



CONFESSION

of

FAITH

of

THE

INDEPENDENT

CHURCH

OF

INDIA



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The following is the confession of faith taken by the Independent Church of India from the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Westminster Confession of Faith and the Holy Scripture. It should be faithfully followed by the ministers and members for rule of faith and life.

1. SCRIPTURE: We believe that the whole 66 book of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is the inspired and infallible Word of God given by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the Saints of the past. As such it is the highest authority for faith, and ministry.

2. GOD: We believe in the almighty God, Creator and sustainer of all things in heaven and on earth. We also believe that beside him there is no God. We believe in One Eternal God in three persons, having the same essence - Father, Son and the Holy Spirit

3. SON: We believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God born without sin of a Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe his miraculous works, his substitution death, the shedding of his blood on Calvary for cleansing sins; his bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, his being seated on the right hand of the Father; and of his visible, bodily return into power and glory.

4. HOLY SPIRIT: We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life giver, a Person proceeding from the Father and the Son. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the author of salvation through the word of God; the comforter, the sanctifier, who indwells and guides the believers.

5. MAN: We believe that man was created in the likeness of God; that man fell into sin by his own free choice thereby incurring not only physical death but spiritual death as well, which is separation from God, resulting in all his progeny being conceived in sin.

6. REGENERATION OR CONVERSION: We believe that salvation is obtained only through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. We believe that man must be born again in the Spirit to reconcile himself with God. Conversion is possible neither by birth in a Christian family nor by living in the midst of believers; it is possible only through personal faith in Christ as Lord and savior. The new birth in a person should be evident through daily life in spirit.

7. RESURRECTION We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust. The just shall enter eternal glory of Christ while those who rejected Christ shall go to eternal damnation.

8. CHURCH. We believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the fellowship of the saints, the body of Christ planted by him to propagate the eternal Gospel of Salvation.

COMMENTARY ON THE CONFESSION OF FAITH

I SCRIPTURE

SCRIPTURE: *“We believe that the whole 66 book of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is the inspired and infallible Word of God given by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the Saints of the past. As such it is the highest authority for faith and ministry”*

1. We believe that the whole 66 book of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is The accepted canonical Bible of the Protestant Churches is the 66 book of the scripture from Genesis to Revelation. What is called ‘the whole Bible’ is the 66 books. The 66 book of the Bible consisted of 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament.

The Old Testament Books are: 1. Genesis, 2. Exodus, 3. Leviticus, 4. Numbers, 5. Deuteronomy, 6. Joshua, 7. Judges, 8. Ruth, 9. I Samuel, 10. II Samuel, 11. I Kings, 12. II Kings, 13. I Chronicles, 14. II Chronicles, 15. Ezra, 16. Nehemiah, 17. Esther, 18. Job, 19. Psalms, 20. Proverbs, 21. Ecclesiastes, 22. Song of Solomon, 23. Isaiah, 24. Jeremiah, 25. Lamentation, 26. Ezekiel, 27. Daniel, 28. Hosea, 29. Joel, 30. Amos, 31. Obadiah, 32. Jonah, 33. Micah, 34. Nahum, 35. Habakkuk, 36. Zephaniah, 37. Haggai, 38. Zechariah, 39. Malachi.

The New Testament Books are: 1. Matthew, 2. Mark, 3. Luke, 4. John, 5. Acts of the Apostles, 6. Romans, 7. I Corinthians, 8. II Corinthians, 9. Galatians, 10. Ephesians, 11. Philippians, 12. Colossians, 13. I Thessalonians, 14. II Thessalonians, 15. I Timothy, 16. II Timothy, 17. Titus, 18. Philemon, 19. Hebrews, 20. James, 21. I Peter, 22. II Peters, 23. I John, 24. II John, 25. III John, 26. Jude, 27. Revelation.

The Bible is written in different languages, by different persons, living in different continents at different places without any conflict of intent and content. There are about 34-40 writers of the Bible, written during 1600 years beginning from 1500 BC to 100 AD. The Bible is written by the best scholars as well as un-educated, fishermen.

The Bible is written mostly in Hebrew and Greek. However, the Aramaic words are found at various places. The Old Testament is written in Hebrew, but Genesis 31:47; Daniel 2:4-7:28; Ezra 4:4-6:18; 7:12-26; Jeremiah 10:11 are written in Aramaic. The New Testament is written in Greek, but such Aramaic words as ‘*Tal’itha c’umi*’ (Mark 5:42); ‘*Eph’phatha*’ (Mark 7:34), ‘*Marana tha*’ (in NIV Footnote) -(I Corinthians 16:22) ‘*Abba*’ (Mark 14:36), ‘*E’lo-i, E’lo-i la’ma sabach- tha’ni?*’ (Mark 15:34) ‘*Corban*’ (Mark 7:11) are also found in it.

2. the inspired The word 'inspired' is found only in two places in the entire Bible - Job 32:8 and II Timothy 3:16. The word 'inspired by God' is from Greek word '*Theopneustos*' It means 'God-breathed'.

The correct interpretation of the inspiration of the scripture is *Plenary-Verbal Inspiration*. It means the whole Bible is the breathed-out words of God. **Plenary** means, '*entire*' or, '*unqualified*'. Every word of the Bible, without any exception, is breathed-out by God. The Holy Spirit safely keeps the entire word. **Verbal** means, '*what was spoken out*'. The meaning of verbal inspiration therefore, is that the entire written word of the Bible is the breathed-out word of God.

The correct meaning of inspiration is that the whole spoken word of God in the bible is breathed out by the Spirit of God. The spoken word of God is the entire written text of the Bible.

a). What inspiration consists of: Inspiration consists neither of the writers of the Scripture, nor of the letters of the scripture, but of the words written by men as breathed out by God. *What was written by men was breathed out by God.*

This means the author of the scripture is the Holy Spirit of God. Though men are being used to write the scripture, every thing written is from God. Even though men wrote it, God's inner fellowship filled them with the power of the Holy Spirit and wrote the messages of God to be delivered to the people in their own time as well as to mankind in times to come. It is as if God spoke to men through the people who wrote the written texts, as Paul "imparts in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit" (I Corinthians 2:13).

God did not, however, use men as we use non living things like pens or machines. Men, used by God wrote what they have seen, received and heard from God using their own mental capability. The writers of the word of God wrote what God gave them to write using their personal ability and expertise. Educated persons like Paul wrote in their educated styles while uneducated fishermen like Peter wrote in their uneducated style. That could be plainly seen in their writings. In spite of this, all the written texts are the inspired words of God. It is a cent per cent product of man as well as a cent per cent product of God. This means, every text in the Bible, whatever it is, either good or bad, is the inspired word of God. Therefore, the whole text of the Bible, without any exception, is the inspired word of God.

What needed to be understood by the statement, 'the whole scripture is the inspired word of God' is the original bible actually written by the writers of the Bible - the written text - is the inspired word of God. The original written text is no longer with us to be seen now. But the present text we are using now is taken by the scribes from the original inspired word of God. There may be mistakes in the process of transmission, and there are some; but since the original text is the inspired word of God, every text correctly transmitted is the inspired word of God.

Therefore, every Word of God is the inspired word of God. The writers wrote only what was given to them by God. Since the Holy Spirit confirmed what was written by the writers, the whole scripture is the word of God; for David said, “Thy testimonies are righteous for ever” (Psalms 119:144).

3. and infallible the statement that the Bible is the word of God, the inspired word of God, infallible or errorless and incapable of error, needs certain clarifications as below:

a). *It does not mean that every single word is infallible.* The Bible, being the word of God, is true; but this does not mean that every single word is true in itself; it means what the statement meant to convey is true. Galatians 6:2 commands to “bear one another burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” while Galatians 6:5 said, “each man will have to bear his own load”. Except from the context, these two verses seem to contradict each other. Both are true in their context. What is meant by the infallibility of the scripture is that the central truth of the scripture is infallible.

b). *It does not mean that every stop, coma, semicolon is the infallible word of God.* The ink for the writing of the Bible is not the most important one. It does not mean that every mark in it is the inspired word of God. What is inspired is what the scripture says. It means what is conveyed by the word is infallible. The statement, “till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18) meant what the dot or iota indicated as the meaning of the scripture is infallible, rather than the dot and iota; it is the sense indicated through the dot and iota that is infallible.

c). *It does not mean that every word in the Bible is literally true.* The word of the Bible is true only in its context. If the statements of the friends of Job in the conversation recorded in Job 1-37 were literally true, Job would have been a sinner, suffering for the sins he had committed. Though not all the statements of Job’s friends were literally true, yet they were the inspired word of God, the Bible. It does not mean that though all of their statements were the word of God, every word or sentence uttered by his friends taken separately were literally true, it is true only in its context. It simply meant that what was reported was the true statement of Job’s friends. In the Bible we find several figurative speeches. God is spoken of as man having eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc. God does not have actual eyes, ears, hands or feet etc. as we men do have. God being spirit cannot be conceived of as having human figure. Therefore, Spirit-filled Stephen had said, “Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says. `Heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool. What house will you build for me? or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand made all these things?” (Acts 7:48-50; cf. Isaiah 66:1,2). The statement is made that man may understand who is God. Though God does not have hands and feet as man does, it is the truth, the infallible word of God.

d). *the infallible word of the Bible is what was written by the writers in the original Hebrew and Greek languages.* It does not mean that the translation of the Bible in the various languages are infallible; it means what was originally written by the writers with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was the

infallible word of God. In fact it is infallible even today. As our present bible is transmitted from the original writing of the biblical writers, in spite of the possibility of the presence of incorrect transmission, every correctly transmitted text from the original writing is the inspired and infallible word of God.

4. Word of God It is generally accepted that the Bible is the word of God. There are, however, different types of acceptance. The following are the different types:

a). *There are those who accepted tradition and apocrypha as of equal authority to the Bible.* There are those who accepted tradition and apocrypha as of equal authority with the 66 book of the Bible. We do not subscribe to the belief that tradition and apocrypha are of equal authority with the Bible.

b). *There are those who do not accept the whole Bible as the word of God.* There are several things we cannot fully understand in the Bible. It is believed that anything written in the Bible that cannot be proven scientifically, that cannot be comprehended by human mind, are nothing but supposition or concocted stories: they are not the word of God. This is the position of the Modernists and the Liberals; we do not subscribe to this.

c). *There are those who accepted the Bible from Genesis to Revelation as the only word of God.* There are those who believe that the whole Bible is the word of God. It is infallible in itself and does not depend upon man's opinion. If, therefore, any person does not accept even a single text of the Bible as authoritative, that person does not believe in the authority of the Bible. This is the opinion we subscribed to; this is where we are standing.

5. given by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the Saints of the past. The Bible, the Word of God does not just come by itself from the air. It is the product of men of God - the saints in the past - specially controlled and directed by the Holy Spirit to write what has happened and what will happen, as well as the messages which God wanted to convey to men. It is, therefore the message of God given to the saints of old through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

It is not possible for finite man to know an infinite, almighty God, who is above everything. Man can have no knowledge of God but through His self-revelation. Also what we know about God is only what God has revealed about himself to men. Therefore, Theologians say, "*The revelation of God is progressive revelation*". God did not reveal everything in the Old Testament. Reading the Old Testament we find that God revealed himself step by step. When we come to the New Testament, God reveals progressively. His final revelation came through Jesus Christ, His Son (Heb. 1:1ff).

6. As such it is the highest authority for faith and ministry It means the highest authority for believer's daily life and walk is the authority of the scripture; the word of God given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the prophets and men of God in the past. Nothing that is not from the Bible, what is not spoken of by the word of God, or what is not written in the Bible is fit to guide the life of the believer. We refuse to believe and accept such authority as guide for the life of believers.

