian's relationship with others. In the passage in question St. Paul is justifying his verdict against an immoral man in the Corinthian Church. This person, the Apostle says, had been living in such 'sexual immorality' that not even the heathen would feel guilty of it (I Cor, 5:1-2). Paul enjoined that he be deposed from Church membership, and that believers should have nothing to do with him. On this basis it is not at all legitimate on the part of the Liberationists to cut off social and family ties with those who do not join their ranks.
- Q. So long as the Holy Spirit is looked upon by the Church,

as you have said, only in a formal sense, is it not possible that people will seek other ways of enjoying the Spirit's presence and blessings?

- A. The question is indeed legitimate, and the answer to it has to be more positive than negative. We must be reminded of the fact that heresies are not altogether wrong. They take one or more aspects of the Christian truth which the Church does not emphasize effectively and build on it a life and teaching, to the exclusion of all other aspects. Having adopted this stand, when they come to realize the one-sidedness implied in their position, they try to get over it by working out things in their own way. Thus part of the blame for the emergence of the Pentecostal and other movements should be ascribed to the Church.
- Q. How can we seek to solve the problem raised by such movements?
- A. It is not easy to spell out what practical steps we should adopt in meeting the problem. However, we should insist that the Church should realize the meaning of the Holy Spirit in its own life on the one hand, and try to maintain healthy relationship with those belonging to such movements on the other.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What are the two strands in the New Testament regarding the phenomenon of speaking in tongues?
2. What is the assessment of the phenomenon by St. Paul?
3. How shall we seek to meet the challenge in our particular areas?

SECTION FIVE: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WORLD

- Q. What relation does the Holy Spirit have to the world outside?
- A. The Holy Spirit is active in the world as well.
- Q. How can we say this?
- A. We have clear evidence in the Bible to affirm that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, is in the world. In the Crea-

tion story (See chapter 1 of the book of Genesis), it is stated that the Spirit of God was brooding over the abysmal waters (v.2). The Spirit was present and active both in creation and in the world thereafter. He inspired the prophets and saints in the Old Testament and guided the historical process. The same Spirit is at work in the world in its forward movement. We have already seen in the discussion of the doctrine of the holy Trinity this idea as a central emphasis in the Church's faith.

- Q. Is it not that according to the Gospel of St. John in particular and other New Testament writings in general the Holy Spirit was given only after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord? How, then, can we say that the Spirit was there already in the world from its beginning?
- A. The gift of the Holy Spirit mentioned in such contexts is a special one. The Spirit comes to the Church anew in order to make saving ministry of our Lord real to the Christian community and the believer.
- Q. Are we, then, to understand that the Holy Spirit who is in the world right from the beginning is coming to the Church and the Christian believer by means of a new outpouring in the Christian dispensation?
- A. Yes, precisely. As we have already noted, the Church affirms the faith that God the Father, who created the world in the beginning and sustains it ever since through the Son, perfects and completes it through the Holy Spirit, who works in it unceasingly. The same Spirit comes to the Church in his sanctifying power.
- Q. Why should the Spirit be there in the world before the Christian dispensation?
- A. We have already noted this point. We may add here to what has been said that God can be sought and believed in only if his Spirit works in us. It is an admitted fact that in any event of communication there should be a point of contact between the subject and the object. Without committing ourselves to the position that God can be an object of our knowledge, we can definitely say that

his Spirit should be in us in order that we may be led to seek him (See Rom. 8). He should be there in the world, guiding it to its ultimate goal and destiny.

Some questions for you to answer

1. Is it legitimate on the part of a Christian to ignore his responsibilities in the world?
2. What relation is there between the Spirit of God who brooded over the abysmal waters (Gen. 1:2) and the Spirit who came to the early Church on the day of Pentecost?

The Church: Its Ministry and Life in the Faith of the Church

SECTION ONE: WHAT THE CHURCH IS

Q. What is the Church?

A. In very simple words, the Church is a community of men and women who are committed to a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ.

Q. Religion being a personal matter and, should as such, be conceived subjectively, why should the Church be a subject of concern for the Christian?

A. The goal of the Christian faith is not merely to lead individual persons to an experience of salvation and leave the rest of mankind and the world outside its concern. As we have noted, man/woman is not a pure individual person, but a societary being. Born into a society, he/she grows into the human fulness through social interactions. Therefore, the salvation of the individual person calls for the salvation of the society as well. The Church as a community has the duty to work as much for the transformation of the individual as for that of the society. In fact ideally speaking, the Church is the transformed society, as the Christian is the transformed individual. Therefore the Church is a fundamental point in the Christian faith.

Q. Does this mean that the individual person is not important and can therefore be ignored or dismissed?

A. No, not at all. The individual person is indeed primary. It is in fact through the individual that noble ideas and ideals come to be expressed and memorable examples are shown forth. What is implied here, on the other hand, is that the

transformation of the individual person is not enough. It should go with it the transformation of the society as well. From this point of view man needs the society to be transformed, which the Church is intended to be. St. Peter calls his readers in the Church to realize this meaning in their lives. "Come as living stones", he says, "and let yourself be used in building the spiritual temple" (See I Peter 2: 5).

- Q. Is this statement true of the Church in the world?
- A. We have to acknowledge the paradox involved in the statement above. As a community in the world the Church is subject to most of the defects ascribable to other communities. Yet the Church has a faith centred in Jesus Christ and the means of grace sealed in the Holy Spirit. As a result of these facts, the Church may be said to include a dimension of experience which other communities cannot give.
- Q. Is not Jesus Christ the founder of the Church?
- A. Yes, he is. While he was on earth, he started it with himself as its first member, and the disciples including the Apostles as the early community. It received the Holy Spirit and preached the Gospel, whereby the Church expanded.
- Q. If that is so, is not the Church merely a community comprising Christ's disciples who formed an association of their own to carry forward the work which the Master had initiated during his earthly life?
- A. The question implies a partial truth, and not the full truth.
- Q. How can the full truth be stated?
- A. Through Jesus Christ, God the Son incarnate, God has shown us the way of eternal life, for both individual human beings and human communities. The work which he has thus accomplished is continued in and through the Church. It exists and functions in the world to be the vehicle of the salvation which Christ offers.
- Q. Since the Church came into history only with Jesus Christ

what can we say about people before his time and those who are outside the Church after it?

- A. The Church believes that those in olden times before the earthly ministry of our Lord have the benefit of his saving work, in a way God alone knows (Compare I Peter 3:19). A similar position has to be adopted about those who have remained and who still remain outside the Church in the world since his time.
- Q. If that is the case, why should we preach the Gospel and seek to bring non-Christian people into the fold of the Church?
- A. To preach the Gospel and thereby to bear testimony to the saving work of God through Christ to all people, whether they are inside the earthly Church or outside it, is the responsibility of the Christian. It is natural for any one, who is convinced of the truth implied in a position, to communicate it to others. This does not mean forcing any-one to accept the Christian faith.
- Q. Is not the motive behind preaching the Gospel to enhance the numerical strength of the Christian people?
- A. The answer is a categorical 'No'. Preaching the Gospel with this motive is opposed to the very nature of what is being proclaimed. The fact that Christians may have used unfair means to convert non-Christians to their faith may be granted. But we should not follow that example, which should only be condemned. We are asked to commend the Christian way through our words and deeds, through our examples and lives of unselfish service, through our devotion to duty and sublimity of character. God will work out the salvation of people, in a way best known to him. The same should be said about the transformation of society. We are expected to show forth a quality of life and relations through the Church, and leave the rest to God.
- Q. Don't we believe that one day the Church will replace the human society as a whole?
- A. We do believe it. In the final end of all things God will

come to be all in all. Writing to the Romans, St. Paul says, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (5:19). The first man fell away from God through disobedience, and in him the entire human race came under God's judgment for sin. But Christ from the side of God manifested himself as the new man and rectified the situation. Therefore, identification of ourselves with him is necessary for salvation. The Apostle makes here Jesus Christ the central point of human salvation on the strength of his teaching based on human solidarity.

- Q. What is meant by the New Testament emphasis that the Church is the body of Christ?
- A. St. Paul notes this idea in more than one place (See Ephesians 1:22-23; 4: 15-16; Col. 1:18). In the first of these passages it is emphasized that Christ who completes all things everywhere, including the Church, is being completed by the Church. In the other two passages Paul says that Jesus Christ is the head of the body, his Church, and that as such he is the source of its life. The Church should be guided by Christ, and when this is done it will complete the work which he has done during his earthly ministry.
- Q. What is the meaning of the Pauline statement that the Church is Christ's bride?
- A. This idea is noted by the Apostle in Eph. 5:21f. He refers here to a mystical union of the Church with Christ. This is the goal which husband and wife should have between them in their life together.
- Q. What is the meaning implied in the four marks of the Church noted in the Creed?
- A. The Creed refers to the Church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The Church is *one*, because all those who believe in Jesus Christ are ideally united in him. It is *holy*, because it is set apart to be engaged in God's work. It is *catholic*, because it is for all people, irrespective of class, race, colour, or sex. It is *apostolic*, because it continues

in the proclamation concerning Jesus Christ and his Gospel, which the Apostles made.

Q. What happens to those who depart this life in faith?

A. Those who depart this life in faith as members of the Church will continue with Christ (See Phil. 1:23). The Church has in fact the two parts of those who continue on earth and those who have passed from hence. Theologians refer to them as the Church militant and the Church triumphant respectively. The former has to fight the battle on the earthly plane, but those who have left the world have triumphed over the battle.

Q. What connection is there between the two parts?

A. Through Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, and in the Holy Spirit, the two parts have a communion between them in God (See Hebrews 12: 22-24).

