

FORMEE, THE BELOVED OF THE FORMATOR: The Divine Pedagogy of Formation - VI

Paul Kalluveetil

Little Flower Novitiate, Trichur, Kerala, India

Abstract

David, a shepherd boy who was called by God, needed a long term training to fit into his elevated role as the king of Israel. In order to become "a man after God's own heart" and a true "leader (*nagid*) of his people" he was exposed to numerous critical situations that brought to light his strengths as well as weaknesses. His election is a reminder of the words of Christ in Jn. 15:16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you..." God who chooses a person to be his instrument has his unique way of forming his chosen one to fit into his role. The most fitting response from the part of the formee is to entrust oneself into the hands of the formator in absolute trust and confidence without any reserve or setting conditions. Suppressing one's own petty interests and fears often exposes the formee to dark night experiences in life. In spite of every attempt from the part of the divine formator the formee may not always succeed hundred percent. The fire of revenge that continued to burn in the heart of David, the one whom God has designated as a man after His own heart, clearly indicates this sad reality.

The Core of the Call

In this article we reflect upon David, a shepherd boy who was called by God, elevated to the status of king and trained for that job. Before calling him the divine Master shared His dreams about him with the king Saul. It sheds light to the implication of the call. David is chosen to be "a man after God's own heart;" he should be a "leader (*nagid*) of his people" (1Sam.13:14). These two expressions "a man after God's own heart," and *nagid* deserve special attention. In Bible the divine

heart is the centre of decisions, decisions being filled with compassion towards humankind. It can also denote the divine will. Yahweh wanted David to become the personification of the divine kindness and compassion as well as a prompt and committed individual to bring salvation to others. For this he should stick to God's demands and commandments. The Hebrew word *nagid* is used also in 1Sam.25:30; and 2Sam.5:2; 7:8 to mention David. *Nagid's* authority and status originate from God. It is indeed a gift and a grace. That rank is inevitably related to the people. Nobody can appoint oneself as *nagid*. He is called and appointed by the Lord in order to serve the people. Thus the chosen one cannot live for one's own sake. This means that a biblical leader cannot terrorize the subjects for the sake of his selfish interests. A *nagid* who does not maintain communion and communication with the people does not deserve that title.

Reflection I

The divine Formator has definite plans about the one whom He calls, since he/she is elected to do a concrete task. The Lord considers them as His beloved. It is not after calling them that the Master gives form to His future dreams concerning the candidates. Even before Jeremiah was formed in the womb of his mother, Yahweh knew him, sanctified him and appointed him as a prophet (Jer.1:5).

Particular Elements

A Person Pointed out by the Lord

The call of David was totally unexpected. Yahweh asked the prophet Samuel to anoint the one whom He will tell him (1Sam.16:3). It is not the qualities that the world esteems, such as bodily perfection and height that God's representative should take into consideration. "The Lord does not look at the things human looks at. Human looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (6-7). It is He who elects (8-10).

Reflection II

This is a warning to the vocation promoters. Wrong is the attitude that it is they who choose the candidates. Merits like nobility, family grandeur, efficiency in learning and physical appearance need not be the norm and condition for a true vocation. Remember the words of Christ in Jn. 15:16: "You did not choose me, but I chose you..." Formators who maintain an intimate communication with God alone will receive the grace from their divine Master to look into the hearts of their formees.

One who is a Qaton

Even Jesse, the father of David, did not consider him as worthy candidate for anointment. Hence he paraded each of his elder sons before Samuel. When the prophet made clear that none of them was chosen by Yahweh (16:8-9), that he became sad. He was not ready to consider the young boy whom he had sent to tend the sheep. It was only when Samuel compelled him that he sent for the lad (11-12).

Jesse designated David as *qaton* (11-12). Also 17:14 makes use of that qualification, which is not to be understood in the literal sense of 'little one'. Rather it indicates a 'nobody', a non-having and non-being fellow, a destitute, (*agati*), an insignificant and a useless one. This was the assessment of his father and brothers about David.

David did not feel inferiority complex about being *qaton*. He was ever ready to acknowledge before others his insignificance and limitations. When King Saul wanted to give him in marriage the princess, this *qaton* thus responded: "Whom am I, what is my family or my father's clan in Israel that I should become the king's son-in-law?" (18:18). Here we find the essential qualification which a formee should have. Only in such persons the divine Pedagogue can freely act and lead them into maturity.

Reflection III

God chooses insignificant persons. Only those who cannot find *gati* (path) on their own will look for *gati* in the Lord. Only they would be ready to entrust themselves in the divine hands and give complete freedom to the Formator. The formation process will be successful only in so far as the candidates delve into the depths of non-having and non-being consciousness. Only in them the seed of Word will yield a thirtyfold, sixtyfold and hundredfold produce (Mt.13:23).

Shepherd

In their cultural context children who cannot be used for other purposes, were sent to tend the sheep. Thus Jesse entrusted David the *qaton* with such a job (16:11). However such a job was providential, since it implied an essential quality to be chosen. There used to exist a deep union of love between the shepherd and the sheep, a relationship which may be compared to the well-known relationship between a father and his children. A good shepherd will be ready to sacrifice his life in order to protect the flock, his beloved children. David, the *qaton* did the same thing. He used to rescue the sheep from the mouth of lions and bears, as he confessed to the king, who was not willing

to send him to fight against the giant Goliath (17:34-37). At the same time David attributed his success to the divine help. A king should be a shepherd of the people. Those who are called to adorn that status should have a heart proper to a shepherd. God himself is depicted in the Old Testament as the shepherd. The divine Formator designates David in 13:14 as a man after His own heart.

