
UNIT 3 INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

- To give some introductory ideas on Christianity; and
- To present the basic tenets of the Christian faith.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Christianity today is the world's largest religion with more than 2 billion followers (33% of the world population) and is practised in nearly every nation on Earth. It is very difficult task to write about Christianity, since there are numerous groups of Christians all over the world. For instance, in the United States alone, there are more than 1,500 different Christian faith groups in many different and even conflicting beliefs. As a result, one has to be selective in writing about Christianity and it may not be acceptable to all faith groups which consider themselves Christians.

At the outset it is good to remark that there are many divergent groups in Christianity. For instance, some Fundamentalist and Evangelical Christians regard themselves as “saved” and so as the “only true Christians”. They maintain separate religious denominations, radio stations, book stores, local associations, etc., and so preserve their strict identity. They regard other religions as lacking truth, which is found exclusively in Christianity. On the other hand, Mainline Christians tend to be much more inclusive, accepting as Christian almost anyone who follows the teachings of and about Jesus Christ. They value the contribution of non-Christian religions and appreciate it. Liberal Christians agree mostly with mainline Christians, and are even more inclusive. Some of them abandon or completely reinterpret most traditional Christian beliefs and take a pluralistic approach to other religions.

In this unit we first give an elaborate historical and theological introduction to Christianity. This is followed by some key personality and core beliefs of Christianity. Finally we conclude by talking of the Indian and materialistic roots of this religion.

3.2 CHRISTIANITY: A BRIEF HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Christianity originated in Israel and was at first a group within Judaism. It developed primarily in the West, has become the largest and youngest of the world religions, with the exception of Islam (Sprunger 2010). In general all Christians share a common belief in the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth as a truly divine and truly human incarnate Son of God who is the saviour of humanity. Scholars believe that Jesus was born between 4 and 7 B. C. at Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth of Galilee. His contemporaries regarded him only as the son of Joseph, a carpenter, and Mary. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke report that Jesus was born of a virgin.

Since Jesus' parents were common people, it is assumed he attended the local synagogue school and was trained as a carpenter. In the Bible only once is Jesus mentioned debating with the temple priests in Jerusalem, when he has twelve years old. The next eighteen years of Jesus are often called the silent years. When Jesus was about thirty he began his ministry at Galilee, with his baptism by John the Baptist, his cousin, in the river Jordan. Then Jesus spent forty days praying in the Judean wilderness. There he was tempted by the devil, which he overcame. When he returned, Jesus selected twelve apostles and spent three years teaching mainly in Galilee and Judea. His taught of a loving God, who wants us to love each other. He healed many of their sicknesses. "He went about doing good." Both the form and content of Jesus' teachings are recognized and respected as outstanding among the great religious pioneers and innovators of the world. Jesus believed he was sent by God and accepted Peter's description of him as "the Christ" (Messiah). The basic teaching of Jesus was the love of God and the love of all humans. Jesus taught the Kingdom of God, which is the fellowship of the sons and daughters of God with each other and with their Heavenly Father (Sprunger 2010).

Jesus saw the Kingdom of God as a progressive growth of the individual and society, like a mustard seed growing. Jesus emphasized the worth of each human personality. Evil was to be opposed with vigour but persons must be loved unconditionally. Ethically, Jesus taught general principles rather than specific rules. He held that the spirit, the motivation, or intention is the heart of human behaviour and human beings will be judged by their intention. He regarded the body, mind, and spirit as a one. He saw them as essentially good and capable of growth and improvement, striving toward the perfection of the Heavenly Father. Much of Jesus' teachings were delivered in parables or short stories, which were shocking to the audience and which could be easily understood by his disciples. The leaders of Judaism increasingly threatened by his appeal to the common people and by his radical teaching and behaviour, conspired to condemn him. This was supported by the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. So he was humiliated and brutally crucified. The third day following his death the Gospels report Jesus' resurrection from the dead. He appeared to many of his close disciples, who changed their way of life at seeing Jesus alive. For this faith or experience, they gave up their lives boldly and even joyfully. Forty days after the resurrection, he ascended into heaven.

