
UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this paper is to bring awareness among the students and impart to them the preliminary understanding about one of the world religions, namely, Judaism. In this paper, we will discuss the History of Judaism, their family set up and religious life, the role of prophets, the role of the state and the temple, the human person and his/her belief in God (Yehova), their belief in the new Messiah and life after death, their religious practices, etc.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Judaism is a religion which believes that God is one, unique, and concerned for us and our actions. Thus it can be called 'ethical Monotheism'. Judaism traces its origin to the people of ancient Israel and Judah, and their relationship with God, who is identified throughout Jewish tradition by ineffable name YHWH (Yahweh). There were two groups among the Jews (the Pharisees and the Sadducees) Pharisees accept the oral tradition while Sadducees accept the written tradition. The greatness of the Jews lies in their obedience to the Torah. Obedience to the Torah liberates the human beings and gives equality.

1.2 HISTORY OF JUDAISM

The history of Judaism can be traced back to the creation of mankind, but explicitly, Jewish historical origin begins with Abraham and the Hebrews who hailed from Haran, a town in Northern Mesopotamia. The Hebrew Bible presents Israel as a distinctive, holy people or nation in relation to Yahweh. Following the creation of the world (which took place in six days), various problems between Yahweh and the newly created human beings resulted in then expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, near destruction of the world by a flood, and the scattering of the nation when they tried to challenge God by building the tower of Babel. Yahweh called Abraham and promised to make him and his descendants a great nation in the land of Israel if he adhered to God as the only God, and also to his commandments. The purpose was to form His own People, to reveal the divine "instructions" or Torah, and thus to bring knowledge of God or holiness, morality, order, and peace to the chaotic world. Through Isaac (son of Abraham and his wife Sarah) and Jacob, the son of Isaac (also known as Israel), the

covenant is continued. Jacob had twelve sons who became the ancestors of the twelve Tribes that formed the nation of Israel.

1.3 JEWISH BACKGROUND

The family was considered to be the smallest unit, which was patriarchal in nature and members were related by bonds of marriage or kinship, ruled by the authority of the father. The family consisted of the father, mother, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, grandparents, other relatives, servants, concubines, sojourners, etc. Solidarity was maintained around the father and retributive justice was applied in terms of corporate personality. Another notable feature is that they encouraged big families for religious and economic reasons. The family functioned as a religious community, preserving religious traditions, passing it on through instructions and worship. The father was the central figure and the mother had special responsibilities, daughters had a subordinate role and sons were of supreme importance to carry on the name of the family. There was co-operative solidarity within the family, especially responsibilities to protect the family's name and honour. Each member had to protect his uprightness of conduct.

Social positions: Women had very little part in public life. They were not noticed and had to wear veils when they ventured out of the house. It was forbidden to look at a married woman or greet her. A wife had to help her husband in his profession, and married women engaged with their husbands in their agricultural duties. Women participated in the synagogue ceremonies and in special gatherings. Women listened and did not teach or preach, and were not allowed to pronounce a blessing.

Racial purity: It was maintained at the time of Christ. Jews kept out of all possibilities of illegal marriages. Only Israelites of legitimate ancestry formed the pure Israel, because they believed that the nation was considered God-given and its purity was God's will. The promise of the age to come was valid only for the pure Israelites.

Divisions in the Society: The rich occupied the places in the court and dominated public life. They had big well-furnished houses, expensive servants, secretaries, etc. The rich offered expensive gifts in the temple. Large sums were given as dowries to their daughters. Representatives of the rich were Merchants, men of *Sanhedrin*, tax collectors, families of the high priests and priestly aristocracy, etc. The middle class people were retail traders, crafts-men, etc. Priests as a whole belonged to this class, except those in Jerusalem who had much wealth and education. The poor people were the slaves and labourers who were considered private property and were auctioned in the market; but they could redeem themselves. There were Jew and Gentile slaves, and the former was not bound to do menial jobs. There were people who lived on chariots. It was meritorious to show hospitality to scribes. This group consisted of the beggars in Jerusalem, workers, unemployed people, the blind, the lame, the crippled, the deaf, and the economically poor.

Check your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for answers

1. Describe the origin of Judaism?

2. Describe the social life and structure of Judaism.

1.4. RELIGIOUS LIFE OF JEWS

God is known as Yehova (YHWH). He is very different from the God of other religions. God is the lord of all things. Judaism is strictly monotheistic. There is only one God and there cannot be another God. God is the one who protects the entire humanity, especially the widows, orphans, and the marginalized. God reveals himself through three ways. 1) Through the media of some techniques, which are through dreams, omens, and astrology. Priests consulted God through these instruments. 2) Through prophetic revelation: through visions by listening to the word of God. 3) Apocalyptic revelation: revelation through mysteries. God reveals himself to human beings. God reveals himself through his nature. It shows God as a compassionate God who saves humanity. In the book of Exodus, God's saving power is made manifest. God saves humanity and he reveals his plans to human beings. The religious beliefs of Judaism are mainly expressed in their prayer book, *Siddar*, a document of public piety. These are religious beliefs shared not only by Rabbis or theologians but by everyone who turns towards God in the humility of his or her heart.

1.5. THE SACRED BOOKS

In the *Torah*, God laid out instructions for life and worship, for his chosen people. The Mishnah is the most important document of Rabbinic Judaism and is based upon traditions. It is essentially a law code and is divided into six major parts called 'Seders' or orders. These are 1. Agricultural law, 2. Sabbath and Festival laws, 3. Family laws, 4. Civil and criminal laws, 5. Laws concerning sacrifices in the cult and 6. Laws concerning purities. The *Talmud* is the second component of the oral Torah, the commentaries to the Mishnah, which explain the meaning and significance of the Mishnah's laws. The great and authoritative commentary to the Mishnah is the Gemara, which is also called Talmud. Ultimately we can say that Torah means law and it consists of the five books of Pentateuch. The contents of the text are the following:

1. The content of creation
2. The covenant of Noah
3. The covenant of Abraham
4. The Exodus
5. The covenant at Sinai and the wandering in the desert.

Torah regulates the life of people at all levels. The Decalogue sums up the fundamental demands of the human consciousness. The law of Moses controls human institutions such as the family, society, economy, etc. There are also laws regarding worship, rituals, and cleanliness. The Torah

covers all aspects of Jewish life and they are different from other codes of law. It is given in the name of God himself and is also called the way of God. It is closely connected with the covenant. Entering into the covenant, God makes Israel his chosen people. He makes promises to them, but also sets down certain conditions. Israel must obey his voice and keep his command. It is the basic element which prepares Israel for the salvation. Its intention is to make Israel a wise people and put them in contact with God. The Torah is an important element to understand the Jewish people. The purpose of the Torah is to liberate the people. Priests are the custodians of the Torah. Priests interpret the message of the Torah to the people.

Now let us look at some of the Jewish writings.

Talmud: The Talmud is the collection of ancient rabbinic writings consisting of two things. They are Mishna and Gemara respectively. It constitutes the basis of religious authority for traditional Judaism. It has two versions. One is the Palestinian Talmud and the second is the Babylonian Talmud. The meaning of 'Talmud' itself is 'learning' or 'instructions'.

Mishna: It is the first section of the Talmud. It consists of a collection of oral interpretations of the rabbis on the Scriptures, and it was compiled in AD. 200. It is written in the Hebrew language.

Gemara: It is the second part of the Talmud. It consists chiefly of commentary on the Mishna. The language of Gemara is Aramaic and it was compiled in AD. 450.

Midrash: It is a type of interpretation and it is a typical way of interpreting texts. It was done by a group of Jews for the Hebrew community, and commented on the Hebrew Scriptures. It was written between AD. 400-1200.

Check your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for answers.

1. Describe the Concept of God in Judaism?
2. What is the Torah in Judaism?

1.6 PROPHETS, FESTIVALS AND PRAYERS

'Prophet' means one who speaks for God and the media between God and human beings. They regard Moses as the authentic representative of God and as the great prophet. The other prophets are Elijah, Elia, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel respectively. They denounce offences against the Torah. Prophets accuse the people when disorder occurs. Prophets cannot tolerate injustice. Their main

duty is to correct the Kings and change their attitudes. When some people make huge amounts of money as profit, the prophets correct them. In a revolutionary way, the Prophets challenge the society.

David rose as king over all Israel and he selected Jerusalem as his political and religious capital. It played a foundational role in the conceptualization and development of the ancient Israelite religion. Solomon the son of David built the temple, and established the Davidic monarchy and the Jerusalem temple as the two primary institutions of ancient Israel or Judah. The temple is the sacred centre of the Israelite state. Religious practices constituted of sacrifices and prayer at the sacred altar. Circumcision was the defining mark of the religious community.

Jewish Festivals:

Passover: It is the 14th day of the 1st month (*Nisan*). God's deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt, where they were in bondage under the Pharaoh, is remembered.

Feast of Unleavened Bread: It is celebrated from the 15th day of *Nisan* until the 21st day. They eat unleavened bread for these seven days, and during these days they make the first of the three trips a Jew has to make to Jerusalem in a year.