Q. How is the communion kept up?

A. We keep it up by remembering them in our prayers and worship, and expressing the wish that they continue to pray for us, as they used to do while they were alive on earth. This is why we pray for the departed and remember the saints, asking them for their prayers.

Q. What is meant by the expression 'the communion of saints'?

A. The answer to this question is implied in the two answers above. The Church militant and the Church triumphant have communion between them in Christ, the risen Lord. The bond of union between them is referred to as the communion of saints. We can say that Church itself is the communion of saints.

Q. Can we say that all Christians are saints?

A. The word 'saints' refers to those who lead holy lives. In the Bible the 'holy' or 'sacred' means that which is set apart for God or his service. From the point of view of the Church all baptized persons have been so set apart, and are therefore saints (See Rom. 1: 7; 8: 27; 12: 13; 15: 25, 31; 1 Cor. 1: 2; 6: 1; and so on). However, there are many

baptized persons who do not live their lives as those dedicated to God, and a differentiation between 'saints' and 'non saints' has been made in the Church itself.

- Q. What about the persons who have been declared saints by the Church?
- A. Strictly speaking, the churches of the East do not have a tradition of canonizing persons as saints, like the Roman Catholic Church. The fathers mentioned in the fifth section of intercession in our holy Qurbana service are on the whole great teachers and leaders who have served the Church in the face of difficulties and oppositions. There are innumerable other saints who have not been mentioned in records, all the same known to God, whose prayers are being offered unceasingly for us.
- Q. What is meant by the statement that the 'Church is the Extension of the Incarnation'?
- A. It means that the saving work accomplished by Jesus Christ by his death and resurrection is being carried on in the world through the Church by the Holy Spirit. St. Paul sees in Christ the New Man. By taking over on himself the consequences of human sin from the Old Man he has proclaimed that God has forgiven us and restored us to fellowship with himself. This experience of the New humanity in Christ is given to the world by the Church. Therefore, the Church is spoken of as the extension of the Incarnation.

Some questions for you to answer

1. Why is membership in the Church necessary for us?
2. How can we keep up this membership?
3. In what ways do you try to maintain intelligent participation in the life of the Church?

SECTION TWO: THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

- Q. What is meant by the words 'the Ministry of the Church'?
- A. By these words, the service which the Church is expected to carry on in the world is what is meant.
- Q. What is that?

- A. In a word, the Church is called upon to carry forward the work accomplished by Jesus Christ in reconciling man with God and man with his fellow-man (II Cor. 5:17-21).
- Q. How does the Church carry on this ministry?
- A. This is done by the Church through the many programmes of its service, performed by men specially chosen and formally appointed.
- Q. Who are these men?
- A. They are the persons who constitute the ranks of what is known as the threefold ministry, comprising bishop, presbyter or priest, and deacon.
- Q. Are these the only ranks in the Church's ministry?
- A. These are basically the three ranks identified from ancient times. But later they came to be expanded to include within them further orders. This expansion affects pre-eminently the rank of the bishop.
- Q. How does this work?
- A. It works in this way. The local church, or what we call 'parish' is looked after by one or more priests. The area of responsibility for the priest is limited to the local church. The bishop has the care of many parishes. The deacon is expected to assist the bishop or the priest in the performance of worship and the fulfilment of other ecclesiastical functions. This is the general pattern. But when the Church grew in size, there arose the need for wider oversight. There were, for example, a number of bishops in a province. When they met in councils or for public functions, one of them had to preside, and in course of time the bishop who presided came to be recognized as the leader and his seat as a major see. Such bishops received the title of Metropolitans, and some of them that of Catholicos or Patriarch.
- Q. What difference is there between a Metropolitan and a Catholicos or Patriarch?
- A. A metropolitan is the leading bishop of a province. The word refers in fact to the bishop of the capital of a pro-

vince. A catholicos or patriarch is the primate of the Church of a nation. The Church presided over by a catholicos or a patriarch is *autocephalous*.

- Q. Is catholicos, then, equal in rank with patriarch?
- A. Yes. During the early centuries of the Church the primates of countries outside the Roman Empire like Persia and Armenia adopted the title 'catholicos' and the leading bishops of the major sees like Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, within the Empire came to be called 'patriarch.'
- Q. Who is the Pope?
- A. The word 'pope' is the Greek *papas*, meaning 'father'. This word was taken over by the Roman Catholic Church as a title for its spiritual head. Before the division of Christendom, the Churches of the East looked upon the bishop of Rome as the patriarch in the West, and recognized him as the first among patriarchs. Rome, on the other hand, was not keen about the title 'patriarch', and from the 5th century developed the theory of the papacy. It began to insist that Peter was the leader of the Apostolic College, and that this leadership continues with the bishop of Rome who succeeds the Apostle. On this basis the Roman Catholic Church claims universal jurisdiction for the bishop of Rome, and the title 'pope' came to be fixed for him.
- Q. Is there any office in the Churches of the East corresponding to that of the pope of Rome ?
- A. No, the East has the synodal form of government in place of the monarchical form practised in the Roman Catholic Church.
- Q. Does our Church accept the pope of Rome ?
- A. No, we do not accept him, as our Church is not part of the Roman Catholic Church.
- Q. Who is an episcopa?
- A. 'Episcopa' is the 'episcopos' in the Greek language. The word means one who has the authority to oversee, namely a bishop. Its equivalent in Syriac is 'metran'.
- Q. Who is a chorepiscopa?

- A. In ancient times there were priests, without bishops, in certain rural areas, where a senior priest was given a sort of oversight by the bishop who had formal jurisdiction over the area, for the purpose of keeping the church's unity. They were called *chorepiscopos*. As time passed the title became merely honorary. In rank the chorepiscopos were always priests.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What is the place of priesthood in the Church?
2. Why is it that we do not accept the pope of Rome as the religious head of our Church?
3. What orders do we accept in the ministry of the Church?

**SECTION THREE: THE CHURCH AND
THE SACRAMENTS**

- Q. What are the means of grace which the Church transmits to its members, without their being affected by the life of the clergy ?
- A. These are chiefly the Sacraments of the Church.
- Q. What is a sacrament ?
- A. Sacrament is an English word derived from the Latin *sacramentum*, which originally referred to a military oath. The Church in the West adopted it in the sense of a religious rite or ceremony, whose outward and visible action symbolizes the divine grace imparted to the recipient. The word used for sacrament in the Churches of the East is 'Mystery'.
- Q. Is there any difference between 'sacrament' and 'mystery'?
- A. The difference lies more in emphasis than in the actual meaning sought to be conserved.
- Q. What is that ?
- A. The mystery does not analyse the rite or ceremony in question in rational terms, but conserves the spiritual meaning which it implies.
- Q. What are the sacraments thus recognized in the Church ?

- A. In usual reckoning they are:- Baptism, Mooron (Chrismation), Confession, Qurbana (Eucharist or holy Communion), Matrimony, Ordination and Anointment of the Sick.
- Q. Why do you say 'in usual reckoning', as though this scheme is not basic ?
- A. This scheme has problems, both from the point of view of the order in which the seven are listed and from that of the number seven itself.
- Q. What are the difficulties with reference to the order?
- A. The Supreme Sacrament is Jesus Christ himself, God the Son incarnate, who gives himself to the believer in the holy Qurbana, so that Qurbana is the first and foremost sacrament. In our Church no sacrament is complete without the holy Qurbana. Baptism, for example, has its culmination in the reception of the Qurbana by the person who is baptized. Mooron is consecrated in the context of the Qurbana. Confession is to be followed by the receiving of it by the one who makes the confession. Ordination is held in the midst of the Eucharistic celebration. The couple who marry and the sick person who is anointed are also given the holy Qurbana. Above all, as we shall see, the holy Qurbana is central act of the Church's worship. To relegate it to the fourth order in a list of seven sacraments is to distort its importance and meaning.
- Q. What about the number seven?
- A. The number seven, as we can note in several parts of the Bible (See Gen. 4:24; Numbers 23: 1; II Chronicles 29: 21; and so on), particularly in the book of Revelation (See 1: 4; 3: 1; 4: 5; 5: 6), has a mystic ring about it. It is possible that the tradition of counting the sacraments as seven may well have received inspiration from the Bible. In any case, the listing of the seven sacraments was done possibly for the first time in Christian history, so far as we have evidence, by a European Christian writer named Peter Lombard in the 12th century, and it came to be adopted as convenient for Christian instruction by the Church both in the West and in the East. However, the

churches of the Reformation called in question the number seven.

Q. Has the number any difficulty from our point of view?

A. Yes, it has.

Q. What is the difficulty?

A. Three points may be noted. *One*, it tends to ignore the significance of the Church. Guided by the Holy Spirit, it is the body of people of the new humanity in Christ, which exists to carry forward the saving work accomplished by the Lord. As such, the Church is itself a sacramental community. *Two*, it elevates the priestly ranks in the Church, as those administering the sacraments, over the community as a whole, in such a way that the latter is assigned only a passive role. This indeed is a position which the New Testament clearly rejects (See I Peter 2: 9f.). What is noted in this Petrine passage is that the Church is the priestly community, which takes a place of Jesus Christ in the world. Therefore, all ranks, of the clergy are in the community, not above it. Transformation into the likeness of Christ by the guidance of the Holy Spirit is necessary for every member of the Church and for the Church as a corporate reality. *Three*, it views, in a sort of an artificial way, each of the sacraments as independent rites in itself.