At Pentecost (fifty days after the Passover) his followers in Jerusalem experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began speaking in different languages

and preaching the gospel of their risen Lord with great enthusiasm and dedication. That is regarded as the beginning of the Church or the community of Christians. Peter and James assumed leadership of the Jerusalem Church until its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE (Sprunger 2010). The early Christian Church was not a highly organized body with an established creed; therefore, it was exposed to a variety of beliefs, including some heresies (or false doctrines). For example, the Gnostics believed the spirit was good and that flesh was evil. Consequently, they denied that Christ could have been truly human. Jesus was not really born of the flesh and there was no resurrection of the flesh. Marcionism was another heresy started by Marcion, who declared that the God of the Old Testament was a cruelly legalistic and merciless deity and that Christians should discard the Old Testament and follow asceticism and celibacy, and scorn the world.

Still another heresy, Montanism, taught that the Holy Spirit was not to be stifled by dogma but should be free to move in the hearts of Christians, causing them to speak in tongues and engage in other charismatic activities and said that the world will come to an end soon. To counter these and other heretical groups, Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, wrote “Against the Heresies” around 185 CE. Further, the Apostles Creed was adopted (325 CE) and the New Testament was codified and canonized, partially for political and partly for religious reasons. Besides these internal problems, early Christians were persecuted in the Roman Empire. Accused of being atheists who committed sexual atrocities and engaged in cannibalism, they were the scapegoats for all troubles of the Roman Empire. Thousands of them were killed, particular by the Roman ruler Nero. The conversion of the Emperor Constantine, whose wife and mother were Christians, brought persecution to an end. In 325 he called the Church Council of Nicea to stop the warring within Christianity over the nature of Christ.

The writings of St. Augustine (354-430), formulating the doctrines of original sin, had a tremendous impact on Christianity. Theological differences and deteriorating relationships between the East and West Roman empires resulted in a complete split in Christianity. In 1054 the Pope excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople which led to the formation of the Eastern Orthodox Church. During the medieval times, the Church and papacy developed power and gathered wealth, and became corrupt. The moral leadership of the papacy was at its lowest between 1309 and 1377. Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274), a Dominican monk, who lived in this medieval historical period, was one of the greatest thinkers the church ever produced. In his *Summa Theologiae* he applied Aristotelian philosophy to the renewal of Christian theology in an attempt to bring faith and reason together. This led to scholastic philosophy which the Church holds dear till today.

The Renaissance, the rise of European nationalism, and the decline of the papacy set the stage for the Protestant Reformation. Religious leaders like John Wyclif in England, John Huss in Bohemia, and Girolamo Savonarola in Italy helped prepare Europe for the Reformation initiated by Martin Luther when he nailed ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Church in 1517. Further, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin in Switzerland and John Knox in Scotland founded the Reformed-Presbyterian churches. The marital problems of Henry VIII were instrumental in founding the Church of England, establishing the heritage of the Episcopal Church, and later the Methodist Church under the leadership of John and Charles Wesley (Sprunger 2010).

The most radical of the Protestant groups were the Anabaptists in Switzerland and the Netherlands, who vowed to discard everything that was not expressly

found in the New Testament. These radicals gave rise to various groups like Mennonites, Amish, Quakers, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Unitarians. Later among the Protestants, social concerns resulted in the advent of the Salvation Army, the Young Men's Christian Association, etc. The Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation was led by the Jesuits, led by St. Ignatius of Loyola. At the Council of Trent in 1545 the Fathers of the Church declared that the Catholic tradition was co-equal with scripture as a source of truth. They reaffirmed the seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Marriage, and Ordination. (The Protestant churches recognize only Baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments.) Later the Catholic Church established the doctrine of the bodily assumption of Mary (1950). The Vatican Council of 1869 declared the dogma of papal infallibility, according to which the Pope cannot make mistakes in matters of faith and morals when he speaks authoritatively and solemnly. The Second Vatican Council called by John XXIII in 1958 and meetings between 1962 and 1965 effected the most sweeping changes ever made in the Roman Catholic Church. It recognized Non-Catholics as true Christians; allowed the vernacular in the Eucharist and encouraged congregational participation in worship. These steps were taken toward reconciliation with the Orthodox and Protestant groups.