Feast of First Fruits: It is celebrated on the first Sunday after *Nisan* 15th. It is accompanied by the offering of the first harvested barley to God.

Feast of Weeks (Pentecost): It is celebrated fifty days after the first Sabbath following the Passover. They make the second of three annual trips to Jerusalem.

Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah): It is celebrated on the first day of the 7th month- *Tishri*. Special trumpets blasts and special offerings are made.

Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur): It is celebrated on the 10th day of the 7th month. It is a day of fasting. Special offerings are made by the high priest to atone the sins of Israel for the full year.

Feast of the Tabernacle. (Booths): It is celebrated on the 15th - 22nd day of the 7th month, and is marked by the beginning of the new agricultural year. The third of the three trips to Jerusalem is made on these days.

Feast of Dedication (lights of Hanukkah): It was instituted around 164 BC, after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. The temple was cleansed after he had desecrated it.

Feast of Purim (Lots): It is celebrated on the 14th and 15th day of the 12th month, *Adar*. It commemorates the time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from extinction.

According to Judaism, human beings are created in the likeness and image of God. It is the cause of his uniqueness in the world. Man has to develop the divine that has been granted to him. Man is assigned with the highest powers of creation. When man sins, the iniquities make him a prisoner. Humans have the freedom to choose between life and death, good and evil. In Judaism there is no myth of sins or original sin but only a man's sin, the sin of an individual. Though man is inclined to sin, he can 'return' to freedom and purity. Because, God in Judaism, forgives iniquity and transgression and sin. (Exo.34:7). The sacrificial services are for purification.

Prayers occupy an important place in the life of a pious Jew. We can say that a pious Jew's life is always encircled by the presence of *YHWH*. This awareness is very much reflected in the life of a pious Jew. The pious Jews affirm that *YHWH* is the creator of the world and the whole universe etc'. *Tefilah* is the ethical prayer. It expresses the idea of human salvation. There is an immense trust in the spiritual possibilities of human beings, profound faith in the justice and goodness of God, and the hope of a better humanity. These are the essential elements in Hebrew prayers.

1.7 JEWISH ETHICS

Judaism speaks of the nearness of God as the ultimate aim, and it teaches that man is never nearer to God than when he responds in love and sympathy to the needs of others. Judaism has always taught that God wishes man to pursue justice and mercy, to have proper regard for his fellow beings, and make his contribution towards the emergence of a better social order. Jewish ethics derives its sanction from God, the author and master of life, and sees its purpose in the hallowing of all life, individual and social. The criterion for ethics is God himself. The Rabbis teach, "just as God is gracious be thou, just as he is called 'compassionate' be thou be compassionate, just as he is called Holy, be thou holy". Man is obliged to make these traits his own to resemble his maker, so far as this is humanly possible.

Concept of Life after Death: The Jewish sacred books speak very little about what happens after death, as Judaism is much more focused on actions than beliefs. According to the Torah and the Talmud, the purpose of life is to fulfill one's duties to God and one's fellow men. Another interesting thing is that the Jews believe that a Messiah will come and rule for ever. They believe that their best king was David. They believe that the messiah is the son of God. They have strong faith in the Messiah who will establish a social order and give a formal blessing. They believe it is *YHWH* who will send somebody (Messiah) to liberate them. They firmly believe that the righteous will rise that day and it will be a time of peace and restoration of the land, and organization of Israel.

The Hebrew word *Olam Ha-Ba* (the world to Come) refers to both the Messianic Age and the Afterlife. According to the Torah, death means rejoining with the ancestors. In an imagery which refers to the finality of death, it says that "the dead are like dust returning to dust". Another image in this connection is a shadowy place called *Sheol*. It is generally a place of darkness and silence. These indicate that the soul continues to exist in some way after death. Regarding the Day of Judgment, where the rewarding or punishing of the dead according to their earthly life will take place, all the dead will be divided into groups. The thoroughly righteous and just will go for everlasting life, in *Gan Eden* (heaven). The wicked will go Gehinnom (hell).

Check your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for answers.

1. What is the ethical concept of the Jews?
2. What is the Jewish idea of life after death?

3. Briefly describe the festivals of Israel?

1.8 LET US SUM UP

Judaism is a religion of the Jews, Hebrews and Israelites. Today, when we discuss Judaism in its strict sense, this is the official religion of Israel and it is the only country where Judaism is the state religion, and the majority of the Jews are staying in this small country. At the same time, there are Jews who live all over the world. The aim of this article is to give some preliminary notion regarding this particular religion and its significance in the present scenario. As we all know, God is the ultimate reality in all religions; the followers of Judaism consider God as the supreme reality that transcends everything. Our main concern in this paper was to provide some and basic insights into one of the world religions, Judaism. The purpose was to illustrate the social positions, religious beliefs, and their firm belief in the coming of the new messiah. The novelty that prevails in the minds of the Jews is that they are the Holy and chosen people of God. Judaism as a monotheistic religion which firmly believes that the righteous will be rewarded and the evil doers will be punished.

1.9 KEY WORDS

Ethical Monotheism	Belief in One God
YHWH, Yehova, Yahweh	the word used by Jews when referring God.
Sanhedrin	meeting place of Jews on special occasions
Siddar	refers to the document of public piety.
Tefilah	it is the ethical prayer.
Gan Eden	it means heaven.
Gehinnom	it means hell.

1.10 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 2 PHILOSOPHY OF JUDAISM

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

Judaism is one of the three Semitic religions and the other two religions, namely Christianity and Islam, have their roots in the Judaic tradition. Although small in number, the influence of Judaism in this world cannot go unnoticed. The aim of this paper is to help the students understand the importance of the Judaic religion, its tenets and principles, and the value system propagated by it, which has largely been incorporated in Islam and Christianity.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Judaism is the religion followed by the Jewish people and it revolves mainly around the Holy Land (Jerusalem). It is a monotheistic religion (belief only in one God). It is more than 3500 years old and was founded by Moses, who is considered to be the greatest of all prophets who brought together in one fold the many tribes of Israel, under a common covenant believed to be between Abraham and God. Today, there are around 14.5 million Jews around the world, mainly settled in Israel and North America. The religion is non-hierarchical and is traditionally organized with the rabbi as the local head. (It may be remembered that a rabbi is not a priest, but a leader). There are several divisions/branches in Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, reformed, etc. and a few other diverse movements like, Zionism, Reconstructionism, Karaite, Judaism etc. Judaism is rich in its sacred writings (*Tanakh*) and is primarily written in Hebrew. The following sections will explain in detail the belief pattern and the philosophy of the Jews.

2.2 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

The essence of Judaism lies in its basic principles, which could be summarized in 13 principles.

God exists: God exists and He is the Creator and Guide of everything that has been created. Only He is the maker of the past, present, and future things.

God is one and unique: God is ONE and there is no one else who is like him or equal to him. There is only ONE God and this God is God who was, is, and will be.

God is incorporeal (spiritual in nature): God has no body. He is Spiritual in nature. He is free from all the properties of matter and therefore, there can be no comparisons to Him whatsoever.

God is eternal: God is the beginning and the end, (the Alpha and the Omega). He is present from eternity.

Prayer is to be directed to God alone: God alone is the appropriate object of worship and prayer. It is not right to pray to any being besides Him.

The words of the (Hebrew) prophets are true: All the words said by the prophets are true. They have prophesized what God had commanded them to do and so there can be no falsity in them.

Moses was the greatest prophet, and his prophecies are true: Of all the prophets, the chief and the greatest of all prophets was Moses. There was none greater than him either before him or after him.

The Torah was given to Moses: The Torah (both oral and written) was given to Moses, who is THE teacher for all the Jews.

There will be no other Torah other than the one revealed to Moses: The Torah cannot be exchanged or changed, because it was revealed to Moses by God.

God knows the thoughts and deeds of human beings: God, who is the Creator of all humans, knows all the actions, attitudes and thoughts of human beings. A reference about this is found in Psalms 33:15 "Who fashioned the hearts of them all, Who comprehends all their actions"

God will reward the good and punish the wicked: The good are those who keep God's commandments and these people will be rewarded; while those who disobey the commandments will be punished.

The Messiah will come at the proper time: God has promised to send the Messiah and He will keep His promise and the Messiah will come at the right time. (Only God knows the right time)

The dead will be resurrected: When God deems it right, then the dead will be resurrected and they will glorify Him forever.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What are the principles of faith?

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2) What is the relationship between life and God according to Judaic beliefs?