Right from the days of the Reformation, the Church Fathers recognized the authority of the Bible as the supreme authority for the life and practice of the believers and accepted it as such. They taught that anything that goes against the teachings of the Prophets, Apostles and the Scripture are to be rejected. The most important teaching was that the authority of the scripture should be regarded as above the proclamation made by the authority of the church and the traditional practices. Any proclamation of the church against the Bible should be rejected outright. It is taught that every step in the life of believer should conform to the teaching of the Scripture. This indicates that they regarded the authority of the Bible as higher than any other authority.

Since for the believer the Bible is the highest authority in life and practice, what the believer believes and does should conform to the authority of the scripture. The Bible should be above, not under, the authority of the Church. What the Bible teaches should be the final authority for the believer. The church should do nothing against what the Bible said. It should not reject what the Bible says. It should do nothing beyond what the Bible says. As the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit never do anything against the Scripture, so also the believers' life should be guided by the Scripture.

The Bible either condemns or justifies men; it justifies the believer and condemns the unbeliever of Jesus Christ; for Jesus said, "He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day" (John 12:48). Nothing should be added to, nor taken away from the word, for it warns that "If any one adds to them, God will add to them the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the word of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Rev. 22:18,19).

II GOD

GOD: “We believe in the almighty God, creator and sustainer of all things in heaven and on earth. We also believe that besides him there is no God. We believe in One Eternal God existing in three persons - Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

1. We believe in the almighty God, The strong foundation of Christian faith is that God is ‘almighty’. Man does not know the power of God by himself; it is known through the self revelation of God. When the Lord appeared to Abraham and said to him, “I am God Almighty walk before me, and be blameless; and I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly” in Genesis 17:1-2, God revealed himself as “God Almighty”. The “Almighty God” here is “*El Shaddai*” in Hebrew.

The word ‘*Shaddai*’ is found 41 times in the Old Testament. It is found 7 times in combination with God (*El*) making a total number of 48 in all of which 31 are found in the book of Job. The root of the Hebrew word *shaddai* is said to be ‘*shad*’. ‘*Shad*’ means ‘mountain’. It is used to indicate that God is All-powerful. *Ell Shaddai* means God is All-mighty, sufficient for everything. That is the primary meaning of *Ell Shaddai* in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, “All-powerful” is “*Pantakratos*” in Greek. It comes from a combination of two Greek words, ‘*pan*’ (all) and ‘*kratos*’ (power, strength, glory). ‘*Pantakratos*’ speaks about God all-mighty, who is nobody’s equal, with whom nobody can be compared to, who is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion who rules over every creation, including men (Eph. 1:19-21; Phil. 2:9; Rev. 2:8; 4:8; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:6,15; 21:22; 22:17; II Corinthians 6:18).

2. Creator and Sustainer of all things in heaven and on earth The Bible takes it for granted that God is the creator and sustainer of everything in heavens and on earth; it simply says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1.1). At the beginning of the Christian era, the early Church Fathers understood it as a *self-authentic* truth and did not have any problem with it. Towards the end of the nineteenth century Philosophers and Scientists put forth a theory that universe is a self-existent entity, evolving slowly for centuries by chance from matter, producing complicated living things, as we knew it now. This is known as *Evolution Theory*.

Evolution Theory: The Evolution Theory states that the universe and everything in it is not created but self-existent. All kinds of living things were produced by fortuitous combination of matter, beginning from small germs that developed thousands of years later into their present form and nature.

There is, however, no proof that the Evolution theory is a sustainable theory. It remains a supposition, an unproven theory. If the theory is true, there must have been lots of developments and changes in the species of life by now. We have not seen any such changes in the different

species to this day. Different forms of species of life not originally existed in the beginning should be seen in plenty by now. The solar system and the natural laws continue to operate under the same law without any change from the beginning to this day. From the nature of their movement it is difficult to believe that the different species existed by accidental change. They appear to have come into existence according to the purpose for which they were created by the creator. Therefore, we can not accept the Evolution Theory.

When we say ‘God created the heavens and the earth’ we do not mean that it is only God the Father who created the heavens and the earth. It has to be understood that the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are actively involved in the creation. There are many places where the Scripture testified that God the Father (Gen 1:1; Isaiah 44:24; 45:12; Psalms 33:6; Colossians 1:16)), God the Son, (John 1:3;10: Colossian 1:16) and God the Holy Spirit (Job 33:4) were involved in the creation of the heavens and the earth. Therefore the Triune God were actively involved in the creation of the heavens and the earth that they were the creators of the universe.

Hebrew 11:3 says, “The world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear”. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”. God did not create the world out of materials that had already been in existence prior to the creation. It indicates that nothing but God existed before the creation of the world. The creation of the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) by God has important implication. It implies that the creation does not have eternal existence; it has the beginning of its existence (Genesis 1:1). It further implies that there is no one but God who controls the universe. It further implies that God and his creation are different, that God is different from his creation. It denies the teaching of *Pantheism* that God is in everything and every thing is God.

Ephesians 4:5 says, “One God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6) to indicate that God is related to his creation, visible and invisible. On the other hand it also indicates that God is “above all” his creation (Rom 9:5). It also indicates that God was not bound to create the world; he created the world to be his possession by his own free will and without any compulsion (Acts 17:25). “All things are created through Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:16,17). “In Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

3. We also believe that beside him there is no God. God gives importance that there is no God beside him. He desires that man should have no God before Him. We, the believers too, should give the same importance to it.

God is the God of the Israel in the Old Testament because they were the chosen race of God. However, the Gentile nations around them worship idols because they knew no God. God repeatedly reminded the Israelites that the man-made gods are not God. God continually reminded the Israelites that beside Him there was no God.

Because God wanted the Israelites to know that besides him there is no God, he said to the Israelites, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). He even commanded the Israelites to diligently teach the same truth to their children (Deut. 6:7-9). Using Isaiah God made it clear that he is the only true God and said, "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). He again repeated the same, saying, "I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I gird you though you do not know me that men may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other!" (Isaiah 45:5,6).

Also in the New Testament Declaring that he is the only true God, God said, "And this is eternal life that *they know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent*" (John 17:3). Informing them that the idols worshipped by the Gentiles as their gods are not God, Paul said, "We know that `an idol has no existence` and that there is no God but one.` For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as indeed there are many `gods` and many `Lords` - yet for there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (I Corinthians 8:4-6;) cf. Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 1:17; Jude 29.

The clear statement found in Hebrew 11:3 "By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear" (Heb. 11:3) together with Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" confirmed God's declaration that there is no God besides the Lord. When God created the heavens and the earth he created it out of nothing. This indicated that, there was nothing but God before the creation of the universe. If only our God the creator of the universe was before the creation of the universe, it consequently indicated that all the man-made idols worshipped by the nations, being made out of the created materials, were not the true God. It further indicated that only our God is from the beginning and that our God is the only true God!

4. We believe in One Eternal God, having the same essence, The basic doctrine of God is that God is one and eternal God, having neither beginning nor an end. He is God from everlasting to everlasting (Psalms 90:2; 145:13). Every god worshipped by the people following other religions of the world has beginning and end. Our God did not have beginning and end; he is an everlasting God.

Though the Bible clearly stated that there are three persons in God-head, the church fathers had to struggle for a long time to understand the relation between the three persons in God-head.

The controversy was settled by the Council of Nicaea in 325. The Council declared that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are persons of the same substance.

In the doctrine of the Trinity, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are fully God. The Son and the Holy Spirit have the same essence as God the Father. They are co-equal, co-eternal, and consubstantial with the Father. However, they are different in nature. Neither the Son, nor the Holy

Spirit is the Father. So also neither the Father nor the Son is the Holy Spirit. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit is the Son. They are, however, of one substance, coequal existing eternally in three persons. This is the doctrine of Trinity.

God is a God having neither beginning nor an end, existing from everlasting to everlasting (Psalms 90:2b: 145:13).

5. existing in three persons, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of Trinity, though impossible to be fully explained, is not a figment of the imagination. It is founded firmly on the Biblical truth. It has to be accepted without any question, since the Scripture unequivocally declared it. Confirmation of the truths of the Three Persons in God-head is found in the following scriptural texts both from the Old and the New Testaments:

a). In the Old Testament: Even though the Old Testament did not stated clearly, the existence of God in three persons, the trinity, can be understood from the followings:

i. From “Elohim” the Hebrew name of God. “Elohim”, the name of God in Hebrew is a plural name, indicating that God is more than one in person. Though there is no clear-cut indication of trinity here, it nevertheless implied it. The word “God” in Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth” is “Elohim”. This made it clear that God, the creator of the heavens and the earth is more than one.

ii). Use of plural personal pronoun. The use of plural personal pronoun indicated that God is one in three persons. In Gen. 1:26 God said, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” The words, `us`, `our` indicated that there was consultation between members in the God-head, consisting of more than one person (cf. Gen. 3:22; Isaiah 6:8). In Genesis 11:7 the statement, “Come, *let us* go down, and there confuse their language that they may not understand one another’s speech”, we see God as consulting one another. These made it clear that there were more than one person in the God-head.

iii. The Father and the Son are mentioned together at various places in the scripture Psalms 2:7 says, “I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me `You are my son, today I have begotten you”. Here is seen the Lord Jehovah and Christ the Messiah together. Psalms 110:1 says, “Sit at *my* right hand, till *I* make *your* enemies *your* footstool.” These and the various other places where the scripture speaks about the Lord Jehovah and Christ the Messiah together indicates that there are three Persons in God-head.

iv). From the separate statement of the works of the Holy Spirit. We see in Genesis 1:2 that “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters”. In other places like Gen. 41:38; Exodus 31:3; Numbers 24:2; Judges 14:19; Psalms 51:11; 104:30; Isaiah 11:2-4; 61:1; 63:11; Ezekiel 37:1ff we find separate statements about the work of the Holy Spirit.

v). Without actually mentioning them by name, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together at various places in the Old Testament. Isaiah 48:16 says, “And now the *Lord God* has sent *me* and his *Spirit*.” Here, *the Lord God* stood for God the Father, the *me* stood for Christ, and *the Spirit* stood for the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 61:1-2 says, “The *Spirit* of the *Lord God* is upon *me* because the *Lord* has anointed *me*” Here we see *God* anointing *Jesus Christ* with the *Holy Spirit*. Here *God* stands for *God the Father*, and *me* stands for *Jesus Christ* being anointed with the *Holy Spirit*. God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are seen together. From these statements we can definitely say that the existence of God in three persons is clearly understood in the Old Testament.

b). In the New Testament: In the New Testament the Triune God is more clearly mentioned and seen together at various places.

i. From the Great Commission; In the Great Commission given to his disciples by Jesus after his resurrection he said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28:18-20). From the nature of the language of the command, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are seen as having the same essence but different in person.

ii. From the Apostolic benediction. Paul closed his epistle with benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you” (II Corinthians 13:14). This clearly shows the existence of three persons in One God. Whenever the *benediction* is given, we declare that the three persons in God-head are of the same substance and are equal in all respects.

iii. From the baptism of Jesus Christ. “And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were open and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him, and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased’” (Matt. 3:16,17). The *Father* here spoke from heaven, *the Son* received the baptism and *the Holy Spirit* descended upon Jesus. The three persons in the Trinity appeared together at the same time, confirming the doctrine of one God in three persons.

iv. From the teaching of Jesus Christ. “And I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him, you know him for he dwells with you, and will be in you” (John 14:16,17; cf. 16:7-11). Jesus taught here that there are three persons in God-head. He (Jesus) was sent by the Father; the Father sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter (*paraclete*), to take the place of Jesus to comfort, strengthen, lead and show the way to the believers.

v. From the teaching of Paul. Paul’s teaching on the relation between the church and the Spirit made it clear the existence of the three persons in God-head. “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same *Spirit*, and there are varieties of service but the same *Lord*, and there are varieties of

working, but it is the same *God* who inspires them all in every one” (I Corinthians 12:4-6; cf. Acts 20:28).