Q. Can these points be explained further?

A. The first of them is noted in section one of the present chapter. The second implies that the Church is a community consisting of clergy and laity. Neither of them is less in their church membership and eligibility for receiving divine gifts. Whereas the clergy has the special responsibility of looking after the services connected with the Church from within, the laity brings the secular world in contact with the spiritual demands of the Gospel. Regarding the third, the following points deserve attention. Take baptism, for instance. As it is performed in our Church, three of the seven sacraments are administered together. The candidate is baptized or washed in water, anointed with holy Oil or Mooron, and given the holy

Qurbana He/she is thus made a full member of the Church. Baptism, therefore, is not simply what the word implies, namely an act of washing, but is the sacred ceremony of incorporating the person concerned into the Church, the body of Christ. A similar explanation of the other sacraments also is possible, with the exception of the holy Qurbana.

- Q. Do you mean to say that the theory of the seven sacraments should be given up altogether?
- A. No, the theory should be understood within the wider context of the Christian calling through the Church.
- Q. Please clarify the emphasis further?
- A. The seven sacraments are not seven independent and unrelated rites. But they are divine mysteries through which the grace of the same Holy Spirit is imparted to the members of the Church in the various stages in their lives as well as vocations. In this way they are enabled to grow into Christian maturity. In baptism, for instance, a person is incorporated into the Church and made a member of Christ's body in order that, led by the Holy Spirit, he may live his life as one committed to the Christian way. The holy Qurbana is the mystery in which the believer is enabled to feed on the crucified and risen Christ. The other sacraments should also be understood within the framework of this setting.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What is a sacrament?
2. List the difficulties for accepting in a simple way the theory of the seven sacraments.
3. What is the supreme Sacrament, and how do we participate in it?

SECTION FOUR: THE SACRAMENTS AND THEIR CELEBRATION—ONE

- Q. Please explain each of the sacraments, by saying how they are celebrated?

- A. We shall do this by discussing baptism to begin with. The New Testament shows that our Lord himself had asked the disciples to baptize those who believed (Matt.28:19). On this basis we may say that it was instituted by Jesus Christ. In baptism the candidate is symbolically weaned away from the old life and brought into the new, in which he/she is to be identified with the Lord, the crucified and risen Christ (Rom. 6: 2-4; II Cor. 5:17).
- Q. What is the old life from which the candidate for baptism is weaned away?
- A. It is the life led by men/women, without any personal commitment and loyalty to Jesus Christ and the ideals which he propagated in the world.
- Q. What are the different actions performed in the service and what do they imply?
- A. In the service of baptism, as it is held in our Church, there are five actions. They are:- 1. The ministry of the word, followed by Exorcism; 2. Anointment with baptismal oil; 3. Washing in water; 4. Anointment with Mooron; and 5. Participation in the holy Qurbana
- Q. What is exorcism and how is it done?
- A. This is an action in which the candidate is made to renounce Satan, fear of him, his works, and so on, three times. He/she is then asked to accept Jesus Christ, his teaching and his saving ministry, also three times.
- Q. How is the Service of baptism begun?
- A. The celebrant (bishop or priest) starts the service with prayers, followed by the chanting of some hymns. Then two passages from the New Testament, (Romans 5: 20; 6:4 and Luke 3:15-16 as well as John 3:5) are read, the epistle by the assistant and the Gospel by the celebrant. Then comes the exorcism, which is noted above. At its close the Creed is recited, indicating that the candidate has been made a member of the community of believers.
- Q. What is the role of the 'Sponsor' in baptism?

- A. The sponsor is a mature Christian who presents the candidate for baptism and receives him/her back after the sacrament being over. From very ancient times the Church was keen that its members held to the faith correctly and led blameless lives (See Eph. 4:1-6). To ensure this, every baptized person was committed to the spiritual care of a faithful member of the Church, man in the case of a male candidate and woman when candidate was of the female sex. This custom had a special relevance when the candidate was an infant. The sponsor, God-father or God-mother, answered questions for the Child and received it officially into his/her care after the ceremony.
- Q. Are not the parents of the child enough to play the role of the sponsor?
- A. The parents of the child do have the obligation to offer it the spiritual care and nurture which it needs, in addition to the physical, mental and other training. The sponsor is not expected to replace them. But he/she specially represents the Church in fulfilling the task of bringing up the child as its member.
- Q. How can the sponsor carry out this responsibility?
- A. The question is not easy to be answered neatly. In fact, the sponsor has become a mere formality in the Church. We should all try to change this lethargy on the part of people who undertake to be sponsors in baptism. A sponsor should definitely feel a genuine moral and spiritual obligation for his/her wards. Seeking to guide them to be faithful Church members, remembering them in prayers, and helping them whenever possible, a sponsor should seek to fulfil his/her undertaking.
- Q. What is the anointment with oil that is not Mooron?
- A. Following the exorcism, in which the candidate renounces Satan and his works on the one hand, and accepts Jesus Christ and his way on the other, he/she is adopted as a child of God. As a sign of this act the candidate is anointed with the baptismal oil. The celebrant touches the oil with the thumb of his right hand and makes the sign of

the cross over the forehead of the candidate in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Q. What is this oil?

A. This baptismal oil is usually consecrated for the purpose, using olive oil, by the bishop and distributed by him to the priests.

Q. How is the baptismal washing done?

A. The celebrant mixes hot and cold water in the font, with appropriate prayers and hymns, and blesses it in the name of the triune God. He then pours three drops of the holy Mooron, again, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Having prepared the water in this way, the candidate is baptized in the name of the holy Trinity. After the washing, the sponsor receives the candidate in clean clothes.

Q. Why is it that hot and cold water mixed?

A. It is traditionally held that the part of the river Jordan where our Lord was baptized had water coming from two streams, one of which was hot and the other cold. It is to symbolize this situation that the mixing is done in the font.

Q. How is the candidate anointed with Mooron?

A. Following the washing, the celebrant makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the baptized person with the thumb of his right hand after touching the Mooron, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then the person is anointed with Mooron all over from head to feet.

Q. What is Mooron?

A. It is a consecrated oil. The word is derived from the Greek *muron*, which refers to fragrant oil. Mooron in the Church is specially prepared with several spices mixed in olive oil, and consecrated usually by the head of the Church, who distributes it to the bishops from whom priests receive it for use in baptism. Mooron is used by the bishops for the dedication of the altar as well.

Q. Is there any connection between the anointment with Mooron in our Church and the Confirmation in the Western Churches?

A. They correspond to each other. In the west baptism and confirmation are considered two sacraments and are administered separately. But the East regards them as two parts of the same sacrament.

Q. What is Chrismation?

A. In the English language the anointment with oil is called chrismation. Derived from the Greek *chrisma*, it means smearing or painting. In ecclesiastical use it means only anointment.

Q. What does chrismation signify?

A. It signifies that the baptized person is granted the Holy Spirit and the full right of membership in the Church, the body of Christ.

Q. How is the baptized person given the holy Qurbana?

A. After being anointed with Mooron, the person is taken into the sanctuary of the Church and made to kiss the four corners of the altar. The holy communion is then administered to him/her and is dismissed with the blessings of the blessed Trinity and the grace of the incarnate Lord.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What is the significance of baptism? How important is exorcism in it?
2. How many oils are being used in the service of baptism, as it is performed in our Church? What does each of them signify?
3. What is the sponsor in baptism?

SECTION FIVE: THE SACRAMENTS AND THEIR CELEBRATION—TWO

Q. How can the holy Qurbana be understood?

A. The question cannot be answered adequately here, as it will require a full volume.

In brief words, the holy Qurbana may be described as the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord. The Church traces it to the ceremonial meal which he had with the apostles in the evening of the day previous to his cruci-

fixion. That was in all probability the evening before the Jewish Passover (See John 18:28). On that occasion he took bread and wine in his hands. After blessing them separately, he gave each of them to the apostles, saying that they represented his body and blood, and asked that the ceremony be continued in his memory till the end (See Mat. 26-29; Mark 14: 22-25; Luke 22:14-20). After the resurrection of the Lord, when the Church was founded, the ceremony was taken up by the community with great reverence (I Cor. 11:23-29). As the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord, it was highly venerated by the Church from the beginning (I Cor. 10:16-17; John 6:53f). The holy Qurbana is indeed the sacrament that signifies Christ's gift of himself to the Church as a whole and to the individual Christian in particular.

Q. Is the holy Qurbana merely a sacrament?

A. It is not merely a sacrament, but in the context of its celebration as a sacrament the Church has its main worship of every Sunday and other important days.

Q. Please give us a brief description of the Qurbana service.

A. The service of the holy Qurbana contains two main parts, which may be referred to as the Ministry of the word and the Ministry of the Sacrament.

Q. Where does the first part begin?

A. The celebrant, bishop or priest, begins the service with the words, "Mary who gave you birth....". After this beginning, the first part includes the *Trisagion*, the readings from the New Testament, prayers by the celebrant, the blessing of the censer, and the chanting of the Creed.

Q. What is the *Trisagion*?

A. The word is Greek, which means the hymn that ascribes glory to God three times: "Holy are You, O God; holy are You, the Strong; holy are You the deathless, crucified for us, have mercy upon us." This, in fact, is the *Trisagion*. Following the celebrant, or the bishop if he is present, the congregation chants it three times.