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2.3 CONCEPTION OF GOD

Judaism is based on strict monotheism. This doctrine expresses the belief in one indivisible God. The concepts of multiple gods (polytheism) or of a God taking multiple forms (for example the Trinity) are contrary to their belief. The prayer par excellence is the *Shema Yisrael*: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One". It is also translated as "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is unique/alone" (Deuteronomy 6:4). (Wikipedia: *Jewish_principles_of_faith*)

So the Jews conceive God as eternal, the creator of the universe, and the source of morality. God has the power to intervene in the world. So God is an actual ontological reality, and is not merely a projection of the human psyche. Maimonides, for instance, describes God as: "A Being, perfect in every possible way, who is the ultimate cause of all existence. All existence depends on God and is derived from God." (Wikipedia: *God_in_Judaism*)

God is the creator of the universe: According to the Biblical account, the world was created by God in six days. While many Haredi Jews take this literally, most of the Modern Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform authorities feel that the six days should be interpreted as "stages" in the creation of the universe. In this way Judaism would feel out of place with the current scientific model that states that the universe is about 13.7 billion years old. (Wikipedia: *Jewish_principles_of_faith*)

God is One: The idea of God as a duality or trinity is heretical – "it is considered akin to polytheism" as *Wikipedia* holds. "[God], the Cause of all, is one. This does not mean one as in one of a pair, nor one like a species (which encompasses many individuals), nor one as in an object that is made up of many elements, nor as a single simple object that is infinitely divisible. Rather, God is a unity unlike any other possible unity." This is referred to in the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4): "Hear Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one." (Wikipedia: *God_in_Judaism*)

God is all-powerful: Orthodox Jews believe in the omnipotent, omniscient God. Thus, most rabbinic works present God as having the properties of omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence (that is, being all good). Here the issue of theodicy or problem of evil comes up, especially after the extreme horrors of the Holocaust when several theological responses surfaced. The central questions they address are whether and how God is all-powerful and all-good, given the existence of evil in the world, particularly the Holocaust, which eliminated about six million Jews.

God is personal: Most of classical Judaism views God as personal. According to them, humans have a relationship with God; God has a relationship with us. Much of the *midrash*, and many Jewish prayers imagine God as caring about humanity just as we care about God.

2.4 THE KABBALAH (MYSTICISM)

The mystical tradition in Judaism or *Kabbalah*, contains further elaborations about God, which are not accepted by all Jews. For example it admits the possibility of reincarnation, which is generally rejected by non-mystical Jewish theologians and philosophers. It also believes in a triple soul, of which the lowest level (*nefesh* or animal life) dissolves into the elements, the middle layer (*ruach* or intellect) goes to *Gan Eden* (Paradise) while the highest level (*neshamah* or spirit) seeks union with God. (Wikipedia: *Jewish_principles_of_faith*)

Judaism has considered "*Tikkun Olam*" (or Repairing the world) as a fundamental reason for God's creating the world. The Jews are also called to "repair the world." Therefore, the concept of "life after death" is not encouraged as the sole motivating factor for human action. Indeed it is held that one can attain closeness to God even in this world, through moral and spiritual perfection. The primary written work in the Kabbalistic tradition is the Zohar. Normally, rabbis discouraged teaching this material to anyone under the age of 40, since they may misinterpret it without sufficient grounding in the basics.

2.5 THE CONCEPT OF THE CHOSEN RACE

One of the fundamental features of Judaism is their notion of a chosen race. God chose them through a unique covenant with God; the description of this covenant is the Torah itself. Contrary to popular belief, Jewish people do not simply say that "God chose the Jews" from among other people. Such a claim is made nowhere in the Tanakh (the Jewish Bible). In fact, such a claim could imply that God loves only the Jewish people or that only Jews can have a heavenly reward. The claim actually made is that the Jews were chosen for a specific mission or for a particular duty: to be a light unto the nations. (Wikipedia: *Jewish_principles_of_faith*)

Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, former Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue of Great Britain, describes the mainstream Jewish view on this issue: "Yes, I do believe the chosen people concept as affirmed by Judaism in its holy writ, its prayers, and its millennial tradition. In fact, I believe that every people and indeed, in a more limited way, every individual is 'chosen' or destined for some distinct purpose in advancing the designs of Providence. Only, some fulfill their mission and others do not. Maybe the Greeks were chosen for their unique contributions to art and philosophy, the Romans for their pioneering services in law and government, the British for bringing parliamentary rule into the world, and the Americans for piloting democracy in a pluralistic society. The Jews were chosen by God to be 'peculiar unto Me' as the pioneers of religion and morality; that was and is their national purpose." (Wikipedia: *Jews_as_a_chosen_people*)

2.6 THE MESSIANIC AGE

The Jews believe that there will be a Jewish Messiah known as *Mashiach*, a king who will rule the Jewish people independently and according to Jewish law. It may be noted that the Jewish vision of Messianic times has nothing much in common with the Christian understanding. Jewish views of the Messiah are as derived from the Davidic line or the Messianic era.

Terminology: "messianic" and "eschatology": In the context of "Messianic Age", the earliest meaning of the word "messianic" is derived from the notion of *Yemot HaMashiach* meaning "The Days of the Messiah", that is, the Jewish Messiah, meaning "related to the Messiah." Messiah comes from a Hebrew word meaning "The Anointed One", i.e., a person who is "specially appointed and empowered". Originally this phrase--the "anointed one"--referred to

either a king who was anointed with Holy anointing oil as part of what might be understood to be his coronation ceremony. Eschatology is an area of religious scholarship that deals with prophecies about "the end of the current age" of human civilization. (Wikipedia: *Messianic Age*)

Description of the Messianic Era: According to Jewish tradition, the Messianic Era will be one of universal peace and harmony, an era free of strife and hardship, and one conducive to the furthestmost of the knowledge of the Creator. The theme of the Messiah ushering in an era of global peace is succinctly captured by Isaiah: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift sword against nation and they will no longer study warfare (Isaiah 2:4)." This is one of the most quoted passages from the Bible. Maimonides describes the Messianic Era as follows: "And at that time there will be no hunger or war, no jealousy or rivalry, for the good will be plentiful, and all delicacies available as dust. The entire occupation of the world will be only to know God... the people of Israel will be of great wisdom; they will perceive the esoteric truths and comprehend their Creator's wisdom as is the capacity of human. As it is written (Isaiah 11:9): 'For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea'." (Wikipedia)

Arrival of the Messianic Era: According to the Talmud, the Midrash, and the ancient Kabbalistic work, the Zohar, the Messiah must arrive before the year 6000 from the time of creation. (According to Orthodox Jewish belief, the Hebrew calendar dates to the time of creation. The year 2010 corresponds to the year 5770 from creation). The Midrash comments: "Six eons for going in and coming out, for war and peace. The seventh eon is entirely Shabbat and rest for life. The Kabbalistic tradition maintains that each of the seven days of the week, which are based upon the seven days of creation, correspond to the seven millennia of creation. The tradition teaches that the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath day of rest, corresponds to the seventh millennium, the age of universal 'rest' - the Messianic Era. The seventh millennium perforce begins with the year 6000, and is the latest time the Messiah can come. Such statements, obviously, must not be taken literally, but symbolically.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What are the qualities of God according to the Jews?

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2) Explain God as the creator of the Universe.

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3) What are the salient features in the Kabbalah?

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2.7 ETHICS

The soul is pure at birth. Humans are born morally pure. Therefore, Judaism has no concept analogous to original sin. Judaism affirms that people are born with a *yetzer ha-tov*, a tendency to do good, and with a *yetzer ha-ra*, a tendency to do evil. Thus human beings have free will and can choose the path in life that they will take. The rabbis even recognize a positive value to the *yetzer ha-ra*: without the *yetzer ha-ra* there would be no civilization or other fruits of human labor. The implication, therefore, is that *yetzer ha-tov* and *yetzer ha-ra* are best understood not only as moral categories of good and evil but as the inherent conflict within human beings between selfless and selfish orientations. (Wikipedia: *Jewish_principles_of_faith*)

Judaism recognizes two classes of "sin": offenses against other people, and offenses against God. Offenses against God may be understood as violation of a contract or the covenant (between God and the Jews). The sins can be atoned for. A classical rabbinic work, *Avot* de-Rabbi Natan, tells a story. Once, when Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was walking in Jerusalem with Rabbi Yehosua, they arrived where the Temple in Jerusalem now stood in ruins. "Woe to us," cried Rabbi Yehosua, "for this house where atonement was made for Israel's sins now lies in ruins!" Answered Rabban Yochanan, "We have another, equally important source of atonement, the practice of *gemiluth hasadim* (loving kindness), as it is stated: "I desire loving kindness and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6). Also, the Babylonian Talmud teaches that "Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Eleazar both explain that as long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel, but now, one's table atones [when the poor are invited as guests]." Similarly, the Jewish liturgy holds that prayer, repentance and *tzedakah* (charity) atone for sin.

2.8 REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

The mainstream Jewish view is that God will reward those who observe His commandments and punish those who intentionally transgress them.

According to the Talmud, God judges whether we have followed His commandments and to what extent. Those who do not "pass the test" go to a purifying place (sometimes referred to as *Gehinnom*, i.e. Hell, which is temporary) to "learn their lesson". There is, however, for the most part, no eternal damnation. The vast majority of souls only go to that reforming place for a limited amount of time. Certain people are spoken of as having "no part in the world to come", but this appears to mean that they will be annihilated rather than being tormented eternally. (Wikipedia *Jewish_principles_of_faith*)

Some philosophers, like Maimonides, believed that God did not actually give rewards and punishments as such. According to them these were beliefs of judgment and were necessary for the masses to believe, in order to maintain a structured society and to encourage the observance of Judaism. However, if we learn the Torah properly, we would know the higher truths.