The doctrine of Trinity is the foundation of Christian faith firmly held by the churches from the beginning of Christianity. This is clearly seen in the doctrinal statements, songs and praises of God in the Churches. *The Apostle's Creed*, *Gloria Patria* and *the Doxology* confirmed that the Church accepted the existence of the Trinity in God-head.

Especially in the New Testament the existence of the three persons in God-head is very clearly seen. We see that the Father is truly God (Romans 1:7), the Son is truly God (Heb. 1:8), and the Holy Spirit is truly God (Acts 5:3,4). The Father is the unseen God, the Son is God who came in flesh and dwelt among men. The Holy Spirit is God working over creation even to this day. This is the Biblical teaching on the Doctrine of Trinity.

III THE SON (JESUS CHRIST)

3. SON: *We believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God born without sin, of a Virgin Mary, through the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe his miraculous works, his substitution death, the shedding of his blood on Calvary for cleansing sins; his bodily resurrection, his ascension into heaven, his being seated on the right hand of the Father; and of his visible, bodily return into power and glory.*

a). We believe in Jesus Christ “Jesus” is a personal name; but it is an expressive name as well. The name is derived from Hebrew word, `Yesus`, `Joshua` or `Jehoshua`. It means `Jehovah is savior` or `God our savior` (I Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:3; 2:10, 13 etc.). In the New Testament Greek it is `Iesous`. It is anglicized as Jesus. `Jesus`, is a transcript form of Greek `Iesous`; it means `Salvation` or `Savior`. Before the birth of Jesus an angel told Josef that Mary “will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for *he will save his people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21). This is the name to indicate that Jesus is savior.

`Christ` is derived from Hebrew `Messiah`. It means *the anointed one*. In the New Testament Greek it is `kristos` This also means *the anointed one* or the *messiah*. Christ is a transcript of Greek *kristos*. It indicates that Jesus is the anointed servant of God to do God’s appointed work. It is an official designation. The designated work was King and Priest.

b). the only begotten Son of God It is important to read this statement carefully. The statement, *only begotten son* implied two important things. The Greek word, *monogenes* is used here. It means (1) God did not have other child, either male or female. God had only one child, he is his only child. *Monos* means *single*; it meant, *a single child*- indicating that God had no other child; he was God’s only child. (2). It also indicated that the child was of the same substance, of one substance with the Father. *Gene* means *offspring*; *seed* and consequently *of the same seed of a family*. It indicated that Jesus was truly born of God; he had the same essence as God himself.

There are people who regarded Christ as God but not Jesus as God. There are also people who separated Jesus from Christ. It should be understood that they are false teachers. God regarded this very seriously. He said that to separate Christ from Jesus and to deny Jesus Christ as God is a denial of God. So the scripture says, “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confess the Son has the Father also” (John 2:22, 23). A true believer believes that Jesus is the Christ; he is truly God. In other words, any person who does not accept that Jesus is Christ does not believe God!

God regarded this very seriously that a voice from heaven declared that Jesus was Christ, the Son of God and said, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:16). Similarly

confirming that Jesus was Christ the Son of God, at the mount of transfiguration, a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matt 17:5).

c). born without sin It is of paramount importance to believe that though Jesus was born as man and that he was truly man, he was born without sin. The Greeks could not understand the true humanity of Jesus Christ because they believed that matter is necessarily evil. Therefore they taught that if Jesus was man he must have sin. On the other hand if Jesus was without sin he could not be man. He must have appeared only as man. This is the teaching of Gnosticism.

The Gnostics had two kinds of teachings on the humanity of Jesus Christ. First, if Jesus was truly man he could not be the Son of God. He must have *appeared only* as a man used by God. He was not divine but merely a good man who, by righteousness and by penetration of his being by the divine logos, achieved divinity and son-ship. Christ was only the manifestation of God as man – not a truly man. This supposed appearance of Jesus Christ as man is known as *Docetism*. Secondly, If Jesus was man, he must have sin, he cannot be without sin, or a sinless person.

However, the teaching of the scripture is that Jesus Christ was truly God and truly man but without sin. This is not denied even by his enemies, the evil spirit, for the evil spirit said to Jesus, "I know who you are, the Holy man of God" (Mark 1:24). Judas Iscariot who betrayed and handed over Jesus to be caught declared Jesus as sinless one said, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4). Pilate's wife also said to her husband, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream" (Matt. 27:10). Pilate himself said, "I am innocent of this man's blood, see to it yourself" (Matt. 27:24). One of the criminals crucified with Jesus said, "But this man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41). The Centurion, seeing what had taken place praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent" (Luke 23:47). In his speech on Pentecost day Peter said, "You denied the Holy and Righteous One" (Acts 3:14). Paul said, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (II Corinthians 5:21). John also said, "In him there is no sin" (I John 3:5). As Jesus is fully God and fully man without sin, the writer of the Epistle of Hebrew writes, "For we have not a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 5:15). From these testimonies, it is but impossible not to conclude that Jesus was born without sin.

d). of a virgin Mary The birth of Jesus Christ, God-Man had already been foretold by Isaiah before his birth saying, "Behold, a young woman (virgin) shall conceive and bear a son" (Isaiah 7:14). In accordance with the prophecy the Bible clearly declared that the virgin Mary conceived him without a husband.

When an angel told Mary that she would conceive and have a child, her response to the declaration of the angel clearly implied that Mary was a virgin. She knew that it was not possible to have child without a husband. To indicate her virginity she asked the angel, "How shall this be since I have no

husband?!” (Luke 1:34). Not only the testimony of Mary but also the testimony of Josef, the betrothed husband of Mary testified that Mary was a virgin. When Josef heard that Mary was with a child, the scripture says, “Josef, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly” (Matt.1:19).

When Josef resolved to ‘divorce’ her quietly, an angel of the Lord came and said to him, “Josef, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:20). Then “as the angel of the Lord commanded him, he (Josef) took his wife, **but knew him not until she had borne a son**; and he called his name Jesus” (Matt, 1:24-25). This made it crystal clear that Mary was truly a virgin.

e). through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible clearly tells us that the Holy Spirit was actively involved in the conception and birth of Jesus Christ. When the angel announced to Mary that she would give birth to a son, she was confused and could not understand how she would conceive without a husband. She asked, “How shall this be since I have no husband” (Luke 1:34). In answer to the question the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born, will be called holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1:34,35).

The birth of Jesus Christ was through the work of the Holy Spirit. This made it clear that he is truly the Son of God. He is not only the Son of God but also the Son of Man. He is truly God and truly man. This is the teaching of the Bible.

f). We believe his miraculous works, his substitution death, and the shedding of his blood on Calvary for cleansing sin The death of Christ and the shedding of his blood for the remission and cleansing of sin is so important that Satan tried his best to hide it.

Peter said, “He (Christ) himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds we have been healed” (I Peter 2:24). So also John said, “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (I John 1:7). The writer of Hebrew said, “So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood” (Heb, 13:12). Foreseeing all these, Isaiah prophesied and said, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5, 6). Matthew concluded that, “The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28).

g). his bodily resurrection In as much as the death of Jesus is important, his resurrection is also very important. The greatest difference between Christianity and all other religion is the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection testified that Christianity is the only true religion. The

resurrection of Christ is the foundation of Christianity. Therefore, Paul said, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those who also have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are of all men most to be pitied” (I Corinthians 15:14-19).

The following scriptures undeniably corroborated the resurrection of Christ: The empty tomb (Luke 24:3; John 20:1-8); his forty days’ appearance to various people after his resurrection (Acts 1:3); his appearance to Mary (John 20:16); to the women (Matt. 28:5,8,9); to the disciples in the upper room (John 20:19); to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13,14); to doubting Thomas (John 20:26-29); to Simon Peter and others (John 21:5-7); at the gathering of the disciples (I Corinthians 15:4-7). The disciples saw him taken up from them into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

h). his ascension into heaven, his being seated on the right hand of the Father After Jesus appeared amongst his disciples and others on the earth for forty days following his resurrection, he ascended into heaven. He did not ascend into heaven secretly. Luke said that after he presented himself alive for many days “he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). This confirmed his resurrection. As he had foretold his ascension into heaven during his life on earth (John 6:62), he also foretold his ascension into heaven after his resurrection (John 20:17). Paul also said that Jesus was ‘taken up in glory’ (I Timothy 3:16b).

Jesus not only ascended into heaven but also sat on the right hand of God. This does not mean that Christ actually sat on the right hand of the Father as we are sitting here on earth. It indicated that Jesus received the favor, satisfaction and blessings of God for the accomplishment and fulfillment of his mission on earth. To indicate this favor God is said to have told Jesus to “sit at my (God’s) right hand till I (He) make thy (Jesus’) enemies a footstool for thy (Jesus’) feet” Heb. 1:13). Jesus was also stated as being exalted on the right hand of God (Acts 5:39).

i). “And of his visible, bodily return The teaching of the scripture is that the Lord Jesus will return personally and visibly. As the disciples were looking at Jesus taken up from them to heaven in the cloud after his resurrection, an angel said to the disciples, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come *in the same way as you saw him go into heaven*” (Acts 1:11). The following scriptures also declared that Jesus will come again personally and visibly. Acts 3:20, 21; Matt. 24:44; I Corinthians 5:22; Philippians 3:20; Colossian 3:4; I Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-187; II Timothy 4:8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28. etc.

j). into power and glory” At his first coming to earth, he came humbly as a helpless child (Matt. 2:11; Luke 2:7) When he comes again, he will come with power and glory as a King.

Jesus himself clearly foretold his second coming saying, "I come quickly" (Rev. 22:7; 20; cf. John 14:3). He also said that his second coming will not be like that of his first coming, "For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father" (Matt. 16:27). Speaking about the change that will take place in the world at his second coming Jesus said, "The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the power of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:29-31). Paul also said, "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God" (I Thessalonians. 4:16).

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IV THE HOLY SPIRIT

4. HOLY SPIRIT: *We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life giver, a Person proceeding from the Father and the Son. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the author of salvation through the word of God, the comforter, the sanctifier, who indwells and guides the believers.*

a). We believe in the Holy Spirit The Hebrew word in the Old Testament for the Holy Spirit is 'ruah'. The word occurred for 389 times. 'Ruah' is not always translated as Holy Spirit. It is sometimes translated as 'wind' carrying the meaning of the presence of the invisible Holy Spirit manifested through the effects of its work as the invisible wind wrought mighty works in the world (Gen. 8:1; Exod.10:13,19; Numbers 11:31; I Kings 18:15 etc.). It is also translated as 'breath' indicating that the Holy Spirit gives life to man and living things (Gen. 6:17; Psalms 31:5; Ecclesiastes 3:19-21; Jeremiah. 10:14 etc). It is also used to indicate that the Spirit of God equipped the prophets with power to tell what God wanted to be made known to the people (Judges 3:10; I Samuel 11:6; Numbers 24:2; Psalms 10:6,10 etc).

A Greek language "*pneuma*" is used in the New Testament for the Holy Spirit. It occurred for 379 times. Like 'ruah' in the Old Testament, 'pneuma' cannot be translated as *Spirit* in all the places of its occurrence. According to the activities of the Holy Spirit 'breath', 'wind', 'fire' 'water' etc. are use for the Holy Spirit (John 1:35; 3:8; Revelation 2:16-21; I Peter 1:11; ii Peter 1:19-30).