With the rise of modern science and the ecumenical movement, the mainline churches of Christianity became less doctrinaire and used scientific knowledge in their religious views. Many Christians accepted, for instance, evolution as the methodology which God used in creation and had no trouble with the possibility that there may be millions of inhabited planets in the universe. There was a sharp reaction to this "modernism" by conservative churchmen who became known as fundamentalists. They denounced evolution, and "worldliness" and accepted infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible, virgin birth of Christ, the physical or bodily resurrection of Christ and the bodily second coming of Christ. They call themselves as "evangelicals". On the other extreme, liberal Christianity believes that Christianity is a dynamic and growing religion; that revelation is progressive and continuous; that God is personal and each person's religious experience is unique; that emphasis should be placed on man's inherent worth, dignity, and potentials as a child of God; and that the struggle against evil is both personal and social. They stressed that Christianity must be deeply experienced, reflected upon and lived in all of life (Sprunger 2010).

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

- 1) When and where was Jesus the founder of Christianity born?

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- 2) What did the heresy Montanism teach?

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3.3 SOME IMPORTANT PERSONS

Here we refer to some important persons in the early Church, who have made Christianity a world religion.

Jesus Christ: Jesus was born between 4 and 7 BC in Bethlehem in Judea from Mary. With his miraculous birth, he is considered the Son of God and God himself. Most texts begin with Jesus' ministry after his baptism in the river Jordan by John the Baptist and of his fasting in the wilderness for forty days. During the final day of his fast, the Devil tried to tempt him, but failed. After his encounter with the Devil, Jesus moved to Capernaum in Galilee to begin his teaching. As the numbers of his followers increased, Jesus began training disciples to work with him. Once trained, he and his disciples travelled to nearby towns to preach the word of God. Much of what he taught challenged the authority of religious and civil leaders. So Jesus gained many enemies as well as followers. As their ministry grew, it was revealed to his disciples that Jesus was the Messiah. This revelation also led to the death of Jesus. Threatened by Jesus' growth in popularity, the leaders devised a plan to kill him. With the aid of one of the twelve disciples, Judas Iscariot, Jesus was arrested and sentenced to death. After being found guilty for blasphemy and other charges, he was sentenced to death. Jesus was executed by crucifixion. Three days after his death, Jesus arose from his tomb and appeared to his disciples. After a brief time with his disciples, Jesus ascended into heaven. It was the resurrection of Jesus, that has become the corner-stone of Christian faith. The disciples experienced it and that changed them so dramatically. Such an experience that Jesus is still alive is the driving force of Christianity even today. This event of the Resurrection is celebrated every year by Christians.

Peter and Paul

Saints Peter and Paul are the principle pillars of the Church founded by Christ. Saint Peter was chosen by Christ to be his first Vicar on earth; he was endowed with powers of the keys of the kingdom of heaven and charged with the role of the Shepherd of Christ's flock. In St. Peter and his successors, we have a visible sign of unity and communion in faith and charity. St. Peter suffered martyrdom under Nero, in about the year 64 AD. He was buried at the hill of the Vatican. Paul was born under the name Saul and was a great persecutor of Christians in the beginning. Born and raised under the Jewish law, Saul hated Christians. Then on a journey, Saul became a Christian when he saw Jesus in a miraculous vision. After this revelation Saul changed his name to Paul and said that this vision meant the end of all religions to him. He was convinced that Christianity was God's call to the entire world. After taking this call from God, he travelled much, preached a lot, has written prolifically and built many churches. He became the greatest missionary of Christianity. He is the author of 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament. His ministry ended when he was executed in Rome in the year 62 AD. Paul the apostle is often called "the second founder of Christianity." This Jewish scholar convert was the first to state systematically the beliefs of Christianity, and is largely responsible for transforming a sect of Judaism into the early Christian Church where gentiles were welcome. Thus he made the Church open to the world and formulated a systematic vision of itself to fellow Christians.

Constantine the Great

Constantine was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity. Constantine was born in Nis, which is now Serbia. In 312 AD, according to legends, right before a major battle, Jesus appeared to him in a dream, giving him a sign that he will be victorious. He won the battle and Constantine looked upon Jesus as the deliverer of victory. Constantine ended the persecution of Christians by issuing the Edict of Milan, which ordered the people to live peacefully with Christians in the Roman Empire. He built numerous churches within the Roman Empire and was eventually baptized before his death. Slowly, Christianity which was earlier persecuted by the Roman Empire, became the official religion of the empire. This has led to the rapid spread of Christianity, including the Christianization of Europe.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) Which is the cornerstone of the Christian faith?