According to this view, the human reward is that if a person perfected his intellect to the highest degree, then the part of his intellect that connected to God – the active intellect – would be immortalized and enjoy the "Glory of the Presence" for all eternity. The punishment would simply be that no part of one's intellect be immortalized with God.

2.9 MUSSAR MOVEMENT

Origin of the movement: The Hebrew word *mussar*, meaning "tradition," usually refers to Jewish ethics in general, or more commonly to the Jewish ethics education movement that developed in the 19th century among the Orthodox Jewish European community. This movement began among non-Hasidic Jews as a response to the social changes brought about by The Enlightenment and afterwards. The strong sentiments of anti-Semitism, assimilation of many Jews into Christianity, and the poor living conditions of many Jews caused severe tension among them. Therefore, many religious Jews felt that their way of life was slipping away from them, observance of traditional Jewish law and custom was on the decline, and what they felt was worst of all, many of those who remained loyal to the tradition were losing their emotional connection to the traditional inner meaning.

The Mussar (also written as Musar) movement seeks to revive Jewish tradition. It is a path of contemplative practices and exercises that have evolved over the past thousand years to help an individual soul to pinpoint and then to break through the barriers that surround and obstruct the flow of inner light in our lives. Mussar is a treasury of techniques and understandings that offers immensely valuable guidance for the journey of our lives. The goal of Mussar practice is to release the light of holiness that lives within the soul. According to them, the roots of all our thoughts and actions can be traced to the depths of the soul, beyond the reach of the light of consciousness, and so the methods Mussar provides include meditations, guided contemplations, exercises, and chants that are all intended to penetrate down to the darkness of the subconscious, bringing about radical change at the root of our nature (Wikipedia *Musar_movement*).

Contemporary revival of the Mussar Movement: Many of the Jews involved in the Mussar movement were killed. Some, however, settled in Israel. Many others of the Mussar movement settled in the United States and were involved in a variety of Jewish institutions.

2.10 BELIEFS ON AFTERLIFE

Jewish sacred texts and literature have little to say about what happens after death. But Judaism is focused more on actions than beliefs, so it is actually to be expected that its prophets and sages have not spent as much time on speculations about the world to come as elaborations on the Jewish law to be performed in this life. The Torah and Talmud alike focus on the purpose of earthly life, which is to fulfill one's duties to God and one's fellow human beings. Succeeding at this brings reward, failing at it brings punishment. There is not much talk on rewards and punishments after death. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word *Olam Ha-Ba* ("the world to come") is used for both the messianic age and the afterlife. This word is very important and something to look forward to. An oral Torah says, "This world is like a lobby before the *Olam Ha-Ba*. Prepare yourself in the lobby so that you may enter the banquet hall." A popular exhortation to contemporary audience is: "This world is only like a hotel. The world to come is like a home." ("Jewish Beliefs on the Afterlife" 2004)

The Afterlife in the Torah

For the most part, the Torah describes the afterlife in vague terms, many of which may simply be figurative ways of speaking about death as it is observed by the living. An early common theme is that death means rejoining one's ancestors. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and other patriarchs are "gathered to their people" after death. In contrast, the wicked are "cut off from their people." Other concrete imageries emphasize the finality of death: the dead are like dust returning to dust or water poured out on the ground ("Jewish Beliefs on the Afterlife" 2004). Another recurring biblical image of the afterlife is as a shadowy place called *Sheol*, a place of darkness and silence, located in low places. Gradually, the concept of conscious life after death begins to develop in the Torah.

Tehiyat Hameitim: Resurrection of the Dead

Sophisticated concepts of the resurrection of the dead and afterlife seem to have entered Judaism under Hellenistic influence after the Torah was completed. It became one of the fundamental beliefs in rabbinic Judaism, the intellectual successors of the Pharisees. The Sadducees, familiar to New Testament readers as those who denied the resurrection, were an exception. In fact, the resurrection of the dead is one of Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Belief, and the frequently-recited Jewish prayer contains several references to the resurrection. How this resurrection might occur has been a matter of speculation in later years. Rabbi Hiyya ben Joseph suggested that "the dead will come up through the ground and rise up in Jerusalem... and the righteous will rise up fully clothed". Saadia ben Yosef al-Fayyumi (892-942 C.E.), a prominent Jewish scholar, offered this explanation: "Even fire, which causes things to be burned so quickly, merely effects the separation of the parts of a thing...causing the dust part to return to ashes....It does not however, bring about the annihilation of anything. Nor is it conceivable that anyone should have the power to annihilate anything to the point where it would vanish completely except its Creator, who produced it out of nothing." ("Jewish Beliefs on the Afterlife" 2004)

Judgment

How is one's destination decided? Judaism believes in a judgement, according to one's actions. The School of Shammai offered the following description: There will be three groups on the Day of Judgment: one of thoroughly righteous people, one of thoroughly wicked people, and one of people in between. The first group will be immediately inscribed for everlasting life; the second group will be doomed in *Gehinnom* [Hell], as it says, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to reproaches and everlasting abhorrence" [Daniel 12:2], the third will go down to *Gehinnom* and squeal and rise again, as it says, "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on My name and I will answer them" [Zechariah 13:9] ("Jewish Beliefs on the Afterlife" 2004) On the other hand, the school of Hillel suggested a more merciful view, in which the middle group are sent directly to *Gan Eden* (Heaven) instead of *Gehinnom* after death. Going further, Rabbi Hanina added that all who go down to *Gehinnom* will go up again, "except adulterers, those who put their fellows to shame in public, and those who call their fellows by an obnoxious name." ("Jewish Beliefs on the Afterlife" 2004)

Gan Eden: Heaven

Traditional Judaism includes belief in both heaven and hell, but is understood differently from Christianity. In Judaism, the eternal destination for the righteous is *Gan Eden* (the Garden of Eden), which is a place of great joy and peace. Some of the Talmudic imagery for heaven are: sitting at golden banquet tables or at stools of gold, enjoying lavish banquets or celebrating the Sabbath, enjoying sunshine and sexual intercourse. On the other hand, other thinkers have offered a more spiritual view of *Gad Eden*. One Jewish author thinks that in heaven “there will be neither eating nor drinking; no procreation of children or business transactions, no envy or hatred or rivalry; but sitting enthroned, their crowns on their heads, enjoying the Shechinah [Divine Presence]”. Such a spiritual enjoyment in heaven is confirmed by Maimonides, who holds: “In the world to come, there is nothing corporeal, and no material substance; there are only souls of the righteous without bodies -- like the ministering angels... The righteous attain to a knowledge and realization of truth concerning God to which they had not attained while they were in the murky and lowly body.” (“Jewish Beliefs on the Afterlife” 2004)

Gehinnom: Hell

The Jewish concept of the afterlife for the wicked is not that elaborately reflected on. Known as *Gehinnom* (*Gehenna* in Yiddish) or *Sheo'l*, it has its foundations in the dark pit described in the Torah. They are related to an actual place of pagan cult and rituals, including burning children. *Gehinnom* is the destiny of unrighteous Jews and Gentiles. According to some, the souls in *Gehinnom* are punished only up to twelve months. Many believe that after an appropriate period of purification, the righteous go to *Gan Eden*. But the really wicked endure the full year of punishment and then are either annihilated or continue to be punished. (“Jewish Beliefs on the Afterlife” 2004) So about an eternal Hell, Judaism does not speak openly and emphatically.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) Does Judaism place importance in ethics and moral living? Substantiate your answer.

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2) Is God a judge in Judaism?

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2.11 LET US SUM UP

We have seen some of the Jewish beliefs, thoughts, and philosophical reflections. It must be noted that the philosophical reflections are based on concrete experiences and imageries. It also focuses on the positive, rather than on the nihilistic side of life. This can be traced to their world-view which is primarily tribal and primeval. Therefore, we have not gone into well-defined and conceptually demanding notions on the Jewish religion and tradition.

2.12 KEY WORDS

Covenant: The central theme of Judaism is the covenant between the Jews and God. This was first made by Abraham, from whom the Jewish believe they came. This covenant was renewed with Abraham's son Isaac, and Abraham's grandson Jacob. The covenant was extended as Moses was given the Ten Commandments and other laws. From this, the Jews learn how they should lead their lives. The covenant involves that the Jews are a chosen people, giving them certain rights as well as responsibilities.

Eschatology: Jewish eschatology is concerned with the Jewish Messiah, afterlife, and the revival of the dead. Eschatology, generically, is the area of theology and philosophy concerned with the final events in the history of the world, the ultimate destiny of humanity, and related concepts.

Kabbalah: (Hebrew: *Qabbalah* lit. "receiving"; *Qabala*) is a discipline and school of thought concerned with the mystical aspect of Rabbinic Judaism. It is a set of esoteric teachings meant to explain the relationship between an eternal and mysterious Creator and the mortal and finite universe (His creation).