- Q. Why are the passages from the New Testament read?
- A. Christians are expected to recall the great events of our salvation as recorded in the New Testament and the teaching of the apostles based on them, and mould their lives in their light. For this reason, usually three passages are read. The first is from either the *Acts of the Apostles* or one of the *Catholic Epistles*.
- Q. What are the *Catholic Epistles*?
- A. These are the epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude.
- Q. Where is the second reading taken from?
- A. This is from one of the fourteen letters regarded by the Church to have been written by St. Paul.
- Q. What is the third reading?
- A. It is from one or more of the Gospels.
- Q. Why is it that the Old Testament is not read?
- A. Passages from the Old Testament chosen for each day are read before the holy Qurbana service begins. The Old Testament contains the scripture of the people of God before the New Testament times. The holy Qurbana being a sacrament of the New Testament, the Old Testament reading precedes it.
- Q. When is the place for the sermon in the service?
- A. Since the sermon is expected to be an exposition of the biblical passages, its right place is immediately after the Gospel reading.
- Q. Why is it then the sermon is postponed to a later occasion?
- A. It has happened in our Church that on the whole people come for the service later than when it starts, so that many of them miss the scripture reading. However, in order to have the message for the day reach even those late comers, the sermon is being delayed.

In fact, we should all make it a point to be present in Church at least a few minutes before the Qurbana service begins. If we can possibly do that, the sermon can be preached at the right time in the service.

- Q. What prayers are said by the Celebrant after the Gospel reading and what is their significance?
- Q. Three prayers are said one after the other, called *Promeon* meaning introduction, prayer of Absolution, and *Sedro*. Of these, *promeon* and *sedro* are two parts of the same prayer in the Syrian Church, which aims to prepare the congregation for the service that follows. The prayer of absolution is a great invocation in which the priest calls to memory the entire Church, both militant and triumphant, and submits all to God's grace and mercy.
- Q. At the end of these prayers, why does the priest use the censer in praising God?
- A. This is a highly symbolic act. The censer here represents the Church that glorifies the Triune God. The priest, while holding to one of the four chains of the censer to begin with, says: "Hallowed be the holy Father"; then holding to two chains together, representing the divine and the human in the one Christ: he says: "Hallowed be the holy Son"; and holding to the last chain, he says: "Hallowed be the holy and living Spirit". While this is being done, the congregation joins in to ascribe glory to the Triune God by bowing their heads and responding with the 'Amen'.

Now the priest himself censures the people and commits both himself and the entire Church to God's mercy and pardon.

- Q. Why does the deacon (or the person who assists) move towards the people and proceed to the front door of the Church?
- A. Here also the action is symbolic. What is done on the occasion is this. When the priest completes praising God with the censer, the deacon receives it from him. The priest now begins the Creed, which the deacon or someone else follows up. In some Churches the Creed is recited by the whole congregation. In this context the deacon turns to the congregation, signifying that they should be united in affirming faith in the words of the Creed.

The first part of the service comes to an end here.

- Q. How does the second part begin ?
- A. It begins with the 'Kiss of Peace'.
- Q. What does this mean ?
- A. To understand the meaning here, observe the action. The deacon comes back to the sanctuary, holding the censer in his two hands. By that time the celebrant who had washed his hands and knelt in front of the altar praying, would have risen up. He gets up on the altar step and offers the prayer for peace. The deacon receives the peace first, and passes it on to the clergy and people.

The peace referred to here is the kiss of peace. The deacon, by holding the censer in both hands, indicates symbolically that the people are of one faith.

- Q. What are the different actions in the second part of the Qurbana service ?
- A. After the Kiss of Peace, there are six actions to be noted. They are:- a) The remembrance of Christ's institution of the holy Qurbana; b) The Invocation of the Holy Spirit; c) The Intercession; d) The chanting of the Lord's Prayer; e) The communion and f) The thanksgiving.
- Q. How is Christ's institution of the holy Qurbana called to memory ?
- A. If you observe the service, you will see that, while the Kiss of Peace is passed on, the vessels containing the bread and wine are covered with a piece of linen. The priest removes it ceremoniously. He then gives the first benediction and asks the people to raise their minds and hearts to heaven, where our Lord is seated at the right hand of God, like the angels on high (Isaiah 6:3; Rev. 4:8).

In this context the celebrant recalls how our Lord instituted the holy Qurbana. He takes the bread into his left hand and blesses it with the right hand, as Christ had done and the chalice with the wine also in the same way. He then reminds the people of Christ's injunction, that the ceremony be continued in memory of his death and resurrection, till he comes again. Now the congregation responds

with the prayer: Lord, we remember Your death, We confess Your resurrection, and we look forward to Your second coming. May Your mercy be upon us all.

Q. What happens in the Invocation of the Holy Spirit ?

A. The priest prays silently that the Holy Spirit may come upon the elements and consecrate them, thereby making them the body and blood of Christ, as well as upon himself and the people in order that they may be enabled to receive the sacrament worthily.

Q. How is the Intercession held ?

A. The Intercession follows the Invocation of the Holy Spirit in six sections, each of them being announced by the deacons or those who assist in the service. In the first section the Church as a whole, particularly its spiritual head, the bishop of the diocese and other bishops in the fellowship of the Church, is remembered. Secondly, all members of the Church who are caught up in one or another adversity is called to memory, and thirdly those who hold political authority in the world are committed to divine care and guidance. In sections four, five and six departed members of the Church—saints, Church leaders, and all those who have left this life in faith respectively—are commemorated.

At the close of this third action the priest gives the second benediction and the sanctuary is closed with the curtain. Now, led by the deacons who assist, a hymn is sung by the congregation, and the priest performs the service called the 'intinction'.

Q. What is 'intinction' ?

A. Intinction is an action in which the priest places into the wine in the chalice a piece of the bread, and with another piece he smears the bread with wine, declaring that the consecrated bread and wine belong to each other as the body and blood of the crucified and risen Christ.

Q. What is done in the fourth action ?

- A. When the service of intinction is over, the sanctuary is opened by having the curtain drawn away. Now the priest says a prayer, at the end of which he begins the Lord's prayer for the congregation. Now the priest and the people together reverentially recite the Prayer which our Lord has taught. Following this, the celebrant says two other prayers, and then gives the third benediction. Now comes the Eucharistic Adoration.
- Q. What is that ?
- A. The priest lifts the two Eucharistic vessels, one after the other, and led by him, the people sing to the glory of God, calling to memory the whole company of the saints and those departed this life (See Hebrews 12:22-24).
- Q. How does the fifth action go ?
- A. While the eucharistic adoration is going on, the sanctuary is again closed. On this occasion the communion takes place. The celebrant and those who are in the sanctuary solemnly receive the holy Qurbana. Then the curtain is drawn, and the priest comes to the congregation to give them also the holy communion. This is a highly elevating moment in the service, and the action is performed in great solemnity. We should all recall the fact that our Lord is giving himself to us and guiding our lives in such a way that we receive his strength.
- Q. What is the sixth action ?
- A. After giving communion to the people who are outside the sanctuary, the priest goes back to the altar and says the Prayer of Thanksgiving. He then concludes the service by singing a hymn, which the congregation responds by singing another hymn. With the final benediction pronounced by the priest, the public worship comes to an end.
- Q. Is this the pattern followed in all our Churches ?
- A. The question is not easy to answer. What is given here is in summary the pattern indicated in our Liturgy and followed in many Churches. Regarding the giving of communion to people outside the sanctuary, we shall see that it is postponed till the very end of the service in many

places. This is the result of a custom which came into vogue wrongly, one may say. When communion by people became infrequent, the postponement happened to be thought of as convenient by the priests and bishops. The holy Qurbana is celebrated for everyone to Communicate. To be a mere spectator at the celebration is against the principle of the liturgy which we follow. On the contrary, we should communicate regularly. While doing it, we have a right to request those concerned to give us the sacrament at the correct time.

Some questions for you to answer

- 1 What significance does the holy Qurbana have in the life of the Church ?
- 2 What is *Trisagion* ? Why do we sing it at the beginning of the holy Qurbana service ?
- 3 Why is the censer blessed during the service ?
- 4 What are the six actions in the service ? What does each of them signify ?

SECTION SIX: THE SACRAMENTS AND THEIR CELEBRATION—THREE

- Q. Why is it that Confession is considered a pre-requisite for receiving communion ?
- A. There is a lot of misunderstanding on this point. The truth of the matter is that Confession is not so considered. On the other hand, the real emphasis of the Church is that we should prepare ourselves spiritually in order to receive the holy Qurbana.
- Q. What is the sacrament of Confession then ?
- A. In a word, Confession is the sacrament of penitence.
- Q. What need is there for it?
- A. A Christian, as we have seen, has taken the vow in baptism of abandoning Satan and his works on the one hand, and of accepting Christ and his ways on the other. This means that he is called upon to lead a life of faith, keeping to the ideals of honesty, dependability, purity and nobility, in thought, word and deed. By such a life he will attain to a sense of self-fulfilment in himself and be enabled to

exert his influence in the world for its moral progress. However, the fact is that this goal is seldom reached by us, tempted ever as we are to seek our own private good to the neglect of the good of others, or to lead a life of unhealthy pleasure to the neglect of fulfilling our duties. In the face of this reality about us, the Church provides for the sacrament of penitence to help us in our moral and spiritual growth.