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2) Who is St. Paul?

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3.4 SOME CORE BELIEFS

As for Christianity’s core traditional doctrines, they are codified in several texts and contexts. They can be studied in a variety of documents. Expressed at its simplest, classical Christian faith is built on two important doctrines: a teaching about God; and about Jesus Christ. In the first place, over many centuries Christianity has professed that God is first and foremost a Creator of all there is. Throughout Christianity’s turbulent history, its devotees have fought and hurled abuse at each other over the identity of Jesus, the nature of the Church, and the means of ultimate salvation. Nonetheless, they have never been seriously and fatefully divided over their cardinal conviction that God is a free, benign, and powerful Creator of the universe. Over time, Christians developed a sophisticated Trinitarian doctrine about God (Kennedy 2006).

Jesus Christ God-Become-Man The main person in Christianity is Jesus Christ. As the Son of God, he came to earth to teach about love and fellowship. He represents the person that all Christians must strive to be. Christians believe that he is the only one that ever lived on earth that can be called perfect from all worldly sins. The important thing to understand was that Jesus was God, though born of a humble woman and virgin, Mary (Therefore, Catholics and Orthodox Christians show special devotion to Mary). He was here on earth to teach of God’s plan for all of humanity and to save us from our transgressions.

He was fully God and fully a human being.

Of Jesus Christ, Christian churches have affirmed over nearly two millennia that:

- he was born of a virgin mother without the agency of a man
- he existed before time began
- he did wondrous signs, healings and miracles
- he chose disciples to establish and promote a new religion over and above the religion of the Hebrews
- he never sinned at any stage in his life
- he died an agonizing sacrificial death to atone or make up for human depravity
- after his death he descended into hell; he was then raised from death by God to enable him to return to heaven
- he visited his former disciples on earth and then ascended into heaven where he remains
- he will one day return to earth to judge the living and the dead

The Doctrine of the Trinity

According to traditional Christian theology, God is triune. That is, God is a unity of three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, but there are not three Gods, only one. According to the Athanasian Creed – a profession of Christian faith dating from either the fourth or the fifth century – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are co-eternal and co-equal: none is before or after the other, and none is less or greater than the other. Thus a clear distinctiveness of Trinitarian doctrine is the notion that a man, Jesus, is included in the identity of God. Such an idea is alien to Judaism and Islam. It leads directly to the second primordial doctrine of Christian faith, which concerns the identity and significance of Jesus Christ. John Hick summarizes conventional Christian assertions about Jesus in a lapidary fashion: The Traditional Christian understanding of Jesus of Nazareth is that he was God incarnate, who became a man to die for the sins of the world and who founded the church to proclaim this. If he was indeed God incarnate, Christianity is the only religion founded by God in person, and must as such be uniquely superior to all other religions.

The doctrine of the Trinity is nowhere to be found explicitly in the Bible. There are multiple references to Father, Son or *Logos* (Word), and Spirit in the Bible. Early Christians struggled over hundreds of years in attempting to elaborate the relation of the man Jesus to the God who created the world. The classical doctrine of the Trinity emerged clearly in the latter half of the fourth century, principally among three Greek-speaking eastern theologians, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, the younger brother of Basil, and Gregory Nazianzus. In 325 CE Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, presided over a council of bishops in Alexandria who spoke of God as one *ousia* (substance) and three *hypostases* (persons). Their formula has remained a yardstick of Christian orthodoxy ever since (Kennedy 2006). In other words, the Christian God has one substance and three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

The Bible, made up of the Old Testament and the New Testament, is the scripture of Christianity. The New Testament began in the early Christian Church as a series of papers and letters written by numerous people. Over the years there was much discussion about which books should be officially recognized. In 367 Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in an Easter letter discusses the books he considered canonical (i.e., accepted authoritatively by the community). This is the first list which includes all of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament as we now have it. Various church councils in the years that followed adopted this list. So Christians believe that the Bible is the “Word of God in the words of human beings.” Therefore, they interpret this Word of God to seek its meaning and relevance for contemporary situations.