Messiah: The Hebrew word *Mashiach* (or *Moshiach*) refers to the Jewish idea of the Messiah. Like the English word Messiah, *Mashiach* means anointed. The Jewish messiah refers to a human leader, physically descended from the Davidic line, who will rule and unite the people of Israel and will usher in the Messianic Age of global and universal peace.

Mussar: The movement *Mussar* is a path of contemplative practices and exercises that have evolved over the past thousand years to help an individual soul to pinpoint and then to break through the barriers that surround and obstruct the flow of inner light in our lives. *Mussar* is a treasury of techniques and understandings that offers immensely valuable guidance for the journey of lives. The goal of *Mussar* practice is to release the light of holiness that lives within the soul.

Rabbi: is a religious teacher. The basic form of the rabbi developed in the Pharisaic and Talmudic era, when learned teachers assembled to codify Judaism's written and oral laws.

Shema: are the first two words of a section of the Torah that is a centrepiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. The first verse encapsulates the monotheistic essence of Judaism: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one," found in Deuteronomy 6:4

2.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 3 INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

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- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Christianity: A brief Historical Introduction
- 3.3 Some Important Persons
- 3.4 Some Core Beliefs
- 3.5 Final Remarks
- 3.6 Let us Sum up
- 3.7 Key Words
- 3.8 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

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

3.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

3.2 CHRISTIANITY: A BRIEF HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

At Pentecost (fifty days after the Passover) his followers in Jerusalem experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began speaking in different languages and preaching the gospel of their risen Lord with great enthusiasm and dedication. That is regarded as the beginning of the Church or the community of Christians. Peter and James assumed leadership of the Jerusalem Church until its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE (Sprunger 2010). The early Christian Church was not a highly organized body with an established creed; therefore, it was exposed to a variety of beliefs, including some heresies (or false doctrines). For example, the Gnostics

believed the spirit was good and that flesh was evil. Consequently, they denied that Christ could have been truly human. Jesus was not really born of the flesh and there was no resurrection of the flesh. Marcionism was another heresy started by Marcion, who declared that the God of the Old Testament was a cruelly legalistic and merciless deity and that Christians should discard the Old Testament and follow asceticism and celibacy, and scorn the world.

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

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

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

The most radical of the Protestant groups were the Anabaptists in Switzerland and the Netherlands, who vowed to discard everything that was not expressly found in the New Testament. These radicals gave rise to various groups like Mennonites, Amish, Quakers, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Unitarians. Later among the Protestants, social concerns resulted in the advent of the Salvation Army, the Young Men's Christian Association, etc. The

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

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

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

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

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2. What did the heresy Montanism teach?

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3.3 SOME IMPORTANT PERSONS

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

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

Peter and Paul

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

Constantine the Great

Constantine was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity. Constantine was born in Nis, which is now Serbia. In 312 AD, according to legends, right before a major battle, Jesus appeared to him in a dream, giving him a sign that he will be victorious. He won the battle and Constantine looked upon Jesus as the deliverer of victory. Constantine ended the persecution of Christians by issuing the Edict of Milan, which ordered the people to live peacefully with Christians in the Roman Empire. He built numerous churches within the Roman Empire and was

eventually baptized before his death. Slowly, Christianity which was earlier persecuted by the Roman Empire, became the official religion of the empire. This has led to the rapid spread of Christianity, including the Christianization of Europe.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. Which is the cornerstone of the Christian faith?

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2. Who is St. Paul?

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3.4 SOME CORE BELIEFS

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

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

- he was born of a virgin mother without the agency of a man
- he existed before time began

- he did wondrous signs, healings and miracles
- he chose disciples to establish and promote a new religion over and above the religion of the Hebrews
- he never sinned at any stage in his life
- he died an agonizing sacrificial death to atone or make up for human depravity
- after his death he descended into hell; he was then raised from death by God to enable him to return to heaven
- he visited his former disciples on earth and then ascended into heaven where he remains
- he will one day return to earth to judge the living and the dead

The Doctrine of the Trinity

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

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

The Bible as the Word of God

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

The Creed of Constantinople

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

Modern English Version of the Creed of Constantinople

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

Resurrection of the Body

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

The Church as the Community of the Faithful

All the Christians believe that Jesus founded the Church to carry on his vision and message by Peter and other apostles. The church is called to live out the values of love, forgiveness, equality, justice, and brotherhood, the values taught by Jesus. The Church, as a community of the faithful, supports each other and brings the community closer to God. The leaders of the Church are specially chosen by the people and by God himself. The Catholics believe that Jesus assigned to Peter the responsibility of establishing the Christian church. Peter traveled to Rome where he was the first pope. At his death, his work was continued by a continuous succession of popes. The 1st century CE popes were St Peter (30-67 CE, who was succeeded by Linus (67-76), Cletus (76-88), etc. So the Roman Catholic Church was a fully functioning organization with authority centered at Rome, as early as the middle of the 1st century. "History proves that from that time

[of Peter] on, both in the East and the West, the successor of Peter was acknowledged to be the supreme head of the [Christian] Church." Jesus' Apostles ordained bishops, who in turn ordained the next generation of bishops. This continuous line of ordination, called the apostolic succession, has continued down to the present day. Thus the authority for the ordination of a new bishop today could theoretically be traced back as far as the individual Apostles, except that accurate records were not kept in the early decades of Christianity (Robinson 2008).

Eucharist and other Sacraments

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

Eschatology as the Final Fulfilment

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

Generally Christians also believe that salvation comes from God. But they believe that it is channeled through church sacraments to sinful but repentant persons. Liberal Christians generally interpret hell symbolically, not as an actual place. They reject the concept of a loving God having created a Hell - a place of eternal torment even for a few humans. They believe that all human being will ultimately enjoy the loving presence of God in heaven. By and large the general theological agreement is that there will be a "new heaven and new earth" or a "new creation" where everything on earth will be transformed by the grace of God. Here the emphasis is less on the sins of the individuals, and more on the abundance of God's Grace.

3.5 FINAL REMARKS

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

Indian Roots of Christianity

It may be noted that Christianity, though a minority of only 2.4% of the population, has been in India since its very beginning. According to tradition, the Apostle Thomas, who was one of the

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

Materialistic Religion

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

Josemaria Escrivá, a Spanish Catholic leader, criticized those who "have tried to present the Christian way of life as something exclusively spiritual, proper to pure, extraordinary people, who remain aloof from the contemptible things of this world, or at most tolerate them as something necessarily attached to the spirit, while we live on this earth. When things are seen in this way, churches become the setting par excellence of the Christian life. And being a Christian means going to church, taking part in sacred ceremonies, being taken up with ecclesiastical matters, in a kind of segregated world, which is considered to be the ante-chamber of heaven, while the ordinary world follows its own separate path." (Wikipedia) Instead, he affirmed the "high value of the material." According to him, "Authentic Christianity which professes the resurrection of all flesh has always quite logically opposed 'dis-incarnation,' without fear of being judged materialistic. We can, therefore, rightfully speak of a *Christian materialism*, which is boldly opposed to those materialisms which are blind to the spirit." Pope John Paul II added: "There is nothing that is outside of the concern of Christ. Speaking with theological rigor ... one cannot say that there are things — good, noble or even indifferent — which are exclusively profane; for the Word of God has made his dwelling the sons of men, he was hungry and thirsty, worked with his hands, knew friendship and obedience, experience sorrow and death."

3.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have seen the importance of research and research methodology in fostering knowledge. We dealt with the process of research and the tools of research. Then we saw how as

a scientific technique, research methodology leads to scientifically verifiable results helping us to solve problems efficiently.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers

1. What does the doctrine of Trinity teach?

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2. When did the apostle Thomas come to India?

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3.7 KEYWORDS

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

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

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

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

3.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 4 PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIANITY

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

What this present unit proposes is a Philosophy of Christianity. A course on the 'Philosophy of Christianity' would mean understanding how the Christian religion looks at world, man, and God. Who is man in Christianity? Why was human life created, sustained? Where is human life destined? What is the understanding of God in Christianity? What is World? What is the relationship between world, man and God?

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Of the two terms that constitute the title 'Philosophy of Christianity', we are familiar with the word 'Philosophy', and we have a basic understanding of its scope and importance. The second term 'Christianity' may require a brief introduction. Christianity, a monotheistic major world religion, is an offshoot of Judaism. It began as a Jewish reform movement after the Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension of Jesus Christ and the Pentecost event, in *circa* 30 CE. Christianity took a systematized form as 'historical Christianity' through a triple combination: Jewish faith, Greek thought, and the conversion of a great part of the Roman Empire. Greek philosophy played a primal role in the formulation and interpretation of the Christian doctrines. But these doctrines of Greek inspiration were founded upon the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

The life and teachings of Jesus as well as the experiences of his apostles (a select few numbering 12, chosen by Jesus), are found in a group of texts commonly known as the *New Testament*. This corpus along with the Jewish Scriptures (referred to as *Old Testament*) became the sacred Scripture, the *Bible* of Christianity. Considered as divinely inspired, these sacred texts have been a constant source of critical interpretation and contemplation. The *New Testament* does not contradict the Jewish Scriptures. Rather it continues, fulfills and perfects it. From *Genesis* (the first book of the *Old Testament*) to *Revelation* (the last book of the *New Testament*) it is the same manifestation of God which is continuously at work.