- Q. How shall we take advantage of this provision?
- A. This is not a difficult task to perform. First of all, we must have a sense of responsibility regarding ourselves. Holding to it, we should examine ourselves periodically and see whether we do really fulfil it. Whenever we realize that we fall short of the mark, we should ask for divine help to improve ourselves. Repenting of our sins in thought, word and deed, we confess them to the priest and receive from him the absolution that comes from God alone.
- Q. Can't we obtain the absolution from God, without confessing to a priest?
- A. The Church does not, in fact, deny that we can. What it does, on the other hand, is to provide for the sacrament as a concrete means, whereby its members may receive the consolation which they need. If we use this provision, we shall find it to be a spiritually and psychologically edifying and efficient way of getting rid of our guilt feeling in the past and of our wrong ways in life in the future.
- Q. What is Matrimony?
- A. Matrimony or Marriage is the sacred rite by which a man and a woman are brought together and united in wedlock in order that they may build up a family.
- Q. Why should there be matrimony in Church? Is it not enough that men and women choose their respective partners in life and live together?
- A. Life together of a man and a woman is, as a matter of fact, a family. It is in families that children are born. As

we have already noted, the responsibility for bringing up children as worthy persons, respectable citizens, and above all as devoted members of the family of God, is vested in man and woman by God. Matrimony is the means whereby the Church sanctions people to work out this divine ordering in practice.

Q. What is Ordination?

A. The question of Ordination has already been discussed above, so that it need not be repeated here.

Q. What is the Anointment of the Sick?

A. The Church has the tradition going back to very early times which enjoins that priests should include visitation of the sick in their pastoral duties (James 5: 14-15). The priest prays over the indisposed and, when called for, anoints him with a consecrated oil. He prays as much for the person's physical recovery as for his spiritual well-being.

Q. Why is this sacrament called the 'Extreme Unction', particularly in the Roman Catholic Church?

A. The words, extreme unction, mean only the last anointment. In the Roman Catholic Church this sacrament was considered the last spiritual rite administered to a Christian while he/she is alive on earth. So it was usually given in that Church to persons who are on the point of death.

Q. Is this not what we also do?

A. No, in our Church the rite is called the Anointment of the Sick, not extreme unction. It can be given to any sick person.

Q. Who consecrates the oil that is used in the anointment of the sick?

A. In our Church this oil, as well as the baptismal oil, is consecrated by the bishop, from whom priests receive it. Usually it is the bishop of the diocese concerned who distributes both these oils as well as Mooron to priests, who serve in churches of his diocese.

Q. How many consecrated oils do we have in our Church?

- A. We have three of them, namely the holy Mooron consecrated usually by the head of the Church, and these two oils. The oil used in all of them is olive oil.
- Q. Can't we use other oils?
- A. In principle we can. But in choosing the olive oil, we are following a tradition. The Church was founded originally in the Mediterranean and the West Asian world. It was in fact in that geographical context that it developed during the early centuries. Olive oil was most common in those surroundings, and the Church used it for its needs.
- Q. Do we have to follow the traditons evolved there, without a change?
- A. This is a question which has many implications, so that a simple answer is not possible to be given. We may say in general that traditions which are rather innocent and have no theological and psychological bearing may be kept, so long as the matter concerned is readily available.
- Q. Do we mean that only members of the clergy should pray for those who are sick?
- A. No at all. Every Christian should pray for the sick, the afflicted, the needy, and so on. As for the clergy, they have a pastoral obligation to pray for people of all conditions. The Church provides for it in this sacrament. Besides while the clergy prays in this way, they are not doing it by themselves. All sacramental actions are carried on by the community, under the leadership of the clergyman concerned.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What need is there for confession? How do we make our confession?
2. Why should there be Marriage in Church?
3. What is our responsibility to the sick?

SECTION SEVEN: THE CHURCH AND ITS LIFE OF DISCIPLINE

- Q. In addition to the sacramental side, what other provisions

does the Church offer to build up its members in faith and Christian dedication?

- A. The Church provides chiefly for Prayer, Public Worship and Seasons of Fasting.
- Q. What provision for prayer does the Church offer?
- A. The Church provides in principle for seven offices of the day and prayers for various occasions.
- Q. What are the seven offices of the day?
- A. Following the practice in Judaism (Psalm 119: 164), the Church has fixed seven times of the day for prayer. Since the seven are not practicable, the Church recommends that individual persons and communities should hold prayers in the morning and in the evening.
- Q. Which are the seven times?
- A. They are:- evening, bed-time, midnight, morning, the third hour of the day, the sixth hour of the day, and the ninth hour of the day.
- Q. Regarding prayer, is there not a difference between what is expected of the individual persons and what is stipulated for congregations.
- A. Yes, there is. We may say that the difference is between private worship and public worship. The former is shorter than the latter.
- Q. How are we to pray?
- A. In private prayer, say in homes or wherever we are, we should collect our thoughts, and concentrate on the presence of God, the holy Trinity. If we can sing a few stanzas of a hymn or a lyric, that will help us to lift up our minds to the divine presence. The reading of a passage from the Bible may also be warmly recommended. For choosing the biblical passages, we may adopt a programme for ourselves or lectionary of the Church. Our Church magazines, Church Weekly, and so on, carry devotional pieces for each day. Choose one of these publications and read the devotional sections for each day. Then say

the *Kauma* and the few prayers appended to this book. For all this, you will not need more time than five to ten minutes. If we adopt this practice every morning and evening, prayer will become part of ourselves.

Q. What about public worship?

A. Public worship is usually held in churches. As a rule, a bishop or a priest leads it. In the absence of either of them and if a deacon is present, he leads it. Otherwise, a layman fulfils the function.

Q. Can a deacon or a layman lead the sacramental service when no bishop or priest is around?

A. No, sacramental services are required to be led by a bishop or a priest. What is noted above refers only to ordinary prayer service.

Q. Are there not other prayer services in the Church?

A. Yes, there are. Prayer services are held in connection with the blessing of a house, burial of the deceased person, and various other occasions.

Q. What is the need for all these prayers?

A. The need is to commit all our ways and doings to God's control and guidance. It is to him that we belong, and we are called upon to follow his ways in all that we do.

Q. Does God have a concern for our earthly life and conduct?

A. The earth and all that it contains, except the sin and evil that happen in the world, are God's, and he wants to help us in all aspects of our earthly life. As we have already noted this point, we need not discuss it further.

Q. Since God has made us and we belong to him, why should he expect us to pray him for his blessings and guidance?

A. We are asked to pray, not because otherwise God will not give us the blessings that we need. In fact, God grants his blessings to everyone, even to those who deny or decry him. We pray to God in order that we may draw closer to the fountain of all goodness and love, and that thereby we may be transformed to his likeness. God expects us to be

his children, and the world to be run in his way. However as persons with creaturely freedom, we can go in our own ways. This should be avoided, and prayer is one of the most effective ways by which we can be changed.

- Q. What is the principle underlying our prayer and worship service in general?
- A. The question cannot be answered fully here, neither is it necessary. We shall give a brief comment on the prayer called *Kauma*, with which we begin our prayer and worship service always. It is offered in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, namely the triune God. The praises and prayers of the *Kauma* that follow immediately are addressed to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son. They are brought to an end with the *barekmor*. Though this Syriac word means 'Lord bless', in the context it is a request to the leader of the worship to start the 'Lord's Prayer' that comes immediately thereafter. This prayer which our Lord himself has taught us is addressed to the Father. Thus the prayers and praises addressed to the Son come to an end, and the prayer addressed to the Father is begun, with the *barekmor*.

All prayers should thus begin in the name of the triune God, and by ascribing glory to him. Within the context of remembering God as the holy Trinity, we praise the incarnate Son who has disclosed God's love on the cross, and pray for his grace and mercy. All this is then summed up in the Lord's prayer.

- Q. What about the 'Hail Mary....', which follows the Lord's Prayer?
- A. 'Hail Mary' was not part of the *Kauma* even in the 13th century when Gregory Bar Hebraeus lived and wrote. He includes the *Kauma* in no less than three of his books. The 'Hail Mary' is not included anywhere. This invocation addressed to St. Mary was added obviously later.

Granting this fact, we can find a meaning in the addition. Mary does in fact represent the human, created reality. While worshipping the triune God, Mary is remembered

as one member of the human family, whom God the Son chose to be his vehicle for the incarnation. While seeking her intercessory prayers on our behalf, we express our solidarity with her in the human family.

- Q. Are we expected to say the 'Hail Mary' whenever we pray the *Kauma*?
- A. No, the usual custom in the Antiochene Syrian Church, from which we have taken over our practice, is to say the 'Hail Mary' only once, namely at the close of the prayer.
- Q. During prayer, why do we cross ourselves?
- A. Signing the cross is a means to remind ourselves of our Christian calling.
- Q. How do we make the sign of the cross?
- A. In doing this, we project the thumb and the next two fingers, of the right hand, putting forward a little the finger that is in the middle. Now with that finger we touch the forehead, the chest, the left shoulder, and the right shoulder in succession.
- Q. What does this action indicate?
- A. It indicates the incarnation of God the Son, the middle person of the holy Trinity, who came down from heaven to the earth and transformed us from the left (evil ways) to the right (goodness and nobility).
- Q. Is this the way in which the sign of the cross is made by all Christians?
- A. No, there are Christian traditions in which people make the sign of the cross with the three fingers including the thumb of the right hand, by touching them on the forehead, the chest the right shoulder and the left shoulder in succession. Here the symbol is that the holy Trinity is everywhere.
- Q. What principle does our practice imply?
- A. It implies that our faith and confession in God is grounded in the incarnation of God the Son. The Gospels testify that the Father alone knows the Son, and the Son and

those to whom he reveals alone know the Father (Mat. 11 : 27 and Luke 10 : 22). Our Church has taken this emphasis seriously. It is reflected in our Church practices. That is implied in the *Kauma* and in the making of the sign of the cross.