The Holy Spirit is the third person but not the least in the Trinity. John 4:24 says, "God is Spirit" However, the third person of the Trinity is spoken of as the Spirit. The Old Testament mostly translated 'ruah' as 'Spirit' rather than the 'Spirit of the Lord' or the 'Spirit of God'. It is translated as 'Holy Spirit' only in Psalms 51:11 & Isaiah 63:10,11. The New Testament translated it mostly as the 'Holy Spirit'.

b). The Lord and life giver The Holy Spirit is the Lord and giver of life. The 'Lord of Life' implies that he is God, who gives life to living things. So David said, "When thou hides thy face, they are dismayed; when thou takes away their breath, they die" (Psalms 104:29). Man's life and consciousness came from God (Job 32:8). Job also said, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of Almighty gives me life" (Job. 33:4). Before God breathed the breath of life in the nostril, the first man was only 'dust from the ground' Only when God breathed the breath of life, 'man became a living being' (Gen 2:7).

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to give life to men dead in sin. The Holy Spirit gave conviction of sin to sinners and created in man a new life in Christ. Therefore, when a person received new life in Christ he is said to be 'born of the Spirit' (John3:5-8) as well as a person who 'lives by the Spirit' (Gal. 5:25).

'Life giver' does not mean that the life of man is spiritual life. It means that the Holy Spirit gave life to man; that life came from the Holy Spirit. It simply means the Spirit has made him alive. The Spirit worked in man and gave him life. Genesis 2:7 said, "God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being" This does not mean that the life of man is spiritual life. It simply means that man became alive when the breath of life was breathed into his nostril.

c). "A Person proceeding from the Father and the Son." If a person does not know that the Holy Spirit is a person proceeded from the Father and the Son, it is easy to think that the Holy Spirit is inferior to the Father and the Son. There were any people who thought that the Holy Spirit is inferior to them. The early church fathers struggled against this problem. In the Bible also Jesus said, "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you" (John 14:16). It seems here as if the Holy Spirit is at the back and call of the Father and the Son.

However, as the Holy Spirit is not inferior to the Father and the Son but the same as the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is specifically mentioned as "a person from the Father and the Son". Paul said, "Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Romans 8:9). This indicated that Christ and the Spirit are equal. John also said, "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). Speaking about the oneness of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit John further said "Now the Lord is the Spirit and when the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (II Corinthians 3:17). Speaking about the oneness of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit Peter also said "You have not lied to men but to God" (to Anani`as and Saphi`ra) (Acts 5:3, 4).

It is easy to understand the meaning of the statement, 'a person proceeding from the Father and the Son' as to indicate that the Holy Spirit had his origin from the Father and the Son indicating the inferiority of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son. However, what is meant here is the unique oneness of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in origin.

d). We believe that the Holy Spirit is the author of salvation through the Word of God. Believers' life began at conversion. The work of the Holy Spirit is necessary for conversion. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is Spirit" (John 3:5). The work of the Spirit is the foundation of new birth.

The Holy Spirit led men to conversion. The Holy Spirit enlightened the mind of men to the truth about Jesus Christ. When Men came to realize that their knowledge about Christ was wrong and came to understand that Christ died in their place rose again for their justification they can accept

the Lord Jesus as their Savior. Nobody can understand Jesus is 'Christ' except through the Holy Spirit.

e). the Comforter and Advocate. Jesus spoke about his departure to the Father for several times. In John 7:33, 34, He said, "I shall be with you a little longer, and then I go to him who sent me; you will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come". He again mentioned his departure to his disciples in John 13:33. The disciples were very much worried (John 13:36-38). Jesus even comforted them with the word, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). The reason given by Jesus for their comfort in the event of his departure was because he was going to send "another Comforter" (John 16:7). Therefore he said that his departure from the disciples was better for them.

"*The other Comforter*" here is the Holy Spirit. This is to tell them that he will not leave them without help at the event of his departure from them. The "*Comforter*" in the statement of "*The other Comforter*" here is "*parakletos*" in Greek. 'Para' meant in Greek, 'by the side of, or, 'along with'. 'Kletos' comes from 'kaleos' it meant 'call'. "*Parakletos*" therefore meant, 'called to be by the side of', or 'to go alongside with a person'. If we knew that we were not alone; that someone was with us and was going along with us the knowledge gave us a feeling of security and comfort. It seems "*Comforter*" is used in this translation for this reason.

One of the early church Fathers, Origen translated the word '*parakletos*' in John Gospel as '*comforter*'; and translated all the others as an '*advocate*'. Cyril of Jerusalem translated '*parakletos*' as *comforter or advocate or helper* from the context. Hillary and Jerome also translated '*parakletos*' as '*comforter*'. Tertullian however translated it as *advocate*.

The *Wycliffe English Bible Translation* mostly translated as *comforter*. At the time of the Translation of the Bible in English by Wycliffe the Pope and the King of England hated the work. The Bible was translated with fear and trembling. Wycliffe died because of the work. The Holy Spirit was the *comforter* in those days. For that reason it was translated as '*comforter*'. Following the *Wycliffe translation* the Authorized Version (AV) and the Revised Version (RV) translated '*parakletos*' as '*Comforter*'.

Though the Revised Version translated as '*Comforter*', a footnote was given in which the literal meaning of the word in Greek was given as '*advocate and helper*'. On the other hand, the Revised Standard Version (RSV) translated it as '*Counselor*'. We are following the Revised Version and the Authorized Version.

What is important for us to know is that '*parakletos*' is generally used by the Greek for a Court Language. It has the meaning of an *advocate, attorney*, who stood along with, or by the side of an accused before a Court of Law. From the nature of this adage, it can be understood how the Holy

Spirit helped the believers. Our Confession of Faith tells us that this was the meaning of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The word “another” in the *another Counselor* had a special meaning. John 14:16 said, “I will pray to the Father, and he will give you *another Counselor*” The word *another Counselor* is in Greek *allon parakleton* (αλλόν παρακλητον). It meant another person of the same essence, of the same seed or another of the same kind. Jesus Christ was the “Counselor”, “Comforter” Jesus Christ will be no more with his disciples on the earth. But the Holy Spirit will come in His place to help, counsel and comfort the disciples. The Comforter will be a person having the same essence as Jesus, the same divine person as Jesus was; another person who can take the place of Jesus in every thing. Here “another” is used just to indicate that the Holy Spirit is God himself.

f). The sanctifier When the Holy Spirit is said to be the sanctifier it speaks about the work of the Holy Spirit in making the believers worthy to be called the children of God. In order to approach God, man who had fallen into sin, filthy before the sight of God, needed to be washed and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. But man by himself cannot avail the cleansing power of the blood. The Holy Spirit will apply the blood of Christ to cleanse the believers. That is the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, when the Corinthians believed Christ and were saved they received salvation and were sanctified. So he said, “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (I Corinthians 6:11). The Bible describes that sanctification is what made a person worthy to be called the son of God when it said “sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:16), “sanctified by the Spirit” (I Peter 1:2).

The Holy Spirit applied the blood of Christ shed on the cross of Calvary 2000 years ago when a person puts his trust on Christ. A person then became a holy person. Men sanctified by the Spirit, washed by the blood of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, are born again believers.

g). Who dwells and guides the believers. It is important to trace the indwelling and the leading of the Spirit for the believers from the beginning. During the Old Testament period the Holy Spirit did not operate upon every body. During the Old Testament period the Holy Spirit did not dwell upon men permanently. The Holy Spirit was given upon people specially designated to do special work for God. Be’zalel, for example, was said to be “filled with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge of all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones offsetting, and in craving wood, for work in every craft” (Exodus. 31:3-5). Some were equipped with ability to prophesy and speak forth what God desired to be told to the people. Samson was specially equipped by the Spirit with strength to take revenge upon the Philistines for God (Judges 14:5, 6).

Even though the Holy Spirit was upon them empowering them to do the given task they became just like the others when the task was finished. The Holy Spirit did not permanently dwell upon them.

In the New Testament, however, the Holy Spirit indwells every believer. Therefore, Paul said, “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (I Corinthians 6:19). When a man is born again, the Holy Spirit came and dwell permanently in him. The Spirit dwells permanently even in the weakest believer. Therefore, he had the vital root for growth in Christian life. He can grow daily in grace and in Christian life.

A believer is now led by the Spirit as he is indwelt by the Spirit. Therefore, when Paul was planning to enter Asia for ministry, the Spirit closed the door for Asia and led him to Europe. Speaking about this Dr. Luke said, “And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, `Come over to Macedonia and help us` And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:6-10).

Even now the Holy Spirit dwells in the believers as a sign and seal that they belong to Him. Therefore, Paul said, “In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, *were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit*” (Eph.1:13). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is also spoken in the scripture as of a guarantee. Paul further said, “which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1: 14). The indwelling of the Spirit in the believer is not only a guarantee that he belongs to the Lord but also a guarantee to his inheritance to the treasures of God.

V MAN

5. MAN: *We believe that man was created in the likeness of God; that man fell into sin by his own free choice thereby incurring not only physical death but spiritual death as well, which is separation from God, resulting in all his progeny being conceived in sin.*

a). We believe that man was created in the likeness of God; The origin of man is the most baffling subject of enquiry for Scientists and Philosophers. Several theories were brought forth, but no acceptable theory was produced so far. There were as many theories as there were proponents, and so far no general consensus of opinion on the question could be formulated.

According to the Bible the origin of man was God. The Bible did not elaborate how man was formed. The formation of man was simply taken for granted. It was taken as universal truth. Therefore, the Bible simply said, "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Gen. 2:26) and so "The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7).

There were several groups who do not believe that God made man. The most popular group amongst them was the *Evolutionists*. The theory of the origin of man propounded by them is known as the *Evolution Theory*. It goes like this:

Simply stated the Evolutionists believed that life came into existence by itself through the process of evolution from a pre-existed life, evolving from some *primordial protozoan* like *amoeba* in the water undergoing changes into various forms of life ultimately resulting in the present state of life on earth as we see it. Man is the final result of such evolution and changes. The pre-existed life gradually changed the original form of life into various species and then into monkey thousands of years later. Monkeys did not originally have tails. Tails came out of the monkeys in the process of development. They began to acquire thinking power, becoming cleverer as years passed. Finally monkeys became men. God did not form man. This was the Theory of Evolution.

Many proponents of the Evolution Theory believed that the earth contained large number of different kinds of lives - herbal lives, animal lives, plant lives and even human lives, continually bringing forth lives from within it. They did not regard life as created by God. *Pantheism* believed that a part of God existed in every thing. However, what they called God was not what we call God. For them a part of God was the lives of plants and animals. They believed that the world eternally existed from the beginning without creator. The world was not created by God. Scientists said that motion produced power. In the same manner life also came out of motion.

However, biologists found that life cannot come from non-living things. Life can come only from antecedent living germs. No one can create life, either plant, animal or human life. Because of this,

Evolution Theory is a theory that cannot be proved. The reasons why it is not possible to accept the *Evolution Theory* are:

(i). If the evolution theory that man became what he is now by a slow process of change and adaptation from lower animal to monkey and to man is true, by this time we should have lots of different and previously unknown varieties of species as well as monkeys turned into man. However to this day, the species of life known to man from the beginning continued to remain as they were from the beginning. The theory cannot be accepted because it rested on untested and untestable assumptions and is not a proven fact.

(ii). The bible says that God formed man. At the time of creation God formed living things “according to their kinds” (Gen. 1:21, 25). Monkeys remained monkeys. Every other creation continued to be what they were at the time of their formation. Because of this fact it is impossible to accept the theory of Evolution.

(iii). The Bible simply stated that the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Gen. 2:7). Evolution theory taught that man evolved from lifeless matter to a living organism which finally evolved into man by chance. It is against the teaching of the scripture and is not acceptable to us.