4.2 CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIANITY

The distinction between ‘Christian Philosophy’ and ‘Philosophy of Christianity’ is subtle. Christian philosophy refers to a system of thought inspired by Christian beliefs, concepts, and doctrines. A philosophy does not become Christian just because it speaks of Christianity, or attempts to justify it. Rather, when philosophical thinking stems from the fundamental belief in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, when it is developed through Christian tradition, when its identity is distinctively Christian, then it is termed as Christian philosophy. In other words, in Christian philosophy there is an intrinsic relationship between Christian revelation and the philosophical knowledge which results. Philosophy of Christianity on the other hand, is philosophy of the Christian religion. Just as other religions, Christianity too has a particular world view distinct from other religions. Its perceptions of God, world, and man, of what is good, what is sacred, what is real, are specific, unique, and exceptional of its kind, and totally unlike the metaphysical content of other religious traditions. A Philosophy of Christianity explains, expounds, and analyses the concepts and belief systems of Christianity, the phenomena of religious experience, and the activities of worship on which these belief systems rest. There is thus a vital relationship between these two. The Philosophy of Christianity is founded, and is dependent on Christian philosophy. Though the Christian religion is based on Scripture, on tradition as well as on doctrines, Christian philosophy is not static but dynamic. The interpretation of the Bible is never finished; each age seeks new ways to understand the sacred books. The evolution in thought is clearly evident in the history of Christian philosophy.

4.3 DIFFICULTIES IN FORMULATING A PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIANITY

Existence of different denominations in Christianity: Like in many of the major world religions, Christianity too has different denominations, the chief of them being Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican. Their common element is: Jesus Christ, his life and teachings as it is promulgated in the *New Testament*. But there are major differences in their theological beliefs. They differ in their outlook on: Religious authority (Creed and confessions, the books in the Bible, the sources of doctrine); God and Spirits (the Trinity, the Nature of Jesus Christ, Mary the mother of Jesus, Angels, Satan); Sin and Salvation (Human Nature, Body and Soul, Evil, Free Will, Atonement, Predestination, Sin and its corruptive effects, Means of Salvation, Grace, Sacraments, Eschatology, Judgment, Heaven, Hell); Liturgical practices; Ethical teachings and views (marriage, divorce and remarriage, abortion, euthanasia). The difficulty of formulating a Philosophy of Christianity lies in their different outlooks.

Prevalence of various trends in the Philosophy of Christianity: This is due to the direct influence of philosophies of the country where Christianity is practised. Thus depending on the prevailing trends, Christian philosophy will have overtones of existentialism, scientism, phenomenology, feminism, option for the poor and the marginalized, etc.

Evolution in Christian Philosophy: Christian Philosophy, as stated earlier, is not static, but dynamic. The different readings and the different interpretations of the Bible have in turn given birth to different doctrines. The change in thought could also be the result of scientific discoveries or of interaction with non-Christian cultures. Thus we have Early Christian and

Patristic philosophy (Apostolic Fathers, Pre-Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers), Scholastic philosophy, Renaissance and Reformation Christian philosophy, Modern and Contemporary Christian philosophy, and Post-modern Christian philosophy. In spite of these difficulties it is possible to identify the essentials in Christianity. The ontology of Christianity is unique and is founded on the distinction between the uncreated Being and the created being, an original concept of Revelation and a Trinitarian God, a doctrine of the relations between God and His creation. The cosmology of Christianity negates the deification of the universe. The created universe is real and dependent on its Creator God for its existence, nature, and history. The anthropology of Christianity is original, distinct from the ancient concepts of Orphism, Gnosticism, or Platonism. Deeply embedded in the metaphysical tradition of biblical anthropology, it affirms human freedom, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life.

4.4 THE CONCEPT OF GOD

In Christianity, there is but One Supreme, Omnipotent (all powerful), Omniscient (all knowing), Omnipresent (always present) God, and this God is Being. The understanding of God as One Supreme has its roots in Judaism, in the words of the *Old Testament*: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” (*Deuteronomy* 6:4-5). This understanding of God has continued in the other two Semitic and monotheistic religions: Christianity and Islam. The God of Christianity is with attributes or characteristics. He is fundamentally Being, Truth, and Love.

God is self-existent: This assertion recognises: 1) God’s absolute ontological independence. God does not depend on anything or on any being for existence or for characteristics. God is not created, nor can He be constituted. God cannot be destroyed. God is an unconditioned, all-conditioning reality. God *IS*. 2) God is eternal, that is, God exists without beginning or end. He is Infinite. The medieval philosopher Anselm of Canterbury (c.1033-1109), famous for his ontological argument for the existence of God, states: “Indeed You exist neither yesterday nor today nor tomorrow but are absolutely outside all time. For yesterday and today and tomorrow are completely in time; however, You, though nothing can be without You, are nevertheless not in place or time but all things are in You. For nothing contains You, but You contain all things.” (*Proslogion*, 19).

The Infinite creates the finite: God is ‘Creator’. God creates everything that exists out of nothing – *Creatio ex nihilo*. The infinite created the finite through His Word (*Logos*), that is, God uttered the world into being. God spoke and the world, with everything in it, including humankind, came to be. This creation out of nothing implies: 1) Distinction: God and the World are not one. The two are distinct from each other. 2) Inequality: The Creator (God) and the Creation (World) are not equal in relation. This means that human beings will always remain subservient to God. Human beings can never become God; they will never become God. 3) Dependence: Human beings depend upon God every moment of their lives. This dependence is manifested through the prayers, rites and practices that the human being directs towards God. The human being exists by the grace of God, the Giver of Life. The Early Church Father, Irenaeus of Lyon writes: “There is one God alone, who has created all by His *Logos*, who has set all in order, and has made it out of nothing. ... It is He who has made the world, it is He who has formed man, it is He, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, above whom

there is no other God, nor Principle, nor Power, nor Fullness; it is He, the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ” (*Adversus Haereses* 1, 22,1)

God is a Personal God: God is a transcendent, divine ‘Thou’. In analogical discourse about the divine, Christianity resorts to the masculine, the paternal ‘Father’, and not to the impersonal ‘It’, or to abstract, general terms such as ‘Force’. The personal mode of encounter is evident both from the Biblical, as well as devotional and theological literature. It is seen in the manner Jesus addressed God. God is ‘*Abba*’ – Father. This figure of fatherhood with its paternal characteristics of love, mercy, care, and concern for his children, became the earthly image with which to think of God.

God is a ‘Person’, and Relation: Within the Christian perception and experience, God is Trinity. God is ‘Father’, ‘Son’, and ‘Holy Spirit’. This does not mean that there are three gods. It means, God is One but not solitary or in isolation. Rather, there are three distinct divine persons in One God. The three divine persons are consubstantial, that is they are one in substance or essence or nature. Their distinction from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another: “In the relational names of the Persons the Father is related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both” (Eleventh Council of Toledo, held in the year 675). There is no opposition of relationship: “Because of that unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son.” (Council of Florence, 1442). The affirmation of God as Trinity implies that God is in active and dynamic relationship with His people.

God is Love, Truth: God’s unconditional and universal love for human kind is attested many times in the New Testament, along with the attributes of goodness and mercy. He wills the ultimate good of His creatures, and acts to bring it about. God loves all persons. And therefore humans can love God, and should love one another. This possibility of triangular loving – God loving humans, humans loving God, and humans loving one another – has been expressed by Jesus Christ, a man in whom dwelt the fullness of divinity and humanity. A man crucified and who died, but who came out of his tomb alive. Through Jesus Christ, a personal relationship has been established between Christians and God. This kind of interpersonal relationship is new in the history of human kind. Henceforth, for all eternity, God has become reality. God is with humans, God is in humans, for God has revealed Himself concretely in Jesus who lived among us.

God is holy (*Kadosh* in Hebrew): The idea of holy implies differentiation, a setting apart from the profane, the common, and the habitual. God is holy in the dual sense that He is unique, and that He is morally perfect. Because God is unique He alone is worthy of being worshipped. The appropriateness of worship is built into the nature of the Creator/creature distinction, which cannot be dissolved. The moral perfection of God expresses God’s absolute separation from evil.

God is providential: God preserves, maintains, and governs the course of history, moving it toward an end (the Kingdom of God). This implies that time and the historical process are one-directional (not cyclical), real, and not illusory.

God comes to meet man: God has acted in history at real times and in real places to reveal Himself to real persons, and to act on their behalf. Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, is the direct revelation of God. He is the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among humans.

4.5. INCARNATION

Incarnation (Latin *incarnatio*: *in* : in, into + *caro* [genitive *carnis*] : flesh), meaning ‘to make flesh’ or ‘to become flesh’, is one of the central tenets of Christianity. It teaches that God out of sheer generosity became man in the person of Jesus Christ and lived among humans: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (*Gospel of John* 1:14a). This embodiment of the divine principle as a human being, as one of us, is a unique once and for all event that will not be repeated. It took place in a particular space (in Palestine) and in a particular time (the beginning of this common era). By taking human form and coming down to earth (divine becoming man) God invites and receives humans into His own company.