- Q. When are we expected to make the sign?
- A. Usually we cross ourselves when the word 'cross' with reference to the crucifixion of our Lord is mentioned in prayer.
- Q. When the bishop or the priest blesses the congregation, or in the holy Qurbana service he makes the sign of the cross holding to the chains of the censer, are we not expected to cross ourselves?
- A. This is being done by most people including some clergymen, so that there is no harm in doing it, but the correct way is to bow down our heads and show veneration, as a mark of receiving the blessing. Making the sign of the cross is not necessary on such occasions.
- Q. Is it necessary to make the sign when the name of the holy Trinity is mentioned?
- A. Again, the answer is 'No.' We should simply bow down our heads and do obeisance to the triune God.
- Q. Do we have to cross ourselves when the censer is swung towards us?
- A. Here also many people make the sign of the cross and there is no harm in so doing, though bowing is enough.
- Q. What is the significance of the censer?
- A. Censer is a vessel for burning the incense in worship both in the Jewish and the non-Jewish religions. The Church took it over from Judaism. For us, it symbolizes the rising of our prayers to God, in the same way as the smoke in the censer goes upwards. Whenever we are being censured in worship, we may recall that we should offer prayers to God which will ascend to heaven.
- Q. Why do we bow down when we are being censured?

- A. While bowing, we express our intention to pray and rise in spirit to God.
- Q. Now that we have received this much information regarding prayer and worship, may we pass on to fasting. Why do we fast?
- A. We fast in order that we may discipline ourselves in Christian living.
- Q. Since the Holy Spirit has been given to us to guide us into all truth, why should there be fasting as a means of discipline?
- A. Self-discipline is indispensable even to experience the guiding work of the Spirit.
- Q. Can this point be explained further?
- A. The Holy Spirit, as we have seen, is the power of God, whom to receive we need to dedicate ourselves and appropriate his gifts inwardly. This calls for self-discipline.
- Q. How does fasting help us here?
- A. In fasting we voluntarily forgo certain meals and certain special items of food, as well as give up some of the usual activities in life. This abstention is possible to be undertaken with joy only when we have a sense of detachment to many things, like food, physical pleasures, search for undue wealth, indulgence in earthly glory, and so on.
- Q. Why should we have this detachment?
- A. Detachment is necessary because of three things, *One*, all that the earth already has and all that we ourselves produce belong in fact to God. We are able to produce anything because God gives us the ability, facility and the means. *Two*, there are others in the world who, on account of various circumstances beyond their control, do not have them. To help such people to attain to a life above want is the responsibility of society. In bringing this about, we should have a genuine concern. *Three*, our own life in this world is not only transitory, but also uncertain about tomorrow.

These three facts about life in this world make it indispensable that we should always have a genuine sense of detachment towards everything that attracts our attention unduly.

- Q. If we do not concentrate in our chosen field of work and enquiry, can we produce anything worthwhile? If we concentrate, how can we have a sense of detachment?
- A. This is a serious question. In fact, the point implied in it will explain what we have tried to communicate. When we concentrate on something, we shall have to say 'No' to many other things. By applying this truth to life, we shall see the value of detachment which fasting seeks to inculcate. We must have an ultimate commitment to God and his ways in all that we do. This commitment can be helped to grow in us by the personal self-discipline, for which fasting stands.
- Q. When we abstain from food and other dispensable things of life, we can make a saving. What shall we do with it?
- A. All savings which we make in this way should be set apart for the benefit of helping others in need.
- Q. How did the custom of fasting evolve in the Church?
- A. The question is indeed important. Fasting was a practice among the Jews (See Mat. 6:16-18; Luke 18:12). Though the Church may have taken over fasting as such from them, it gave the practice a new meaning. (See Mat. 9: 14-17).
- Q. What is the new meaning?
- A. In a word, fasting in the Church is related to faith in Jesus Christ and his Gospel. The second reference in the answer above implies it. What the passage notes is that, so long as the Lord was with them on earth, the disciples were not fasting. In fact, they were not required to fast, because the goal of fasting was to enjoy companionship with the Master, and they were having it. But when he was gone from them, they should fast in order to realize it.
- Q. But didn't you say that fasting was a means to develop a

sense of detachment and personal self-discipline? How can the emphasis just made go with it?

- A. The answer is simple. Detachment is negative as it helps us to say 'No'. While saying 'No', we must develop the attitude of saying 'Yes'. This should be by developing our commitment to Jesus Christ and the Gospel. The Holy Spirit is helping us to say this 'Yes'. The Spirit of God inspires us to seek companionship with the Lord, and this leads us to grow in the spiritual dimension in life.
- Q. Do we have evidence in the history of the Church that fasting had evolved from early times?
- A. Yes, we have evidence. During the first three hundred years the Church had two seasons of fasting. One of them consisted of the weekly fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. This replaced the weekly fast of the Jews on Mondays and Thursdays. The other was an annual commemoration of our Lord's crucifixion and death. The latter developed into the Easter Lent.
- Q. How did the Church relate these seasons to Jesus Christ?
- A. An early Christian writing entitled *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, produced probably in the 2nd or the 3rd century, enjoins that Christians should not fast with the Jews on Mondays and Thursdays, but that they should hold the fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. Another writing entitled *The Apostolic Constitution*, compiled possibly in the 4th century, states the reason for the fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays. It says that on the Wednesday previous to the last passover of our Lord the Jewish council had decided to do away with him by crucifixion, and that on the Friday that followed the decision was carried out. The fasting therefore on Wednesdays and Fridays each week was being held in memory of Christ's death. Both seasons of fasting were thus meant to commemorate the passion and death of Christ.
- Q. Why was the period of seven weeks fixed for the fasting every year?
- A. Of these seven weeks, the one before Easter is a time

when we commemorate Christ's passion and death. The six weeks before Palm Sunday is a period of time, reminding us of the fast of our Lord (See Mat, 4: 2f; Luke 4: 2f.)

- Q. Why are we asked to abstain from meat and animal products during the time of fasting?
- A. We have a reference to it in *The Apostolic Constitution* which we have mentioned already. This 4th century work says that meat and other animal products are taken by people in connection with feasts. Since fasting is a time when we avoid luxury in food and other aspects of life, we should forego them and be content with other items of food.

The idea emphasized here is that we should consider the seasons of lent as special occasions for self-discipline, and that we should do our best to identify ourselves with Christ in his death and resurrection all through our lives in the world.

- Q. What about the other fasts included in our Church life?
- A. In addition to the two seasons noted above, our Church recognizes four other seasons for fasting during the year. These are, following the Easter Lent, the Apostles' Fast which begins on 16 June and ends on 29 June with the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul; the St. Mary's Fast which is held from 1 to 15 August, ending on the anniversary of our Lady's assumption; the Christmas' Lent, beginning on 1 December. It ends with the Christmas on 25 December; and the Nineveh Fast. This last is a three-day fast beginning on the Monday, three weeks before the entrance of the Easter Lent.
- Q. What is the importance of each of these fasts?
- A. During the Apostles' Fast we recall thankfully the services rendered by them. They were in fact eye-witnesses to what our Lord did on earth, and they were used by the Holy spirit to found the Church. We remember them and pray for the mission of the Church in the world. St. Mary's Fast is a time when we commemorate the Mother of our Lord. During the Christmas' Lent we prepare ourselves

spiritually to celebrate our Lord's coming into the world, by being born of a human mother. We can use the three days of the Nineveh Fast for a special self-dedication to God.

- Q. How much of abstention from food and other aspects of life are we expected to adopt during the seasons of fast?
- A. The Church has certain directives in this regard, which we shall consider to be general guidelines. In practice, the abstention varies according to the physical health and life situations of people. On the whole, we may say that we should all adopt certain amount of self-discipline in food, human relations, and so on. In its context we should try to understand the meaning of our faith and Christian calling. While doing this, we must have a genuine awareness of those outside of our family and Church circles who need our help in any way and seek ways and means of extending the same to them.

Some questions for you to answer

1. How do we pray and why?
2. What principle does the *Kauma* seek to conserve?
3. How do we make the sign of the cross, and what does it signify?
4. What is the importance of fasting?
5. What are the seasons of fasting recognized in our Church and what significance can we see in each of them?

The Mission and Unity of the Church

SECTION ONE: THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Q. What is the function of the Church in the world?

A. In a word, the Church exists in the world to work for its transformation.

Q. What transformation should the world undergo?

A. This is a big question, which cannot be answered adequately in a few words or sentences. We have already noted that the ministry of the Church consists in carrying forward the work which our Lord did while he was on earth. As the Gospels testify, he came to the world to do the will of the Father who sent him and to fulfil his work, and he enjoined on the Church to complete what he had initiated in himself with reference to the world as a whole in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the Church's mission, which has two aspects.

Q. What are they?

A. They are, *one*, to build up the Christian community on the basis of the life and ideals of Jesus Christ, and *two*, to work for the transformation of the world at large in the light of these ideals.

Q. What is our basis for saying this?

A. We can refer to three points in answer to this question. The first of them is what we can make out from our discussion already given concerning the Christian faith in God, and his relation to the world at large. We have shown there that the Christian dispensation is not meant merely for a section of the human race only, but that it is for the entire human family.

Q. Can you explain the idea further?

A. We have noted the Christian faith that God made the world in the beginning and guides it to the final goal of reflecting his will only. Though the world as a whole and man in particular have fallen away from this divine plan, God is working unceasingly to accomplish his purpose. The Church, we believe, is the pre-eminent instrument for realizing the goal.

Q. What is the second basis?

A. This may be noted by citing a passage in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians (See 1:24). The Apostle makes mention of his suffering for the Colossian Christians. He then goes on to say that by this he is completing in his flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, the Church. The sufferings of Christ should become the means of salvation for the entire human race through the Church, and we have a role to play in the attainment of this goal.