Therefore, though men have relation with the other creations, men did not evolve from lesser species of living creature and became men as the apex of the development of God’s creation. It is exactly as taught by the Bible that God formed man different from the other creations. However men have strong relation with the other creations. All the other creations were created for man that men may have dominion over them (Genesis 1:26) that men may have them for their food (Gen. 1:29-31). Men also had to be under the natural laws like days and nights; changes of weather, months, days and years.

Even though the other creations did not disobey the law of God they also had to suffer the consequences of the disobedience of man (Gen. 3:17,18; Romans 8:20,22). In the same way as the creation was subjected to futility due to the disobedience of man, they also will be set free from the bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. As we were groaning inwardly for the redemption of our bodies the creations also have been groaning in travail together with man until now for their redemption (Romans 8:19,21).

1). *The Constitution of man.* There are two different opinions on the constitution of man. They are:

First, Man was created by God in *two parts*: *First*, visible and material – body; invisible and immaterial – spirit. This is known as *Dichotomy*. *Secondly*, God made man in *three parts* - *body, soul and spirit*. The visible and material part is one, the *body*; and the invisible and immaterial parts are two, *soul and spirit*. This is known as *Trichotomy*. However since the Bible in Genesis 2:7 clearly

stated that man was made with a visible body and an invisible breath of God, we accepted the creation of man as *Dichotomy*.

2). *The creation of man in the image and likeness of God.* We have the Biblical record of God's creation of man in his likeness in Genesis 1:26,27 : "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them'".

It is seen here that two words, '*image*' and '*likeness*' are used in God's creation of man. Theologians have different opinions regarding the meaning of these two words. Church Fathers in the early period regarded them as the *rational and moral character* of man, like holiness. Irenaeus and Tertullian separated '*image*' and '*likeness*'. They regarded '*image*' as bodily traits and '*likeness*' as spiritual nature of man. Clement of Alexandria and Origen rejected the idea of man's likeness to God as physical likeness. During the Reformation period differentiation between *image* and *likeness* was rejected. The image and likeness of God with which man was made was taken as the original righteousness. Though '*image*' and '*likeness*' are different words they were regarded as carrying the same idea and meaning. This was how the Old Testament and the New Testament used the terms.

In the Old Testament: In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our *image*, after our *likeness*" When God made man in Genesis 1:27 it was recorded "So God created man in his own *image*, in the *image* of God he created him". In the actual creation of man, man was said to be created in the *image* of God. The term *likeness* was not used in the actual creation of man here. But the man created by God was Adam. This proved that image and likeness are not different but interchangeably used as the same.

However, Genesis 5:2 said, "When God created man, he made him in the ***likeness*** of God. Male and female he created them". Here the word '*image*' is absent. However, what God created was not a deficient man. Therefore, the Old Testament used '*likeness*' and '*image*' interchangeably as one and the same thing.

In the New Testament: In I Corinthians 11:7 the New Testament used *image* in connection with the covering of the head for men. "For man ought not to cover his head, since he is the ***image*** and glory of God" Concerning the use of tongues, James said, "With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the ***likeness*** of God" Here both the *image* and *likeness* are used separately. However we cannot say that none of the man made was fully man. Therefore, it is clear that the New Testament also used *image* and *likeness* as one and the same thing.

The image and likeness of God in man cannot be physical likeness. God is spirit. The image and likeness of God in man must be understood as below:

(a). *As God is a person, so also man is a person.* A person has self-consciousness, desire and free-will. As a rational being man has consciousness and conscience as well as free-will. Man can have fellowship with God which the other creations like nature, plants and animals can not have. This was how man was made in the likeness of God.

(b). *As God is holy and righteous, so also man was originally created holy and righteous like Him.* When man was created anew after the fall, Paul said man was “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). Theologians called this as *‘the original righteousness’*. This was how man was created by God in his image and likeness.

(c). *As God is spirit, so man too has spirit, an immortal spirit.* When God made man he “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). That living being was endowed with endless existence; not only the spirit but also the body has endless existence. Had it not been for the fall of man in sin man was destined to be immortal. Though man died because of sin he will be resurrected in the body on the day of resurrection. Both sinners and the righteous will be bodily resurrected. This was how man was originally made by God.

(4). *As God was omniscient, having perfect knowledge, man too was originally made with knowledge.* Paul, speaking of the new creation in Christ said that the new creation “have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Colossians 3:10) and because of this man was made to rule over the other creations. Man’s ability to do things with knowledge and wisdom is the likeness and wisdom of God that is in man.

b). that man fell into sin by his own free choice Man created by God in his own likeness was created with the knowledge of right and wrong or conscience; and by using that conscience man was given free choice or free-will to choose either to obey God or not to obey him. God’s command to man to choose whatever he desired to eat in the Garden of Eden undeniably proved that man was endowed with conscience and free-will.

Let us examine Genesis 2:16,17 where God gave freedom of choice to Adam and Eve. “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying ‘You can freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the three of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat; for the day you eat of it you shall die’”.

The important words here are “*You can freely eat every tree of the garden*” and the words, “*but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.*” What did the word, “can eat every tree of the garden” included? The word “every” is an all inclusive word. Every tree in the garden was included in it. In the same manner as no one but an idiot understood that “every tongue”, “every person” covered the whole mankind, unless “the three of knowledge of good and evils” was not there in the garden it is needless to say that the command, “you can freely eat of every tree in the garden” included even the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”.

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (Gen. 2:17) was the command. The command “you shall not eat” did not indicate whether Adam could eat it or not. It indicated that it was possible for Adam to eat. But he was told that it was better for him not to eat it. When the statement, “shall not” is given, it always indicates that it could be done but is better not to do it. When the Bible said, “You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal” (Exodus 20:13-15), it does not mean that you “cannot kill etc”, for People kill, commit adultery and steal. It rather speaks about what they can do by using their freedom of choice. When the Bible tells us not to murder, commit adultery, steal etc. it does not mean that murder, adultery, stealing etc are not possible. It rather indicated that it is possible; and that one has the ability to commit such crimes. If it was not possible for them to eat, there will be no prohibition; for there will be no need for it. As they ate the fruit it meant, they were able to eat and they ate it with their own free choice.

God did not made man like a robot or a machine. He made us able to differentiate between good and evil. We were made to choose God not by force but by our own free will. If we were compelled to obey God we will be nothing but machines. God will be a dictator or a totalitarian ruler.

The Bible clearly tells us that Adam broke the command of God by his own choice saying, “and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (I Tim. 2:14). Though the woman was deceived by Satan, man was not deceived by Satan; he was not deceived but he deliberately entered into sin. Therefore, Paul said, “Therefore, as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sin – sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law” (Romans 5:12,13).

The Bible said that not Eve but Adam was the transgressor. This was because Adam knowingly and willfully disobeyed God’s command. He had to bear the consequences of his sinful act. Therefore, we should accept the clear statement of the Bible that man knowingly disobeyed God’s command.

c). thereby incurring not only physical death but spiritual death as well, which is separation from God, What the Bible tells us here is that death came upon man because of Adam’s deliberate disobedience to the command of God by eating the forbidden fruit. Paul said, “Sin came into the world through one man and so death spread to all men because all men sinned” (Romans 5:12). Even though God had said, “the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen. 2:7) death did not immediately come upon them. It is clear that the death mentioned here was not primarily physical death.

Whenever the scripture speaks about death it always refers to separation of the spirit-soul from the body. When Jesus died, “Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, `Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit` And having said this he breathed his last” (Luke 23:46). When Elijah restored the life of the dead son of Zarephath, it was recorded that Elijah “cried to the Lord, `O Lord my God, let this

child's soul come into him again` And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived" (I Kings 17:21,22). Speaking about death, Ecclesiastes said, "and the dust (*nephesh -body*) returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gives it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). These confirmed that death is separation of the body and the soul-spirit.

In the same manners as physical death is separation of the body and soul, so also spiritual death is separation of man from God. When God said to Adam in the garden, "You shall die" it physically meant separation of the body from the spirit. Spiritually, it meant separation of man from God. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in Eden they did not die physically but they were dead in spirit – i.e. they were separated from God in spirit. When in the evening God came to have fellowship with Adam and Eve, God called "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9) because they have been separated from God. Therefore, when Adam committed sin they met physical and spiritual death – separation of man from God, though physical death did not immediately follow.

What has to be understood clearly here is that in both cases of physical and spiritual death, it is not annihilation. Even though the body is dead, both believers and unbelievers will be resurrected bodily. Believers will be resurrected to eternal life and unbelievers will be resurrected to eternal damnation. The spiritual death of the unbelievers will be an eternal separation from God. This is what men will receive as the consequence of sin.

d). resulting in all his progeny being conceived in sin. Paul said, "as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Romans 5:12), it follows that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Even though his descendants did not transgressed like Adam, God clearly declared that all the descendants of Adam inherited his sin. To confirm that Abraham's descendants inherited his sins Paul said, "Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam" (Romans 5:14). Paul went on to say, "... many died through one man's trespass, ... the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation ... because of one man's trespass, death reign through that one man Then as one man's trespass lead to condemnation for all men ... For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Romans 5:15-19). It is the central teaching of the scripture that all men inherited the sin of Adam although they did not transgressed like Adam. Man did not lean to commit sin when he had grown up. The Bible tells us that we were sinners by birth. Sin is not the end-result of a cumulative sin. David therefore, said, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5). Cf. Job 14:4; Ephesians 2:3).

Since from the beginning of the Church there were wrong teachings on the question of sin – the most prominent one was the teaching of Pelagius. Pelagius' teaching was condemned by the *Synod of Carthage* in 416 as a heretical teaching. It was again condemned by the *Council of Ephesus* in 431.

VI REGENERATION OR CONVERSION.

6. REGENERATION OR CONVERSION: *We believe that salvation is obtained only through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. We believe that man must be born again in the Spirit to reconcile himself with God. Conversion is possible neither by birth in a Christian family nor by living in the midst of believers; it is possible only through personal faith in Christ as Lord and savior. The new birth in a person should be evident through daily life in spirit.*

a). We believe that salvation is obtained only through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Since the transgression of Adam brought condemnation for all men, men needed perfect obedience in order to regain justification from sin. Even as the first Adam could have no perfect obedience by himself, it is not possible for his descendants, born in sin and totally depraved, to have perfect obedience. There is no hope in man.

Unless the Son of God became incarnate as man and offer his holy and sinless life for a perfect sacrifice, man cannot fulfill the righteous demand of the law and satisfy the perfect demand of God. Therefore, Christ came into the world and fulfilled God's demand of righteousness for us. The way of salvation opened only through the life and death of Christ.

Christ not only became man and suffered in his body, but also died for the sinners. He had borne in his body the curse of God fallen on all the descendants of Adam. He bore the curse of God that fell on the descendants of Adam. Salvation came only through that sacrifice. Therefore, Paul said, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sins, so that in him we might be the righteousness of God" (II Corinthians 5:21). Peter also said, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (I Peter 2:24). Peter further said, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit" (I Peter 3:18). Prophet Isaiah also said, "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and as, one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:3-5).

When Adam and Eve fell in sin, God "made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21) to indicate that he would provide for them a savior. That was a prophecy to be fulfilled in Christ. That prophecy was fulfilled when Christ was raised from the dead. Speaking about that Paul said, "And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the Fathers (Adam and Eve), this has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus" (Acts 13:32,33; cf. Gen 3:15; 12:3; 25:4; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:16). Therefore, Paul again said, "Let it be known to you therefore,

brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38,39).

The cost of the transgression of the first Adam that made all men transgress the righteous law of God was paid in full by Christ, the second Adam (I Corinthians 15:45), through his life, death and resurrection. Only because of that there could be provision for eternal life.

b). We believe that man must be born again in spirit to reconcile himself with God. Consequent upon the transgression of Adam (Genesis 3:1-2), sin separated man from God. Sin brought enmity between God and man. And since all have sinned (Roman 3:23; 5:12) man became alienated from God.