From the metaphysical standpoint of Judaism, the Christian doctrine of Incarnation can be objected to. The very possibility is meaningless and a contradiction. How can the Intelligible, the Spiritual, and the Divine come and defile itself in the sensible, the material, and the human? How can the Eternal enter into the temporal, the Universal into the particular? But a relook at the metaphysics of immanence according to the biblical thought would reveal that the idea of Incarnation is possible. The Creator can come into this world, created in and through his *Logos* (Word). The Old Testament speaks of the God of Israel dwelling among His chosen people; that God “tabernacles” with His chosen. The Biblical Hebrew word is *Shekinah* and denotes the dwelling or the settling presence of God among His people. The God of Israel, the Creator God, is both transcendent and immanent. In God mankind is, moves, and lives. God continues to act through human conduct, thoughts, and acts of free will, just as He is at work in the continuous coming into being of the world.

The *Logos* is the individual Incarnation of the divine principle, the emanation of a personal God. Though the act of God taking human form is found in other religions like Hinduism or in ancient Greek and Roman thoughts, and though the *Logos* in the Gospel of John has Greek and Semitic roots, Incarnation and the *Logos* in Christianity is original and different from other religions. Incarnation is not *ensomatosis*, that is, descent into bodies. John made *Logos* a real person, an irreplaceable individual, and not merely a personification, or allegorism. The *Logos* is fully human and fully divine without any confusion of natures. This *Logos* is the Creator and the Light which enlightens every human born in this world. This *Logos* is the Messiah, the Saviour who lays down his life for humans, and who introduces the Kingdom of God. He is fully human whom his disciples approached, with whom they related on familiar terms, and of whom they now give witness.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space for your answers

1. In Christianity, God is One in essence but Three in persons. Explain.

2. How is Incarnation original and different from other religions?

4.6 THE CONCEPT OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Christian anthropology is developed within the sacred Scripture of the Old Testament, and is therefore Biblically rooted. The Bible narrates the beginning of existence, both for particular beings as well as for the whole, through the dynamic and voluntary act of God the Creator. The human being is created by God.

The human person is corporeal: It is not an evil god or a perverse principle that created the corporality. Man's corporality is not due to a fall from God's grace. Neither is it a blemish, nor a place of exile, nor an accident, nor a catastrophe. Corporality was not gifted to man because of sin or in anticipation of sin. He is corporeal by God's creation. God the unique Creator created humankind, both male and female, with a bodily nature, in His "own image and likeness"; and human, so created, is blessed by God, and is found, like all creation, "good". Corporality is part of the creative plan of the Creator, and is excellent in its order.

The human body is not evil: Since God created humankind with a body, found His creature good, and blessed him, the body is not evil, nor the source of evil, nor is it responsible for evil. God created humans corporeal, and therefore the corporeal nature of man is good. Christian tradition rejects vehemently the Gnostic and Manichean systems, the Neoplatonic philosophy and mediaeval dualism which have tended to degrade, despise, or diminish human corporality. According to these philosophies, the human soul is divine by nature, and is part of the godhead fallen into an evil body. But, if man was a soul fallen into an evil body, it would be difficult to understand the biblical concept of creation, or Incarnation. Creation is the work of God's free will and is a gift; how could the *Logos* of God "pitch tent", *i.e.*, incarnate, into an evil matter, a body impure by nature?

Human is not a divine soul fallen into an evil body: Man is a created, living being with a soul. Humans have a single soul, which is both intellectual and spiritual. The soul is created in a corporeal condition. It is not pre-existent as part of the divine substance. The living body exists as a living body only because it is animated (Latin *anima* : soul, breath). The body is the 'matter' while the soul is the 'form'. On the other hand, the body is not a prison for the soul. God created human, soul and body together. The concept of the pre-existence of the soul, the themes of transmigration, reincarnation, and everlasting return are therefore alien to Christianity.

Human soul is not a particle or fragment, or a part of God: They are not created from God's substance, His spittle, His seed, or His blood, and therefore there is no natural consubstantiality of the human with God. The Biblical creation story is radically different from the Egyptian and Assyro-Babylonian myths which taught the consubstantiality of the soul with the divinity. Christianity rejects this doctrine of a natural consubstantiality. The individual souls are created by God as new souls. As created souls they are radically and ontologically distinct from God

their Creator. All beings are beginning to be born and to exist. They are in a world which is in a state of coming into being, of continued creation, in which all beings begin to exist every day. The human soul is the gift of God, of the Spirit of God, who gives immortality to the soul. Immortality is not its own nature. The soul continues in existence after death; souls do not transmigrate, but they remember the actions performed here on earth. The parable of the wicked rich man and the poor man Lazarus in the *Gospel of Luke* (16:19-31) reveals clearly that souls continue to exist, that they do not pass from one body to another, that they possess those human characteristics by which they can be recognized, and that they remember those who are on earth (Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses* 2, 34, 1).

Life is God's gift: Human life is given in accordance with God's grace, and it is not of oneself or of one's own nature that one possesses life. It is God who gives life. This thought of life as God's gift is foundational in Christian ethics.

Human being is summoned to perfection: The Biblical anthropology of the human being created in the image and likeness of God implies that the human being is different from other created living things. The very purpose of the creation of human in the image and likeness of God is the divinization or perfection of human nature. The doctrine of divinization, which the Greek fathers called *theiosis*, carries certain metaphysical implications and presuppositions. Man should be free to consent to be called to this godlike destiny. The human person, unlike inanimate objects or other living things, is summoned to perfection, to share in God's life, to divine completion. In Christian thought, man is not a marionette. God cannot invite a lifeless puppet to a divinization. The divinization is not something that took place in the past but is to happen in the future. It is the final end. This would mean that there is no place for hopeless nostalgia, for a vain desire to return to the past state of perfection. On the other hand, the divinization, for which mankind is pre-adapted by creation, demands active cooperation from the humans as well as the saving grace of God.

Human being has the capacity for God: According to Biblical anthropology, in all of God's creation, only human beings possess a spirit. The term 'spirit' translates the Hebrew word *Ruah* which in its primary sense means, breath, air, wind. *Genesis*, the first book of the Bible gives two narratives of the creation of man by God. According to the second narrative, God creates Adam, the first man, out of the "ground, and breathes into his nostril the breath of life (*Ruah*)". The Spirit of God is breathed onto the inanimate Adam, and the vivifying power of this breath transforms the human into a living being: "The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (*Ruah*); and man became a living being" (*Genesis* 2:7). No longer is human an animal being. The human being is now a partner with whom God converses, and to whom God entrusts the stewardship of the world. The human who has received in himself the *Ruah* of God, has now the capacity to welcome the supernatural, the capacity to hear God's word, and to converse with God, in short the capacity for God (*capax Dei*). According to Christian ontology and anthropology, what distinguishes human from animals is this capacity for God; the 'capability' to attain God.

4.7 HUMAN FREE WILL AND PROBLEM OF EVIL

The Biblical teaching on freedom and evil is bound with the teaching on creation, matter, and body. It is not the body or matter or the senses which are responsible for evil, but it is man himself who is responsible for the evil he does. It was his own act, done out of his own free will and choice, that led man into exile and away from the paradise God has prepared for him; man was himself the cause of his downfall. It is not the gods (as in the cosmogonies of Greek philosophy), or fate or the stars that are responsible for man's tragedy.

Freedom of will is a fundamental characteristic of a human being. According to Tertullian, one of the Early Church Fathers, there is nothing in man which is more to the image and likeness of God than free will. It is essential to the being who was created in the image and likeness of God. Man was created good and free, and he is called to be good through free, personal consent. Without freedom man could not be good; with it he might be either good or bad. The narrative in *Genesis* of the Fall of man tells us that man was faced with the alternatives of obedience or disobedience, either of which he was free to choose indifferently. It was in the exercise of his free will that he deliberately chose the way of disobedience and transgression.

Evil is not merely an enigma but a reality. Though evil has been understood in different ways (absence of good, human fallibility, unmerited suffering that cannot be justified), its existence has never been denied in Christianity. There is evil in the world. Now, the paradox is this: how to reconcile the concept of creation of the world by an omnipotent, benevolent God with the existence of Evil? The Trilemma argument attributed to the Ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus (341-270 B.C.E.) presents the enigma of the existence of an omnipotent God and Evil:

“Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able?

Then He is not omnipotent.

Is He able, but not willing?

Then He is malevolent.

Is He both able and willing?

Then, from where, comes evil?

Is He neither able nor willing?

Then why call Him God?”

In other words, an all-powerful, all benevolent God would not allow evil to exist. But that evil does exist cannot be denied. And its very existence puts into doubt the existence of God. Over the centuries there have been numerous attempts at Theodicy. (Theodicy, from Greek *Theos* : God, and *dike* : justice, coined by the German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz, is the defence of God's omnipotence and goodness in view of the existence of evil). How can God of Love allow evil?