The Creed of Constantinople

In the history of the Christian Church, there have been several noteworthy gatherings of bishops, who codified what they regarded as the essential content of Christian faith in the form of creeds, or formal professions of belief. One of the more significant of these meetings was the First Council of Constantinople, or Constantinople I, which was convened in 381 CE. A very good way of grasping the heart of what Christians have believed over many centuries is to examine the creed of Constantinople I. It is a significant profession of faith for two reasons. First, it incorporates and modifies the creed of Nicaea I (325 CE), and was itself adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE. In the second place, it ‘remains today, almost word for word, the basic creed of most Christian churches and is widely used in the liturgy’ (Kennedy 2006).

Modern English Version of the Creed of Constantinople

“I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. AMEN.”

Resurrection of the Body

All Christians’ faith rests on Christ’s resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of Christ concluded his public ministry here on earth, by proving that he was God. His death and resurrection paved the path for the redemption of all of humanity that believEd. In Christian beliefs, all who have died will be resurrected from their earthly bodies and become new persons in Christ. How the new risen body is to be understood is a matter of theological reflection and debate. Easter is the annual celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the principal feast of the Christian year. Easter is a culmination of an entire week. The Sunday before Easter is called Palm Sunday. It is celebrated to remember the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Holy Thursday, which is also known as Maundy Thursday is in memory of the Last Supper of Christ with his disciples. Good Friday commemorates his crucifixion, i.e., death on the cross. On Easter every Christian celebrates Jesus’ rising to new life, which is a symbol of their own new life.

The Church as the Community of the Faithful

All the Christians believe that Jesus founded the Church to carry on his vision and message by Peter and other apostles. The church is called to live out the values of love, forgiveness, equality, justice, and brotherhood, the values taught by Jesus. The Church, as a community of the faithful, supports each other and brings the community closer to God. The leaders of the Church are specially chosen by the people and by God himself. The Catholics believe that Jesus assigned to Peter the responsibility of establishing the Christian church. Peter traveled to Rome where he was the first pope. At his death, his work was continued by a continuous succession of popes. The 1st century CE popes were St Peter (30-67 CE, who was succeeded by Linus (67-76), Cletus (76-88), etc. So the Roman Catholic Church was a fully functioning organization with authority centered at Rome, as early as the middle of the 1st century. "History proves that from that time [of Peter] on, both in the East and the West, the successor of Peter was acknowledged to be the supreme head of the [Christian] Church." Jesus' Apostles ordained bishops, who in turn ordained the next generation of bishops. This continuous line of ordination, called the apostolic succession, has continued down to the present day. Thus the authority for the ordination of a new bishop today could theoretically be traced back as far as the individual Apostles, except that accurate records were not kept in the early decades of Christianity (Robinson 2008).

Eucharist and other Sacraments

Eucharist or communion is practised to remember Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. In this practice, bread and wine are symbolically used or transformed by an ordained minister and taken by the minister and members of the congregation. By performing this ritual, Christians are following Jesus' command at the Last Supper, "Do this in remembrance of me." The bread represents his body that was broken for humanity. The wine represents the blood that he shed for all. Eucharist is one of the seven sacraments accepted by the Catholic Church. Another sacrament which Christians all over accept is Baptism, the initiation into the Church. Christians believe that a sacrament is a special sign instituted by God, and accepted by the Catholic Church: "a sacrament is a visible sign of invisible grace from God." The Catholic Church accepts that there are seven sacraments.

Eschatology as the Final Fulfilment

Eschatology is concerned with the afterlife, beginning with death and the personal judgment that follows the death of the individual, and is followed by the destination of heaven (place of eternal bliss) or hell (place of punishment). Eschatological passages, sometimes called "apocalyptic" writings, are found throughout the Bible, in both the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) and the New Testament. The second coming of Christ is the central event in Christian eschatology. Most Christians believe that death and suffering will continue to exist until Christ's return. Others believe that suffering will gradually be eliminated prior to his coming, and that the elimination of injustice is our part in preparing for that event. Needless to say, there are a variety of viewpoints concerning the order and significance of eschatological events (Robinson 2008).

Generally Christians also believe that salvation comes from God. But they believe that it is channeled through church sacraments to sinful but repentant persons.