When God made man, he made him after his likeness ‘in true righteousness and holiness’ (Eph. 4:24; Colossians 3:10; Genesis 1:26). Therefore, man could have fellowship with God until he fell into sin, because he possessed thinking power, will, knowledge, righteousness, holiness and truth. But when he disobeyed God’s command and ate the forbidden fruit in the garden, the life he lived only for God and in accordance with the will of God was tarnished. After man followed the will of Satan, sin entered in him. When sin entered in man, in spite of the fact that there remained holiness, righteousness, will, and knowledge, they were tinted by sin. The holiness, goodness and knowledge that remained in man were no longer useful for fellowship with God as before the fall. Man became estranged from God. Man could no longer live with God. Man became totally depraved because of that transgression.

However, the total depravity of man does not mean that man no longer have any natural goodness, civil goodness, righteousness or moral goodness. However good a man may be the remaining goodness in man is not good enough to please God. There is nothing man can do in order to have fellowship with God through his own efforts (John 1:13; 6:44; Romans 7:8, 24; 8:7,8; I Corinthians 2:14).

The depravity of man is so total that man can approach God only when the Holy Spirit applies the efficacious grace of God in his life.

Believer’s life begins at conversion. The work of the Holy Spirit is needed for conversion. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:5,6). Speaking about conversion, we usually use the terms, rebirth, regenerate, born again etc. Similarly, a man born of flesh is flesh. A man born of the flesh needed to be reborn in the spirit; he needed to be born again. Unless a man is born in the Spirit or is born again, he is not regenerated. Regeneration is new birth in the Spirit.

Because the work of the Holy Spirit is the foundation for conversion, the work of the Holy Spirit is very important in conversion. The works of the Holy Spirit in conversion are as below:

1). *The sinner is convicted of his sin.* When Jesus spoke about his coming ascension to heaven, his disciples were distressed. But he told his disciples that he will send the Holy Spirit to be with them. He said, “And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:8,9). The conviction mentioned here is the conviction through the Holy Spirit. It is important to understand that the conviction that comes through the Holy Spirit and the conviction that comes from the conscience of man are quite different. The differences between the conviction through the Holy Spirit and through the conscience of man are as follows:

a). The conviction of sins from man brings knowledge of the punishment of sin a man has to meet as a consequence of his sins. It could give him only the knowledge that he has to suffer the consequences of his sins. There is no avenue for escape but to suffer its consequences. In other words, that conviction is *Legal Conviction*.

b). The conviction that comes from the Holy Spirit gives man knowledge not only of the sins he has committed, but also how he can be freed from the penalty of sins. In other words, this is known as *Evangelical Conviction*.

When conviction comes from the Holy Spirit, sinners are made to know and understand three things:

i). He made man to realize that he is a sinner not by deeds but by birth; that he is condemned because he did not trust in Jesus Christ. The root of sin is the transgression of Adam; for “sin came into the world through one man and so death spread to all men because all men sinned” (Romans 5:12). The reason for his condemnation is because he has no faith in Jesus Christ, for Jesus said, “He (the Holy Spirit) will convict the world concerning sin, because they do not believe in me” (John 16:9). *Conviction in respect of sins, then, goes to the very root, and always has been unbelief. Adam did not believe in God. Men are damned eternally in the lake of fire because of unbelief.*

ii). He made man to realize that there is no righteousness apart from the righteousness of God in Christ. The failure of the unbelievers in their understanding of righteousness is on Jesus Christ. They believed that they could be righteous without trusting in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Instead of trusting on the righteousness of Jesus Christ they tried to be justified through their own righteousness. They did not know that Jesus was a righteous man. They regarded the murderer as a righteous man. They killed Jesus Christ. But God raised Jesus Christ from the dead because he was the righteous man (Acts 3:14,15; 7:51-53). He ascended unto the Father and as the Father regarded him righteous he made him sit at the right hand of the Father. Therefore, the unbelievers, “being

ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Romans 10:3) said Paul. Therefore, Jesus said, when the Holy Spirit comes, "He will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you will see me no more" (John 16:8-10).

iii). He bears witness to the unbelievers and convicted them that their judgment on the scripture is absolutely wrong. Their judgment on Christ by crucifying him on the cross as a malefactor was completely wrong. It was absolutely wrong. In the same manner those who do not believe in Christ are the same as those who crucified Christ on the cross. The unbelievers took Christ Jesus as a miscreant who made himself the Son of God. They made wrong judgment upon him and killed him (Acts 3:15). The Holy Spirit bears witness to the unbelievers that as Satan the king of this world was condemned on this account so also were they condemned for their wrong judgment upon Jesus Christ. So Jesus said, "he will convince the world ... concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is judged" (John 16:11). He witnesses to the sinners that as Satan has already been condemned, they were also condemned already.

2). *He bears witness about Jesus Christ to the unconverted.* Jesus said, "When the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the very beginning" (John 15:26,27). The Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth of Jesus Christ to the unconverted people. He witnessed to them that their judgment upon Jesus was wrong. And when they realized that Jesus Christ died and rose again from the death on their behalf, they can accept him as Lord and savior. It is not possible to know Jesus except through the Holy Spirit.

3). *He converts sinner.* When Nicodemus went to Jesus and was told that he must be born again, Nicodemus thought that he had to enter his mothers' womb in order to be born again. He was puzzled and could not understand. We see what Jesus had said unto him on that subject; "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel what I said to you, 'You must be born anew'" (John 3:3-6; cf. Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:23; John 6:63; Ephesians 5:25,26).

Jesus was the Son of God. A woman conceived him through the Holy Spirit when he was born. Jesus was born through the Holy Spirit. Likewise, the conversion of man is through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is through the new birth that man became partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). It is not only a reformation of human nature (John 1:13). It is the Holy Spirit who gives conversion to every believer.

4). *He gives assurance of salvation.* Paul said, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, you have received the spirit of

sonship. When we cry, `Abba Father`, it is the Spirit himself being witness with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, then, heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Romans 8:14-17; cf., II Corinthians 1:12, 22). It is the Holy Spirit who gave us assurance of salvation.

c). Conversion is possible, neither by birth in a Christian family, nor by living in a Christian community; it is possible only through personal faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. Salvation cannot be received through human generation. It is also important to understand that conversion can be had neither from outward profession nor through association with believers.

In times past as well as now, there are many people born in Christian families, who have heard and learnt the words of God from childhood without having true faith in Jesus and without truly being born again, but living as Christians in a Christian society. This is the reason why many people professed to be born again several times in crusades and camps.

The Jews though that by being born Jews they were the children of God. Therefore, John the Baptist said, “Do not presume to say to yourselves, `We have Abraham as our father` for I tell you, God is able to form these stones to raise children to Abraham” (Matt. 3:9). Jesus made it clear that the children of God are those “who were born, not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). Jesus made this truth crystal clear in his parable of the ten maidens who took their lamps without oil and went to meet the bridegroom, but were rejected by the bridegroom after the door was closed (Matt. 25:1-13). Therefore, no one is converted simply by being born in a Christian family or by being a member of Christian society. Only those who truly accepted Christ as savior can receive new birth.

Three things inseparably intertwined in the acceptance of Christ as savior – *belief* in the truth that Christ is the savior; sincere desire or *will* to have that salvation; and *acceptance* of the salvation freely offered by Christ through his life, death and resurrection. This, in other words, is *salvation through faith*. This is what is known as *saving faith*.

In regard to faith some said that since the word of God said, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9), faith is the gift of God and unless God gives faith man can not believe in Christ. You should not try to enter heaven through your own faith. This teaching had been plaguing the church since for a long time, and this is a very common teaching even today. Nowadays, too much emphasis on this teaching brought in the teaching of *Gnosticism* that began from human speculation through knowledge taken from the *Greek* philosophical system. It is therefore imperative to deal with this problem since the Greek philosophical system of studying the words of God produces lots of confusions in the churches these days. It is also necessary to give further clarification regarding new birth or salvation through faith.

Man was born 'dead' in sin through the disobedience of Adam (Ephesians 2:1). Except the dead is made alive, he can do nothing. This is universal truth, physical and spiritual. Jeremiah asked, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spot?" (Jeremiah 13:23). The answer is apparently "No!" The Psalmist also said, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5). We were sinners by birth. We were sinners even before we were born. We do not commit sin only after birth or after we became mature. The depravity of man is so deep that, it is beyond description.

Apostle Paul clearly told us of the *total depravity* of man when he said, "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, even one; their throat is an open grave, they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shedding of blood in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:10-19).

Man can do nothing for salvation. There is no one willing to seek God. Therefore, it was God who took the initiative in bringing salvation to man. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believe in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God by himself made provision for the salvation of man.

Even though God had given his only begotten Son, the depravity of man was so complete that man can do nothing to appropriate the gift. God had to offer him efficacious grace to appropriate the gift of salvation. When a man trusts in Christ through the enabling power of God, he can receive salvation, conversion or the new birth (Romans 8:16). This acknowledges the *total depravity* of man, as well as the enabling power of God for man to freely accept the free gift of salvation by faith using his *free will*. This is the teaching of the Scripture on faith.

God respected the freedom of choice he had given to man. God did not make man to do his will as a machine does. Similarly, God does not intend either to convert or not to convert any one at will. If God does not give freedom of choice to man, God is responsible for the unbelief of man and for man being lost. He gave us freedom of choice. God does not intend to take away that freedom from man. Therefore, if man chooses God by using his freedom of choice, man is responsible for his own choice. If man does not choose God, the responsibility falls on man, for the scripture says, "That thou may be justified in thy word" (Romans 3:4; cf. Psalms 51:4).

We have not been born again because of what we have done on our side as men. Man can either choose or reject God using his freedom of choice. This is possible only because of the efficacious grace God has given to man. Suppose, a person gives me something and I accepted to take it by putting forth my hands, it will not be because of what I have done but because the gift was placed on my outstretched hand by the giver that I received it. If I am not given something by someone,

however long I might have stretched my palm, I will not get anything in doing so. This is how we receive the free gift of salvation from God.

Some people taught that God gives us faith saying, "We can have faith only when God gives us faith. It will be of no affect even if we do our best until God gives us faith." This understanding seems to come from Paul's statement in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" because they regarded the above `faith` for what Paul had said as "the gift of God." "The gift of God" here is taken to refer to as "Faith." This understanding does not seem to be true. If true, only to those God gave faith will receive salvation and to those God did not give faith will be lost. In that case, God is responsible for the salvation or damnation of man. God will show partiality. We know that "God shows not a partiality" (Acts 10:34). This teaching is, therefore untenable; it cannot be accepted.

The verse does not say that 'faith' is the 'gift of God'. It rather says that you have been saved by grace; that 'God's grace is the source of your salvation'. Paul never said that men are saved 'on account of' but 'through' faith; for faith is not the cause; only the channel through which our salvation comes. Paul further said, 'and that not of yourselves'. The word 'that' refers not to grace or to faith, but to the whole act of salvation – that salvation is not of ourselves. It is the gift of God. The Holy Spirit has been very careful to guard this precious doctrine of salvation by grace against all forms of heresy. Works in the scripture are the products or fruits of salvation, not the cause of it.