The risen Christ, before he ascended into heaven, said to the disciples, as St. Luke records (Acts 1:7-8), that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem. . . and to the end of the earth.

Q. What is the third basis ?

A. We may refer to it by noting a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (See 8:21). The Apostle shows there that the Christian understanding of God and the work of Christ imply the need for the transformation of the whole creation, not merely the human race. The creation itself, says he, would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God. In other words, the mission of Christ is not merely for a section of the human race, neither is Christ the Lord of a part of the world. He is the Lord of the entire world and the human race as a whole. His concern is not limited, but is cosmic.

Q. Does not this emphasis mean that the Christian should

work for the conversion of all people into the Church in order to achieve the goal ?

- A. If the question implies an external conversion of people into the Church, it has to be answered negatively. Jesus did not act or pray for such conversion. On the contrary, his prayer was that his disciples may be united with him and with one another in love, as he himself was one with the Father in love. It is such unity among them, and their being together united with the Triune God that will lead the world to believe in the Christian message (See John 17:21).
- Q. As a community in the world is the Church different from other communities? If it is, how are we to understand this? If it is not, how can the Christian make claims of this kind?
- A. The question is very legitimate and proper. The answer is 'Yes' and 'No'. 'Yes', in the sense that it is bound by the same laws and facts of life as other communities. As things go, we cannot say that the members of the Church do as a rule maintain a higher standard of morality or good behaviour than people of other faiths and no faith. Yet, it is possible to say 'No', in the sense that the Church believes in the God of love who cares equally for all men/women, and who guides the world to the ultimate goal of justice and equity, truth and goodness, peace and joy, for everyone.
- Q. How are we to understand this possibility ?
- A. We do not, as a matter of fact, understand it rationally. But in the light of the faith that God who made all things will guide them to the end, we hold it in hope. So, we believe that in the final end all evil will vanish and all human selfishness will come to nothing. When this comes to pass, all creation will reach its destiny in the eternal God. "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth disappeared, and the sea vanished. And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready...". A loud voice spoke, "Now God's home is with

mankind! He will live with them, and they shall be his people ...He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared." (Revelation 21: 1-4)

- Q. In the face of this noble hope, what shall we do to promote it?
- A. We shall make up our minds to live our lives in faith and in the light of the ideals, trusting in the power of the risen Christ which we receive in the Holy Spirit.
- Q. Are we expected to retire from earthly life, by giving up our positions and occupations?
- A. No, the earth and all that there is in it belong to God. Therefore we should live in it and work for its transformation, so that when we pass from it by death, we shall leave a better world for the coming generations.
- Q. What about the clergy?
- A. They also should live and work in the world through fulfilling their responsibilities in the Church and inspiring men and women to live in faith, holding to ideals, and to work for a transformed world order.
- Q. What does the Christian have to make these claims?
- A. The Christian, as we have already stated: has his faith. These are in fact faith claims. He has no earthly weapon, either military or monetary, by which to promote the claims.
- Q. What does the Church have to promote this faith?
- A. The life of the Church is so evolved that those who adopt it genuinely grow in Christian maturity and serve as God's agents in the world.
- Q. Please explain this point further?
- A. This may be done by looking into two aspects of Church life. Firstly, we must look into the sacramental life. By an intelligent participation in it we are given the assurance of divine grace in connection with the different stages in our lives. In Baptism, for example, we are incorporated into

the family of God, in holy Qurbana we are given the life that we need to live as God's children, in Confession we are enabled to renew our baptismal vow and grow in our Christian dedication, in Marriage the bride and groom are blessed by God to live as husband and wife in mutual love and care, and seeking to bring up the children who will be born to them in the Christian way; in Ordination those who accept it receive special grace and strength to serve the cause of Christ; and in the Anointment of the Sick the person is granted either God's healing or, in some cases, prepared to leave the earthly life in hope.

Secondly, the ecclesiastical year. A brief glance into our Church calendar will show that we begin the year with special dedication of ourselves to God on two Sundays early in November. In some years one of them will be the last Sunday in October. From then on we have a sort of pilgrimage with Christ all through the year. We commemorate the various incidents in the life of our Lord and the events of our salvation, till we come to the middle of the September of the following year, when the feast of the Cross is specially celebrated. During the several Sundays thereafter the cross is the subject of our meditation till the next new year. The calendar is drawn up in this way with a view to enable the Church as a community and its members individually to identify themselves with Jesus Christ and live in the Holy Spirit.

- Q. Is there anything else regarding Church life which we should remember in this connection?
- A. We have the seasons of fasting, which we have discussed. In addition we have a number of Saints' days throughout the year, when we recall the great army of men and women who have lived dedicated lives and passed from hence. We also make memorial of those of our kith and kin who have gone behind the veil. All these people remind us of the transitory nature of our lives on earth, and that in Christ we have a spiritual communion with them. We commit them in prayer to God, as they remember us in their prayers (See Heb. 12:22; II Tim.1: 18; Rev. 8:3).

- Q.** This is all well said. Yet does not the divided state of the churches contradict it? If during the more than nineteen hundred years of its existence Christianity evinced a history of divisions and rivalries, how can its message be believed?
- A.** This is a fundamental question, which no thinking Christian can afford to shirk. In fact, John 17: 21, to which reference has already been made, is clear on this point. It is by the unity of Christ's disciples in love that the world will come to believe in Jesus Christ as the Lord whom God has sent to the world. In other words, the world will feel compelled to accept the Christian truth only as a consequence of Christian unity—a unity in love which is eternally perfect in the triune God.
- Q.** What is the nature of the Christian unity spoken of here?
- A.** We shall take up this question in a later chapter. Here we may say that Christian unity will become ultimately possible only by the work of the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church into all the truth. Granting this central emphasis, the responsibility of the churches to work for Christian unity in the light of the Johannine statement must be stressed.
- Q.** What is the essential emphasis regarding the mission of the Church made in this section?
- A.** The Church in the Christian faith should be understood rightly. Then only can we speak about its mission in its proper perspective. Though it is a community in the world like other communities, it should receive its driving force from the eternal God through his Spirit. The Son who is known only to the Father and who (as well as those to whom he reveals) alone knows the Father (Mat. 11: 27), has founded it with himself as its first member. "The living Father has sent me", he said, "and I live because of him. In the same way whoever eats me will live because of me" (John 6:57). "Peace be with you", said the risen Christ to the Apostles, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). The Church is the community in the world which, both in its members individually and in itself corporately, is called by God to live

and work in the world by feeding on Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. To promote this life within itself and commend it to the world outside till the end is the mission of the Church.

- Q. But the Church, being a community in the world, has to be subject to the social and cultural, as well as the economic and political conditions that prevail in the world. Since that is the case, can the Church claim to be above the evil and sin, injustice and inhumanity, of the society at large?
- A. The answer is definitely 'No'. We have to be reminded in this connection that normally God works through human and created agencies which are not in themselves above defect and sin. This state will continue till the end of the world, as our Lord himself indicated in the parable of the tares (Mat. 13:24-30). But we believe that God will change it in his own time and in the way he only knows.
- Q. If this is the case, can the Church claim to be infallible or inerrant regarding itself and its decisions at any time?
- A. The Church is infallible and inerrant only in regard to the salvation which it proclaims, not in anything else. The salvation is God's gift transmitted to us in grace by the Holy Spirit.
- Q. When, then, can we expect the Church to become an infallible community?
- A. We do not know when. But we believe that God who is the beginning and the final end of all things, will bring this about.

Some questions for you to answer

1. What is the mission of the Church in the world?
2. Since the Church as a community in the world is not above historical anomalies and contradictions, what shall we do to remedy the situation?
3. Should one give up one's social and political involvement in order to be faithful to the Christian calling?

SECTION TWO: THE CHURCH AND THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

- Q. Are there not movements in the world which work for Christian unity?
- A. Yes, there are. In fact, the history of the Church notes the fact that whenever there arose division, there were forces which engaged themselves in trying to bring the separated bodies back to unity. In the present century the Ecumenical Movement came to be formed with the specific intention of working for the reunion of the Christian churches.
- Q. What is the Ecumenical Movement?
- A. This is a movement in which churches come together through officially appointed members to work for unity.
- Q. How did this movement begin in modern times?
- A. The story may be said in a simple way. The 19th century was a period in which the various Protestant churches in Europe, Britain and America engaged themselves in evangelistic work by sending their missionaries to the African, Asian and South American countries. While carrying on the programme, some of the leading persons among them came to realize that Christian division in their mother countries affected the progress of Church growth in the mission fields. This realization led them from the beginning of the present century to take up the question of Christian unity more seriously and concretely than ever before. Thus between 1910 and 1948 several conferences of the representatives from different churches were held. These gatherings considered ways and means of bringing the divided churches closer and to work for their unity. The efforts made in this way culminated in the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948 at Amsterdam, Holland. Since then the W. C. C. has been operating with Geneva, Switzerland, as its headquarters. It offers the member churches a common organization to help them towards cooperation and unity.
- Q. Can the W.C.C. be called the Ecumenical Movement?
- A. No, the Ecumenical Movement is a spiritual reality. The

W. C. C., on the other hand, is an organization which seeks to express the spirit of the Ecumenical Movement in a concrete way.

Q. What has the W. C. C. done so far in its history?

A. This question calls for a fuller answer than we can offer here. In fact, there is a lot of literature dealing with the history and the work of the W. C. C. and its various organs. Here we may note that from its formation in 1948 at Amsterdam, Holland, it had five world assemblies with official delegates from member churches, and the sixth is going to be held at Vancouver, U. S. A. this year. The W. C. C. has a department of Faith and Order, which is primarily instituted to discuss questions related to the issue of Church union. Besides, the W. C. C. has other departments in which the member churches cooperate in seeking to fulfil Christian services of various kinds.