In Christian thought, God created human beings with free will, that is, with the capacity to choose to do good or to do evil. Human beings decide, make the choice and act. True, an omnipotent and omniscient God could have made sure that human beings decide, choose and act justly, and always rightly. But in order to do so, God would have to create human without a free will. A human who is programmed to act correctly is not a free person. Creating human beings with free will implied that human is free to decide, to make a choice, and that he/she is morally

responsible for the decision, choice, and action. It would be contradictory to say that God created a free human being who had to always do what is right. Creating a free human being means creating a person who is free to do both right and wrong, good and evil. Man can stop himself from doing evil; he has the free will to make decisions and choices, and to act accordingly.

The key of a meaningful life for a Christian is an ongoing relationship with God and with others. This is evident in the love commandment of Jesus: “Love your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and Love your neighbour as yourself” (*Gospel of Mark* 12:28-34). The life of Jesus characterized by love and sacrifice, as told in the *New Testament* narratives, is the paradigm for a meaningful life for the Christian. Imitating the *Logos*, that is Jesus Christ, implies the willingness to lay down one’s life, and be subject to rejection just as Jesus was.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space for your answers

1. According to Christian thought mankind is created in God’s image and likeness. What are the implications of this philosophy?

2. Freedom of Will and Evil are inseparably linked in Christianity. Explain.

4.8 CONCEPT OF THE WORLD AND THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GOD AND THE WORLD

Creation is a free act of God: Creation is the act of God who is One and Unique. The created world is not the absolute, nor is anything which the world contains. Only God is Absolute, and the Absolute is distinct from the world. The relation between the Absolute and the world is a relation of creation, and is expressed through the Hebrew verb “*bara*” (to create), a word that the Bible reserves only for God’s action. Creation is not imposed upon God, either by an external or an internal necessity. It was not for self-realization, or for self-generation, or for self-awareness that God created the world. Neither did God create the world to acquire perfection. Creation is grace; the first grace. In the words of the scholastic theologian Hugh of St Victor it is *gratia*

creatrix (creating grace). Creation is the manifestation of God's *agape* (love), and of His goodness. At the beginning there is the *agape* of God, His bountiful love, and creation is His free gift.

Creation is not fabrication: In Christian thinking the world is God's creation and not His fabrication. The difference in these two acts is that creation needs no pre-existing matter, not even God's own substance. Creation is *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing). On the other hand, fabrication or fashioning would require matter. Creation did not presuppose an uncreated and external matter on which the creator would have worked, like the raw clay that the potter moulds into a pot, or the block of marble that the sculptor chisels into a figure of art. The originality of creation is that God created the matter too; there was no pre-existing matter. The pre-existence of matter would suppose the existence of two absolutes, two uncreated eternal principles: God and matter. This would be inconsistent with Christian monotheism.

Material creation is not consubstantial with the Divine: Creation is not an emanation of, or a procession from the divine substance. Neither is creation generation. The created is not born of the divine substance (spittle, blood or seed as in other cosmogonies), and hence is not consubstantial with God. Only the *Logos* is consubstantial with God. *Logos* is not created, but begotten. Creation is a positive act, willed by God, blessed and found good by Him. Material creation is willed and brought into being by God for its own sake. Thus neither creation nor the Fall is evil. God is not responsible for the Fall, for man's sin. According to the Biblical narrative of man's Fall, creation and Fall happen at different intervals. Human sins at the end of creation, and therefore sin is not pre-cosmic, pre-historical, or pre-empirical.

Creation is not eternal: Creation has had a beginning. The world did not exist from all eternity. God created all things in time. The Bible opens with these words: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (*Genesis* 1:1). Just as creation has had a unique and definitive beginning, the created world is irreversibly directed towards an end. Creation is neither eternal, nor will there be an eternal re-commencement of the cosmic cycle. Creation is not appearance or illusion. The whole world has had a beginning and will have an end, for it is not divine, and is not the same as self-existence.

Creation is "continuous creation": Creation is not a static, ready-made world constructed by the divine Creator, but it is a dynamic, unfolding creative process. If creation is *creatio ex nihilo*, it is also *creatio continua* (continuous creation). *Creatio ex nihilo* conveyed the ontological dependence of creation on the sustaining will of the Creator. *Creatio continua* communicates that God's action in relation to the world is not a single act in the past, but is a continuing presence here and now, a continuing creation. God is as much the Creator today as God was when the Creator spoke the world into being. The created world has no autonomous existence that would enable it to continue independently of a God. The world would cease to be without the divine sustaining will.

The created world that God holds in existence is not an immense marionette theatre manipulated from above by the unseen Puppeteer-God. Neither is God an impotent, disinterested, indifferent, deistic spectator of its history. When the Bible speaks of God "holding in his hands the depths of the earth and the highest mountains" (*Psalms* 95:4) it is to express God's creation care. The

created human beings are endowed with free will, and summoned to act with responsibility. They are God's stewards and co-creators participating actively in the *creatio continua* of God. This is in fact the divine purpose of creation – to let the creatures continue the creation improvisation. Over the billions of years since the world was created, the human beings as created co-creators have lived up to this summoned responsibility, exploring new possibilities, continuing, and improvising God's creation.

Creation is God's self-emptying: Creation is *kenosis*, the self-emptying act of the Creator. It is an emptying of the self in the sense of self-restriction of the exercise of divine power, the letting-be of creative process. The most momentous moment of the *kenosis* act of the Creator is related to free human actions. Respect for the free will of his created co-creators requires God to permit evil or sin. Christian thought makes a distinction between God's permissive will and God's positive will. Although all happenings depend upon the divine permissive will, however everything that happens does not take place in accordance to God's positive will. Thus the voluntary evil acts of the creatures, like murder, or the natural catastrophes are not willed positively by God. However, the Creator allows the autonomous course of such events; they are permitted to happen within the creation that has been gifted with a degree of creaturely independence.

4.9 ESCHATOLOGY

Every human life ends in death; but in Christian thinking, death is not the end. It is only the end of the temporal existence of man's earthly pilgrimage. In Christianity, there is a perfectly coherent belief and hope in an Eternal existence to come, that is, in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. The human being is made up of the human body and the human soul. Death is the separation of the unity of body and soul. At death the human soul continues, while there is a physical breakdown of the material body, that is, its decay. The very nature of man's material body makes it subject to physical decay, as it is the case for all material beings. By death the human soul is separated from the body, but in the resurrection God will give incorruptible life to the body, transformed by reunion with the soul. God's creative, saving, and sanctifying action will preserve the human body in divine memory, and ultimately reconstitute the soul's embodiment in an eschatological act of resurrection. This eschatological new creation is not *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing), but *creatio ex vetere* (creation out of old creation). Resurrection is therefore not merely a spiritual survival after death. The resurrection of Jesus remains as the promise of one's own resurrection, for "if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again" (*First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, 15:12). Christian thinking affirms in the Last Judgement, the existence of hell and its eternity. The souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into Hell. Hell is eternal separation from God. For those who die in God's grace, but who are imperfectly purified, there will be a period of atonement, of purification, before being reunited with God. Life everlasting means to be in blessed communion with God, to see God face to face.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space for your answers

1. Explain the meaning and the implications of the terms: *creatio ex nihilo*, *creatio ex vetere*, *creatio continua*.

2. What is the Christian interpretation of human destiny?

4.10 LET US SUM UP

A 'summary' of the Philosophy of Christianity would mean recapitulating the particular world view of the Christian religion, its specific and original approach to the triple concepts of God, World and the Human person. Nothing beats a story in helping us remember important information. In the present case, we shall resort to two parables (short allegories) that are found in the *New Testament*. These two parables – 'The Prodigal Son' and 'The Good Samaritan' – are narrated by Jesus himself to his disciples at two different occasions. The parable of 'The Prodigal Son' tells the story of loss and reconciliation, and reflects the relationship between the Absolute and His created. The parable of 'The Good Samaritan' speaks of eternal life, the primacy of interpersonal relationships between human and God and human and the other. Together these two parables capture the spirit of Christianity.

The Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32): « And he (Jesus) said, "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and

shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry. Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But the elder son was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' »

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37): « Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher", he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The lawyer said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

4.11 KEY WORDS

Creatio ex nihilo: Creation out of nothing. God the Creator created the world and all things in it out of nothing. He created matter too.

Creatio continua: Continuous creation. God's action in relation to the world is not a single act in the past, but is a continuing presence here and now, a continuing creation.

Creatio ex vetere: Creation out of old creation. Resurrection is not mere spiritual survival after death, but is resurrection of the body. God's creative, saving and sanctifying action will preserve the human body in divine memory, and ultimately reconstitute the soul's embodiment in an eschatological act of resurrection.

Incarnation: The embodiment of the divine. God the Son became man and dwelt among humans.

Logos: The Word of God. The second Person of the Trinity. God created the world through his Word, i.e., God spoke the world into being.

Trinity: There are three distinct divine persons in One God. The three divine persons 'Father', 'Son' and 'Holy Spirit' are consubstantial, that is they are One in substance or essence or nature. Their distinction from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another.

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