But how are we to understand that the *gift of God is salvation, not faith*? The question is answered by the Greek text: "By this grace you are saved through faith; and this (*touto, this salvation*) is not of you; it is the gift of God, not of works; so that no one can boast. The relative *touto, 'this'* which is in the *neuter gender* cannot stand for *faith*, which is the *feminine*; but it has the whole sentence that goes before for its antecedent. But it may be asked: Is not faith the gift of God? Yes, as to the grace by which it is produced; but the grace or power to believe, and the act of believing, are two different things. Without the grace or power to believe no man can ever did or can believe; but with the power the act of faith is man's own; God never believe for any man any more than he repent for him; the penitent, through this grace enabling him, believes for himself. Nor does he believes necessarily or impulsively when he has that power; the power to believe may be present long before it is exercised, else why the solemn warnings with which we meet everywhere in the Word of God, and threatening against those who do not believe? It is the proof that such persons have the power but not use it. The gift of God, as mentioned in this verse, is not *faith* but *salvation*. Believers are not saved because of what they did. They were saved only because of the gift of God through his Grace.

d). The new birth in a person should be evident through daily life in spirit. A person cannot just say 'I have been born again' without having a changed life. Conversion must be visibly evident in life. A truly born again person must display a visible change of life. Profession of conversion

without visible change in life is at best, doubtful conversion. As a living thing shows its life by action, so also a new life in a person should be visible through his activities.

In his advice to the Philippians, Paul said, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2;12). If a man is saved, he has to live according to the will of God. He knows that to live a life that is in conformity to the will of God is pleasing unto him. He should always be afraid of living contrary to the will of God. He will always live according to the will of God and work out his salvation.

When a man is born again, he is a new person. Paul said, "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (II Corinthians 5:17). Since he now has a new life, the new life in him should grow and manifest in his daily walk. Paul said, "Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Paul also said, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). Because of this Paul said, "I press on to make it my own, because Christ has made it my own" (Phil 3;12).

Daily Bible reading with prayer in fellowship with God should be the life of a born again believer. That is what God expected from believers. He should be a person who always longs to dwell in the house of God. David said, "How lovely is thy dwelling-place, O LORD of Hosts! My soul longs you, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. ... Blessed are those who dwell in thy house, ever singing thy praise!" (Psalms 84:1-4).

VII RESURRECTION

7. RESURRECTION *We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust. The just shall enter eternal glory of Christ while those who rejected Christ shall go to eternal damnation.*

a). We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust The basic foundation and the most important confession of Christian faith is the resurrection of Christ. According to the teaching of the scripture there is resurrection and it is the resurrection of the body. The body that was buried in the grave is to be resurrected. God said that it is our “lowly body” that is to be resurrected “like his glorious body” (Phil, 3:21). Paul also said to the Corinthians, “So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown in physical body, it is raised in Spiritual body” (I Corinthians 15:42,43).

Over and above what Paul had said in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians he also spoke about the resurrection in First Thessalonians 4:13-16 and in II Corinthians 5:1-10. John the beloved also spoke about it in Revelation 20:4-6. Therefore, the Bible undeniably stated that there will be resurrection of the body and that it will be the resurrection of the body that was dead and buried in the grave.

i). *It is our ‘mortal body’ that is to be resurrected.* Paul said like this, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you” (Romans 8:11). The soul is immortal. It is the mortal body that is to be raised, said Paul. Speaking about the resurrection of the ‘lowly body’ to the Philippians, Paul said he “will change our *lowly body* to be like his glorious body by the power which enables him even to subject all things to him” (Phil 3:21).

The “*lowly body*” referred to her is translated in another version as “*vile body*” in English (KJV). This ‘vile body’ may seem to indicate our corrupted body. It is not so. This word is taken from the Latin ‘vilis’ which means ‘cheap’ (*having no worth or value*) or ‘valueless’. The meaning of ‘vile’ is taken from the word, ‘low degree’ in the magnification of Mary in Luke 1:52. The meaning of ‘vile’ is ‘low degree’. It speaks about the great difference between the resurrected body and our present body.

It may also be noted here that what was spoken about the resurrection at many places in the Old Testament were the resurrection of ‘the very body’ that had died’. Job said, “and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God” (Job. 19:26). Speaking about the resurrection of the ‘dead body’ ‘that had already been turned into the dust’, Isaiah also said, “Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise; dwellers in the dust. Awake and sing for joy” (Isaiah 26:19). Daniel, speaking about the resurrection of the dead bodies that had already been turned into the

dust said, "And many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake, some to eternal life, and some to shame and eternal contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

ii). *The bodies of the dead to be resurrected are:* The bodies of both the sinners and the righteous will be resurrected. Some are of the opinion that the love of God is so great that sinners will not be resurrected to be punished in hell for ever but will be annihilated. This is wrong and unfounded opinion. Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28,19). The author of the resurrection himself declared that both the righteous and the sinners shall be resurrected. No one has the authority to say anything against it. The Sinners and the saints will be bodily resurrected. But their destination will be different.

b). The just shall enter eternal glory of Chris while those who rejected Christ shall go to eternal damnation. It is the teaching of the Word of God that every person born in this world, both the righteous and the sinner will be bodily resurrected. But the Bible tells us that the nature of the resurrection of the believers and the sinners will be different. Believers will be raised from the dead to inherit eternal life of glory while the sinners will be resurrected to be punished for ever.

The time of the resurrection: There are two opinions on the time of the resurrection. Some believed that the resurrection of the righteous and the sinners will take place at the same time. Others believed that the resurrection of the righteous and the sinners will take place at different times - the righteous will be resurrected first and the sinners will be resurrected later.

The reason why some believed that the righteous and sinners will be resurrected at the same time is because verses such as, "Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28, 29). They say this verse indicated that both the righteous and sinners will be resurrected at the same time because it is mentioned here that "*all who are in the tomb will hear his voice and come forth.*" So they said, Jesus did not say that any one will be left in the grave at the time of the resurrection.

Paul also said that the resurrection of the righteous and the sinners will take place at the same time in I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:22-57. Also Daniel 12:2 and John 11:24 said that both the righteous and the sinners will be resurrected together. For these reasons they taught that resurrection of both the sinners and the saints will take place at the same time, not at different times.

Let us examine more closely these verses and see if they really support the contention. John 5: 28-29 speaks about the resurrection of the dead from the grave but did not mention **when** it will take

place. Daniel 12:2 also spoke about resurrection of the dead but did not mention *the time* of the resurrection. The resurrection mentioned by I Thessalonians 4:13-18 is the resurrection of the believers. Paul here speaking to the believers that they “may not grieved as others do who have no hope” said, “the Lord himself will descend from heaven with cry of commands, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And *the dead in Christ will rise first.*” This speaks about the resurrection of the dead in Christ. Similarly, John 11: 24 spoke about the resurrection of Lazarus and the believers “in the resurrection of the last day.” He did not speak about the resurrection of the unbelievers.

The resurrection of the believers is clearly seen by John the beloved in his vision and said, “Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or their images and had not reached the mark on their hand nor their forehead. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection” (Revelation 20:4-5).

The Bible tells us that the first resurrection covered the three resurrections of the believers that will take place at three different times. Paul wrote about this in his epistles to the Corinthians like this: “But *each in his own order*: Christ the first fruit, then *at the coming those who belongs to Christ*. Then *comes the end*, when he delivers the Kingdom of God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power” (I Corinthians 15:23-24). This clearly indicated that the time of the resurrection of the dead for both the believers and the unbelievers had already been determined beforehand. The resurrection that took place first was the resurrection of the saints in the Old Testament. They were raised from the dead with Jesus Christ on the day of his resurrection. Matthew tells us about this, “And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were splitting, the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tomb after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matthew 26:75-76). This was the beginning of the first resurrection.

Next to this Paul said, “then at his coming *those who belongs to Christ*” (I Corinthians 15:23). This is the resurrection of the believers on the day of the second coming of Christ (I Thessalonians 4:16, 17) at the end of tribulation when the last trumpet of God is sounded and when all the believers will ‘be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air’. This ‘coming’ (I Corinthians 15:23) in Greek is ‘*parousia*’. This carries the meaning of ‘coming’ as well as ‘presence’. It means the coming of a great king for which people prepared themselves to welcome him as well as the actual reception at his arrival when the king is in the midst of the people. Therefore, ‘coming’ here refers to the return of Christ to earth in the midst of the clouds to meet his saints as well as his presence in their midst at his arrival. It refers to the coming of Christ when transformed believers who are still alive at his coming will meet him in the air. The word ‘caught up’ is ‘rapture’. The ‘gathering of the saints to be caught up in the air’ is what is called ‘rapture’.

When Christ returns and the believers who are still alive are taken up (*ruptured*) to meet Christ in the air (I Thessalonians 4:17)), there will be seven years' Great Tribulation on the earth. At that time believers will have already been taken up to be with Christ in the air. We will not go through the great tribulation. When the great tribulation is over, we shall come on the earth to rule over the Jews and the nations with Christ. The believers who had died during the tribulation will be raised from the dead. This is the first resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20:5. This will be the end of the first resurrection.

After Christ came on earth with his saints, there will be judgment upon the nations at the valley of Jehosha'phat (Joel 3:1-15). God will separate the lambs and the goats from amongst the Gentile nations (Matthews 25:32, 33). The sheep are those who suffered persecution for showing kindness to the Jews during the great tribulation. The goats are those who did not show kindness to the Jews but persecuted them during the tribulation period. At the judgment the "sheep shall be given favor" (Matt. 25:34-36). They shall enter Millennial Kingdom. The goats shall be sent to the lake of fire appointed for the devil and his followers (Matt.25: 541-43). As John the beloved had said, believers will reign over the Jews with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:6).

Soon after the thousand years was over, Satan, bound and thrown into the pit, will be released for a short while. He will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth to gather them for battle. They will encircle Jerusalem. God will fight against Satan and his hosts. He will conquer Satan and send him and his followers into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10).

Then every unbeliever from the beginning of the world to the end of the thousand years will be resurrected from the dead. There will be Judgment for them. The judgment will be the judgment of "the great white throne" (Revelation 20:11) spoken by John the beloved. All the dead unbelievers will be bodily resurrected to stand for judgment before Christ to be condemned. This is the last resurrection.

A New Heaven and a New Earth will be ushered in. Believers will be with Christ praising him forever and ever (Revelation 21:1ff; cf. Isaiah 66:22-24).

VIII CHURCH

8. CHURCH. *We believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the fellowship of the saints, the body of Christ planted by Him to propagate the eternal Gospel of salvation.*

a). We believe in the Holy Catholic Church, (i). *Church:* Though there is no word that can be translated as “Church” in the Old Testament Hebrew, two Hebrew words, “*Qahal*” and “*Edah*” are used to speak about the gathering of the people of God in the Old Testament. “*Edah*” carries the meaning of people gathered at an appointed place, such as, “the *congregation* of Israel” (Exodus 12:3), “the people of Israel” (Exodus 31:12). ‘*Qahal*’ is also used to indicate the gathering of the Israelites. It speaks about the gathering of the people being summoned. It is used in two ways – one, to speak about the gathering of people called for religious instruction, such as, the gathering of the Israelites when “Moses assembled all the congregation of the people of Israel and said to them, ‘These are the things which the Lord has commanded you’” (Exodus 35:1ff; cf. Deut. 10:4, 18:16); and secondly, the gathering of the Israelites for war in such case as “The whole congregation of the people of Israel assembled at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there, the land lay subdued before them” (Joshua 18:1ff; cf. Judges 21:1-15 etc).

Though this may not be equated to the Church it can be compared to the meeting of the Church in the New Testament. Therefore, in the *Greek* translation of the Old Testament known as the *Septuagint (LXX)*, “*Qahal*” is translated as “*ekklesia*”. Therefore, some says that the Israelites were the “Church of the Old Testament”. However, Israel was never called the church. Israelites were not actually the church. They were a people called out by God to be his people.