Q. What has the W. C. C. done to promote Church union?

A. To promote the cause of unity should be the direct concern of the churches themselves. The W. C. C. has no mandate to enforce unity on them. But it can exert its influence with them wherever possible and extend assistance whenever called for.

Q. What has the Faith and Order Commission accomplished for Church union?

A. This question also cannot be answered in a few words. For our general information, however, two points may be noted. *One*: In almost all Church union negotiations in different parts of the world the Commission has lent its advice and assistance. *Two*: it has undertaken study in depth of various doctrinal points on which churches seem to have different traditions and emphases, to see whether they could agree on certain basic positions.

Q. Can these points be illustrated?

A. Yes, they can be given examples. As regards the first, Church union negotiations are going on in different parts of the world. Representatives of the Faith and Order Commission often take part in the consultations connected

with them. An assistance of this kind received by the churches of the East deserves mention here. From 1964 to 1971 four unofficial consultations of theologians of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches were held in order to discuss the issues that had caused division between the two families. These meetings were made possible by the assistance rendered by the W. C. C. and particularly by the Faith and Order Commission. Though, as a result of these consultations, the two traditions of churches have not yet come to concrete union, the fact that the points of disagreement raised against each by the other traditionally has no theological basis has now been acknowledged. This is indeed a great step forward in the matter of the union of the two families, which have been separated from each other for over fifteen centuries.

- Q. How were these two families of the Eastern Church divided?
- A. They came to be divided in consequence of the council of Chalcedon of 451 A.D. We have already noted this fact.
- Q. What example can be cited to illustrate the second point.
- A. There are several issues on which the churches have divergent emphases and traditions. And yet, if we go into the depth of the matter, we may find agreement among them despite the seeming differences that we see on the surface. It is also possible that some emphases and traditions cherished by churches need to undergo modifications, if they are to serve the cause of the faith relevantly.

From this point of view, we can refer to a unanimous decision of the last meeting of the Faith and Order Commission held at Lima, Peru, during January 1982 as something very relevant. This meeting approved a statement on Baptism, Eucharist (or the holy Qurbana), and Ministry (or the role of priesthood) to be transmitted to member churches for their reaction.

- Q. What authority does this statement have?

- A. The statement has the authority of the Faith and Order Commission, consisting of about a hundred and twenty theological experts and Church leaders chosen from most of the member churches of the W.C.C.
- Q. What are the churches expected to do with this document?
- A. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry are three crucial points in the on-going life of the Church, on which the churches are believed to have divergent views. If the churches agree that the Lima document can be adopted as a basis for union negotiations, that will be a great step forward. On the other hand, they can raise questions for further study, which also will prove helpful in the search for Christian unity.
- Q. Can we expect the churches to unite in the near future?
- A. We should always expect the churches to unite, but when that will happen is known only to God.
- Q. If the churches unite, what relation will it have to the world outside?
- A. The unity of the Church is taken up for discussion by the ecumenical leaders only in relation to the humanity outside the official Church. They pay serious attention to the unity of the human race as a whole, taking into account non-Christian religions and ideologies.
- Q. But can the human race be united, so long as there is poverty, denial of justice to the weaker sections, and ill-treatment of people on the basis of race, colour, economic and social standing?
- A. The answer is a definite 'No'. The Faith and Order Commission and the W.C.C. as a whole view Church union only with a clear awareness of these significant concerns.
- (i) What connection does our Church have with the W.C.C.?
- A. Our Church is a member of the W.C.C. from its very beginning. Members of our Church have occupied in it very significant roles and made memorable contributions.
- (i). What is the relation of the Roman Catholic Church to the W. C.C.?

- A. From the point of numerical strength and world-wide expansion, the Roman Catholic Church is the largest single church in the world. Though this Church is not yet a member of the W.C.C., it is a member of the Faith and Order Commission. Besides, it takes an interest in most of the activities and programmes of the W.C.C.
- Q. Are there not certain rival movements which try in effect to offset the work of the W.C.C.?
- A. Yes, there are. In general, these movements are led by persons who pay little attention to the Christian responsibility in the political, socio-economic and religious fields. They claim to be interested only in preaching the 'pure' Gospel and drawing men/women to accept Jesus Christ as their personal saviour. This standpoint seems to us to be very one-sided and superficial.

Some questions for you to answer

1. Why should we be concerned about the unity of the Church?
2. What is the W. C. C. and what is the Faith and Order Commission?
3. What do you think we can do to promote Christian unity?
4. Is not the idea that Christians should unite, leaving the world outside beyond our concern, a denial of the Gospel?

SECTION THREE: SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Q. Now that we have come to the end of the discussion on the faith and life of the Church, tell us what the source from which we gather our knowledge is?
- A. Our source is two-fold, namely the Bible and Christian history.
- Q. What is the Bible?
- A. The Bible is a collection of writings, which constitutes the sacred scripture of the Christians.
- Q. The Bible contains the Old Testament and the New Testament. How authoritative is each of them to the Christian?
- A. The Church does not accept the Islamic conception of

inerrancy for the Qur'an with reference to the Bible. For the Church, the Bible is authoritative because what it proclaims about God, man and life, is the truth about them. I am the way, the truth and the life, says our Lord (John 14:6). Having granted this, we should try to understand the concept of authority with reference to the Bible.

Q. How are we to understand it?

A. We may answer this question by referring to the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament we have on record the religious basis of the Hebrew people. They had a faith concerning God, man and the world. It is this faith that lies at the back of the New Testament proclamation of God, man's responsibility in the world, and the world in the plan of God, though in a more developed form. The New Testament tells us how Jesus Christ culminated in himself the best in Old Testament, and how the early Church sought to advance the work of our Lord in the power of the Spirit of God. It is not therefore a literal adherence to what the Bible says that the Church seeks to conserve, but the principle behind it. That is what is the revealed truth.

Q. How important is the Old Testament for the Christian Church?

A. The New Testament, as we have just said, is a continuation of the Old Testament in regard to its faith in God as the sovereign Lord of history and in its understanding of man as a creature of God, responsible to the Creator and his fellow beings. We find here the prophetic contribution of the Old Testament religion continued in the New. In this way, the Old and the New stand together as scripture for the Church, but in the New there is a fulfilment and completion of the Old.

Q. Do you mean that all the biblical literature should not be considered literally binding?

A. Yes, precisely. The Old Testament tells us about God; how he guided his people, though they were not always faithful to him. The New Testament completes the story by

saying how, in spite of human sin and betrayal, God loves the world and gives his Only Son to die on the cross a death which human sin brought on him, and proclaims divine forgiveness to all those who repent. In the light of this central emphasis, the Bible tells us how we should live in this world. This biblical proclamation is indeed binding on the Church.

Q. What about Christian history?

A. During the early history of the Church, the New Testament proclamation was brought to the non-Hebrew people of the Mediterranean and the West Asian world, where it evolved a character within the cultural and social conditions of those areas. It is on this foundation that the Church developed later.

Q. How much of what the Church evolved in this way should we consider binding on us today?

A. This is a question which deserves serious attention by the Church.

Appendices

APPENDIX ONE: THE KAUMA IN SIMPLE ENGLISH

(When you pray in the morning and in the evening, spend a few seconds in silence, collecting your thoughts and realizing the presence of God. Sing a song or a few stanzas, read a passage or more from the Bible, and use some devotional literature.)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the one true God.

To him be glory, and upon us his grace and mercy, for ever, Amen.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty. Your glory fills the heaven and the earth. Praise be to You in the heights.

Blessed are You, Lord, You who have come and who will come, glory be to You in the heights.

Holy God, holy the Strong, holy the Deathless,

Crucified for us have mercy upon us. (Say this three times)

Be merciful to us, Lord. Accept our prayers and petitions, and be gracious to us.

Glory be to You, O God, Glory be to You, Lord, our Creator.

Glory be to You, Christ our King. Grant us Your servants, Your grace, sinners that we are.

Bless, O Lord! (Barekmor)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven: Hallowed be Your name, Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Give us this day our bread for the day. Forgive our sins and

offences, as we have forgiven those who have offended us
 May we not come into temptation, but may we be delivered
 from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
 for ever and ever. Amen

Invocation of Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed are
 you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb,
 Jesus Christ our Lord. O holy Virgin Mary, who bore God, pray
 for us sinners, now and for ever, and at the hour of our death.
 Amen

APPENDIX TWO: THE CREED IN SIMPLE ENGLISH

We believe in the one God, the Father almighty, who has made
 the heaven and the earth and all things visible and invi-
 sible.

We believe also in the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Son of
 God; born of the Father before all worlds; Light of Light;
 Very God of Very God, born and not made, He has the
 same being as the being of the Father, and it was by Him
 that all things have been made.

He came down from heaven, for us and for our salvation;
 He took on Himself an incarnate state from Mary the virgin, the
 God-bearer, by the operation of the Holy Spirit,

And became man;

He was crucified on our behalf in the day of Pontius Pilate;

He suffered, died and was buried;

And on the third day He rose again, as scriptures testify;

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of
 the Father.

He shall come again in his glory to judge both those living and
 those departed.

His Kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the one living Holy Spirit, the Lord who
 gives life to all,

Who proceeds from the Father, and who is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son;

Who spoke by the prophets and the apostles.

And we believe in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church;

We acknowledge baptism for the remission of sins to be one;

We look forward to the resurrection of those who have died,

And the New Life in the world to come. Amen.