Liberal Christians generally interpret hell symbolically, not as an actual place. They reject the concept of a loving God having created a Hell - a place of eternal torment even for a few humans. They believe that all human being will ultimately enjoy the loving presence of God in heaven. By and large the general theological agreement is that there will be a “new heaven and new earth” or a “new creation” where everything on earth will be transformed by the grace of God. Here the emphasis is less on the sins of the individuals, and more on the abundance of God’s Grace.

3.5 FINAL REMARKS

In these final remarks we want to trace the Indian roots and materialistic aspect of Christianity.

Indian Roots of Christianity

It may be noted that Christianity, though a minority of only 2.4% of the population, has been in India since its very beginning. According to tradition, the Apostle Thomas, who was one of the first followers of Jesus, arrived in India and established seven congregations in CE 72. This was followed by the coming of other missionaries including Thomas of Kana with 72 families who came and settled down on the Malabar Coast. Later it is said that around 1200 CE the travelling scholar Marco Polo stayed on the Coromandel Coast, described the tomb of St. Thomas as a place of pilgrimage, and visited Christians and Jews in Quilon. In the sixteenth century Indian Christians had contacts with Vasco da Gama. In 1542 the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier came to India and preached Christianity. In 1606 Roberto de Nobili began a 50-year career in the Jesuit Madurai Mission, adopting Brahman culture and becoming a renowned scholar and poet. Thus the trend to Indianise (or inculturate) Christianity began.

Materialistic Religion

We may very well describe Christianity as one of the most materialistic of all religions: a religion that takes matter, world, and body seriously. Throughout history, Christian thought has struggled with the ideas of the flesh, world, and spirit, and their interplay in each person’s salvation. As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (the present Pope) said in *What It Means to Be a Christian* (2006), “Christian theology...in the course of time turned the kingdom of God into a kingdom of heaven that is beyond this mortal life; the well-being of men became a salvation of souls, which again comes to pass beyond this life, after death.” This tendency of spiritualization, Ratzinger said, is not the message of Jesus Christ. “For what is sublime in this message,” he stated, “is precisely that the Lord was talking not just about another life, not just about men’s souls, but was addressing the body, the whole man, in his embodied form, with his involvement in history and society; that he promised the kingdom of God to the man who lives bodily with other men in this history.”

Josemaria Escriva, a Spanish Catholic leader, criticized those who “have tried to present the Christian way of life as something exclusively spiritual, proper to pure, extraordinary people, who remain aloof from the contemptible things of this world, or at most tolerate them as something necessarily attached to the spirit, while we live on this earth. When things are seen in this way, churches become the setting par excellence of the Christian life. And being a Christian

means going to church, taking part in sacred ceremonies, being taken up with ecclesiastical matters, in a kind of segregated world, which is considered to be the ante-chamber of heaven, while the ordinary world follows its own separate path.” (Wikipedia) Instead, he affirmed the “high value of the material.” According to him, “Authentic Christianity which professes the resurrection of all flesh has always quite logically opposed ‘dis-incarnation,’ without fear of being judged materialistic. We can, therefore, rightfully speak of a *Christian materialism*, which is boldly opposed to those materialisms which are blind to the spirit.” Pope John Paul II added: “There is nothing that is outside of the concern of Christ. Speaking with theological rigor ... one cannot say that there are things — good, noble or even indifferent — which are exclusively profane; for the Word of God has made his dwelling the sons of men, he was hungry and thirsty, worked with his hands, knew friendship and obedience, experience sorrow and death.”

3.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have seen the importance of research and research methodology in fostering knowledge. We dealt with the process of research and the tools of research. Then we saw how as a scientific technique, research methodology leads to scientifically verifiable results helping us to solve problems efficiently.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What does the doctrine of Trinity teach?

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2) When did the apostle Thomas come to India?

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3.7 KEY WORDS

Bible: It is the collection of sacred writings of the Christian religion, comprising the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament (Covenant) is the Sacred Book of the Jews, while the New Testament is unique to Christians. The New Testament consists of Gospels (meaning “The Good News”) ; the four books on the life and death of Jesus, and Letters of St. Paul, St John, etc.

Messiah (The Christ): The anointed one or the expectant one. Christians regard Jesus as the one sent by God, for whom the world has been waiting for, to save them from their sins.

Parables: Short stories used by Jesus in his preaching, to speak mainly about the love of God for all human beings.

Saviour: Christians regards Jesus as their Saviour, since he saves them from their sins.

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