There are two Greek words translated as Church in the New Testament. The two Greek words are, “*kyriakos*” (adjective), “*kyriakon*” (noun) and “*ekklesia*.” “*Kyriakos*” means “that which belongs to the Lord”. It is used to indicate a new born believer as belonging to the Lord. “*Kyriakon*” on the other hand, carries the meaning of a place where believers are gathered for fellowship. It means the building of the church where believers are gathered together. It is used in such a statement as “*kyriakon doma*”, (the house of the Lord) and others. ‘*Kyriakos*’ and ‘*kyriakon*’ are never used to indicate the gathering of the Church, the believers. “*Ekklesia*” is mostly used for the Church.

The meaning of “*ekklesia*” is “*called out*” – (*ek* – out; *kalos* – call). The translation of the word in Hmar as “Kohran” is very appropriate. It actually means “called out” people called out by God to be his, to be separated for him (I Corinthians 6:14-18). The word “*kyriakon*” in Greek is sometimes translated as “*church*” in English. Therefore, in some places it is translated as church. It is translated mainly when the Church is compared to a building in such case as, “in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21,22). However, *kyriakon* does not really mean the church. It means the Church building where Christians worship God rather than the people

gathered in the church. “*Ekklesia*” is never used for the place of gathering. It is used for the gathering of the people of God. The people called out by God from the nations of the world to be his people (Acts 5:11), as well as the fellowship of the believers at a given place (Romans 16:23) are the Church.

Therefore, the Church is the gathering of the believers all over the world (II Corinthians 1:1; Acts 9:31). It covers all the believers in heavens and on earth (Ephesians 1:22; 3:10,21). The Lord Jesus dwells in this church. It is the fellowship of believers in the name of Jesus. It is the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12), the family of God (Ephesians 2:19), and the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22). It is the church of God, purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; I Corinthian 1:2), whose head is Christ (Eph.1:23; Colossians 1:18).

Jesus Christ called the church “My Church” (Matthew 16:18). It is also known as the “Church of Christ” because it was established by Jesus Christ himself. Some call the Church as the New Testament Church. Since the gathering of the chosen race of God in the Old Testament was the gathering of the people called out by God from the world, they were sometimes called the Old Testament Church. But the Bible never called the Israelites as Church. The Bible always spoke about the gathering of the Israelites as the “congregation of Israel” (Exodus 12:16), the “assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel” (Numb 14:5), the “commonwealth of the Israel” (Ephesians 2:12) etc., rather than the church. The Church is a special name for the people of God in the New Testament.

(ii). *Catholic Church*. The word “*Catholic Church*” given in English here does not mean the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church under the Pope as its head and having membership all over the world regarded itself as the only church and called itself the *Catholic Church*. They regarded themselves as the church planted by Christ himself.

However, the word “Catholic” does not mean a church that covers the whole landscape of the earth as taken by the Roman Catholic Church. It means the Church Christ has established covers the whole world. It rather meant every true believer all over the world, who truly accepted Christ and are saved. Even if a church covers the whole landscape of the earth, those who are not truly born again, who are not true believers are not members of the Church established by Christ. Catholic does not mean the extent of the world covered by the Church. It means all the true believers, the saved ones all over the world.

The church does not have geographical boundary like the States. It covers the whole universe. Church can be established anywhere in the world. It covers every nation. Even though there were many denominations in the Church, every believer in Christ who is truly born again is a member of the Church. Church is not the name of a particular Church but the name for the congregation of the people of God all over the world.

(iii). *Holy church* indicates that the gathering of the true believers, the Church, is the gathering of people sanctified and separated from sin by God. The true Church of God is a holy Church. It does not mean that the church is clean, free from dirt, free from difficulties or troubles. The separation of the Church from the world for God is what is meant by 'holy' in this passage. In the Bible the word 'holy' does not mean 'without stain', 'clean' or 'without spot'. It means 'separation from the others for a special use'. A thing 'being separated' from the others is called 'holy'. So the meaning of holy such as holy temple, holy place, is indicative of being set apart exclusive use for worship. The Church is called Holy Church because God took it out from the world and separated it for his own special people.

b). the fellowship of the saints. Before conversion man lives sinful, corrupt and filthy life like a polluted garment (Isaiah 64:6). When a man trusts in Christ and became a true believer, sanctified, set apart and separated from sins, he became a holy person. According to the scriptural language, he is saint or holy man. Rather than being freed from filth or pollution, holiness means separation - separation for a special use - separation from common use or different from others. In this sense Christ is called, 'thy holy servant Jesus' (Acts 4:27,30).

In the Old Testament Hebrew word, "*Gadosh*" is used to describe men set apart by God for his special use. (Psalms 106:16; Exodus 24:41; 29:1; Leviticus 21:6). In the New Testament Greek, "*hagios*" is used (I Peter 2:5; I Corinthians 1:12; Revelation 6:3,4). The Spirit that dwells in the believer is Holy. (I Corinthians 3:16, 17). We are called holy brethren (Hebrews 3:1). We are also called to be holy priesthood (I Peter 2:5). we received a holy calling (II Timothy 1:9). All these refer to the believers as people called out from the world for God's special use.

Then the word "*Fellowship*" does not mean people gathered together at a place for gossiping as we do in our places. The Greek word "*koinonia*" is used for fellowship. The common Greek language at the time of Jesus Christ was "*koine*". The word "*koinonia*" is taken from that Greek root. It refers to the fellowship in religious matters; fellowship in spirit; open minded fellowship; working together in one mind and accepting each others as having the same calling. When we speak about the fellowship of the saints, it is a true '*koine*', a fellowship of people having the same calling, receiving the same salvation, living the same new life, and working together in harmony and in one accord. This is what is meant by the word fellowship.

At the beginning of the New Testament we see that believers' life was very close to each other and they lived "day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in the houses, they partook of food with gladness and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all people" (Acts 2:46,47). The gathering of the believers here is '*koinonia*'. It also included doing things together in one accord. When Paul and Barnabas were to go out for ministry Paul said the leaders of the church "gave to me and Barnabas the right hand o fellowship" (Galatians 2:9). This is the meaning of fellowship or *koinonia*.

Believers' sharing some thing together is also included in fellowship. The sharing of bread and wine at the Lord' supper in I Corinthians 10:16 is '*koinonia*'. Paul said, "the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (I Corinthians 10:16). When believers share the suffering and death of Christ through partaking the bread and wine in the sacrament, it is fellowship. The sharing of the death and suffering of Christ is called fellowship (*communion or koinonia*).

It also indicates that believers are not to live alone but live in a company or society. "The fellowship of the saints' implies that a true church should gather together in worship and fellowship. As coal taken apart from the fire-place immediately died, but when put together, build a roaring fire, so also the fellowship of believers, the people of God, enjoys the presence of Christ that strengthen the church.

In the Westminster Confession of faith, fellowship of the Saints is stated as "All the saints who are united in the Spirit, who have Christ as head, have fellowship with Christ in his grace, suffering, death and resurrection and glorification; united in love, having fellowship in exchange of love gifts; performing their duties individually and as a group, helping each other in and outside of their community".

"They live holy lives having fellowship, worshiping God together, doing spiritual ministry to the best of their ability. Such a fellowship of doing things together, helping one another is the duty of every believer all over the world. This kind of fellowship should be the hall-mark of Christians everywhere in the world".

c). the body of Christ planted by Him The Church was planted by Christ on Pentecost day. It was purchased by him 'with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The Church is called out of the world by Christ to follow him and to be separated from the world (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

In the Bible the 'Church' is found in Matthew 16:18 when Jesus said, "I will build my Church" and in Matthew 18:17. These are the only places in the Gospel where 'Church' is mentioned. However, 'Church' is mentioned several times in Acts and the Epistles.

At the beginning all the followers of Jesus were Jews. They believed that the twelve disciples were called by Jesus for the fulfillment of the restoration of the fallen booth of David (Amos 9:11; Jeremiah 12:15; Isaiah 45:21) promised by God. Therefore, when Jesus appeared unto the disciples and others and had fellowship with them for forty days after his resurrection, the disciples believed that the restoration of the kingdom of Israel will be fulfilled soon. They even asked Jesus, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts 1:6). On the other hand the outsiders thought that the disciples were a "sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). Some others called them people "belonging to the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9; 24:14).

When a large number of Gentiles believers were added to the followers of Jesus they were confused. Even Peter himself could not understand it until he was enlightened by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:1ff). Peter understood it after he received the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:16). Peter even went to the house of Cornelius at his invitation and argued that God wanted to save the Gentiles also. Even then they did not fully understand it. They still believed that the Gentiles had to become proselyte to become Christian and go through Jewish ritual of circumcision after the laws of Moses. Because of this problem Jerusalem Council was called (Acts 15:1-35). They understood after the Jerusalem Council.

Amongst those who believed Jesus Christ and received the power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost day were “devout men from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). When they returned from Jerusalem to their respective village they spread the gospel amongst their people. Believers rapidly increased. After the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60) believers in Jerusalem met severe persecution. “Those who were scattered went about preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). Even the Samaritans believed the word of God. Gentile believers increased rapidly. The gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured even on the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-47). Those who were scattered because of persecution that rose after Stephan was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cypress and Antioch. Even the Greeks believed in the Lord. When the news reached the believers in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas was very glad when he saw how the Gentiles received the grace of God. A large company was added to the Lord. (Acts 11:23,24)

When Barnabas heard about Saul from Antioch, he went to Tarsus to look for Saul. When he had found Saul, he brought him to Antioch. They remained at Antioch for a whole year and taught a large company of people. At Antioch “the disciples were called for the first time CHRISTIAN”. (Acts 11:26)

Even though the church was established first at Jerusalem the church at Antioch became more prominent as Christianity progressed. It became the centre for the Church. When there was famine at Jerusalem, the church at Antioch collected famine relief for the church at Jerusalem and sent Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to deliver the famine relief. Saul and Barnabas returned to Antioch after delivering the famine relief to the church at Jerusalem.

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas and Saul were amongst them. “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work of which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off’ (Acts 13:1-3). From then on Saul and Barnabas preach the Gospel and suffered persecutions for the Gospel of Christ. Through the leading of God they planted churches wherever they go; and the believers grew in numbers.

d). to propagate the eternal Gospel of Salvation. When Christ planted the Church he did not plant it for nothing. He gave a great commission to his disciples before he left the world, saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

The church and its members were given heavy responsibilities. These were the two important responsibilities given to them: *First, to spread the good news.* In Greek it is “*euangelion*” (εὐαγγέλιον –Gk). The good news is salvation of man and redemption from sin through the death and resurrection of Christ. The proclamation of the good news of salvation throughout the world is the responsibility of every believer, both individual and the whole members of the church. *Secondly, teaching.* In Greek it is “*kerusso,*” or *preaching* which is ‘*kerugma*’. This is the proclamation or preaching about Christ. The preachers are called *Evangelists*.

The command of Jesus was not only to spread the gospel and bring people to faith in Christ but also to “make them disciples”. This is what we call ‘*teaching*’. The church is to teach the word of God. While the church spreads the Gospel amongst the unbelievers, it should also proclaim, teach the word of God, the whole truth, to the new believers. That is one of the greatest responsibilities of the Church.

In order to teach the Word of God, one has to have true and correct knowledge of doctrine and to be faithful in teaching. The Church of God is the “church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (I Timothy 4:15). The true church needs to be a church that teaches and stands for the Gospel truth. Satan tries his best to destroy the Kingdom of God. From the beginning of the church he had been trying to destroy the church by bringing in all kinds of false teachings and doctrines in the church. To defend the Word of truth the *Church Councils* in the early period of the Church era condemned false teachings that crept in the churches. From those days, the Church Councils produced various Creeds such as the ‘*Apostles’ Creed*’, *Nicene Creed*, *Westminster Confession of Faith etc.* They had laid the foundation of true Christian Doctrine. We are also following the steps of the Church Fathers now and formulate this ***Statement of Faith***.

THE END.

July 23, 2012.