The Rituals

The Divine Declaration

As the *qaton* arrived, the divine Pedagogue told Samuel: "Rise and anoint him; he is the one" (16:12). This makes clear the truth that it is God who calls and elects the candidates. His representatives have only the role to do what the Lord would tell them. The human formators should never forget that they are mere instruments in God's hands.

The Anointing Ceremony

The prophet did what the Lord had commanded (16:13). He anointed David in the presence of his family. The anointed person is one who is fully dedicated to God. As the oil flows from the head and enters every pore of the body, so the entire person should be filled with the divine love. He/she should appropriate the maxim of call in Phil.1:21 "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

The Pouring of the Divine Spirit

As David was anointed the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power "from that day on" (16:13b). The phrase, "from that day on" indicates that the Spirit began to act unceasingly in David. The chosen one should be led and formed by the inspiration of the Spirit.

The Blessings

The Lord provides the chosen ones some other graces, as David displays. He was an expert in playing the harp, a brave man, a warrior, one who speaks well and a handsome man blessed with the divine presence (16:18). One who is called to lead the people of God has to be endowed with such qualities. Since they are appointed to conduct devotedly the liturgical services, it is important that they should have at least a musical sense. The author of the books of Chronicles presents David as a liturgist in 1Chr.15:16. As the life of the people of the covenant needs to be focused in the liturgical celebrations, the chosen one should be its *maestro*. At the initial period of monarchical rule the king had to withstand the aggressors and

enlarge God's kingdom. Only a warrior can give leadership in such an undertaking. Also who are called to a priestly or religious life, have to face the spiritual foes. For that they need to take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph.6:17); they have to stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around their waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place and with their feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, and take up the shield of faith with which they can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one (Eph.6:14-15). Besides, a leader should be gifted with eloquence.

The Life of the chosen one

We find the divine Formator being engaged in preparing the anointed one for his future task. Christ, one who was appointed to become the saviour of human kind had to lead a solitary life of an ordinary person in Nazareth for thirty years. Similarly David had to spend days by tending the sheep and playing the harp in order to protect the king from the evil spirits. We can compare it to the wilderness years of Israel.

The One Zealous for the Sake of God

The divine Pedagogue gave enough chances to David in order to show his commitment to Him. When Goliath uttered words of abuse against God's elected people (17:1-28) David was infuriated. He shouted: "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God" (26)? The chosen one asserted that he will kill that man and take away insult that had fallen upon Israel. The young lad never thought about the impossibility of defeating such a giant. He had only one thing in his mind. Nobody should try to reduce the glory of the Lord. Such persons should be exterminated.

An Adventurous Attempt

Although others tried to reject his words as prattling, David continued to speak in such a tone. The king came to hear that zealous utterance (17:31-37). Then the young man approached Saul and informed the king about his readiness to challenge Goliath. The monarch tried his best to turn him back from such a risky act, but David stuck to his words as to compel Saul to send him to the battle field, saying "Go, and the Lord be with you" (37). Then he put a coat of armour on David and a bronze helmet on his head (38-39). As the young man could not walk around with them, he took them off. With the staff, five smooth stones and his sling he approached the Philistine (40).

At the Battle Field

The Lord's Ways

Absolute confidence and trust in the Lord – this should be the essential quality which the chosen one needs to have. David told Goliath who was cursing and abusing him (41-47): “I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of the Israel whom you have defiled. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s and He will give all of you into our hands.”

These brave words came out of the mouth of one who trusts only in the strength of God. He repeatedly utters the names Lord and God. The Almighty is the Lord of hosts. The swarming army of Philistines amounts to nothing when it is compared to the military array of God. The Lord needs no sword or spear. He will himself fight for us. The God of Israel will hand over all of the Philistines into his peoples’ hands.

Reflection IV

The candidates who do not put their trust in themselves but entrust into the divine hands, can work wonders. Or the Lord will work through them what seems to be impossible for humans. David used a language of absolute certainty and determination. The words resulted from the attitude of security, which originated from confidence and trust. Let us remember here the words of the New David in Mt.17:20: “If you have faith as small as mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” If a formator can engender in the formees this type of unwavering trust, then the art of formation will be a total success.

An Affectionate Intimacy

There existed between Jonathan and David a deep and intimate friendship (18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42; 23: 16-18). Both of them became one spirit and one soul. The formators of the past generations used to label such a relationship as particular friendship, forbidden for the candidates. They discouraged it, since they feared that it will be harmful for the formees in growing in the love of God. But the deep

friendship with Jonathan did not deter David from cultivating union with the Lord, since it was totally unselfish love. Rather it helped David often to save his life. Both friends used to come together to share their problems and to find proper solutions, Jonathan strengthened David with words of comfort and courage. The name of God took prominent place in their conversations (19:5; 20:3, 12, 13, 16, 23, 42). A sincere and God-centred friendship should be encouraged among the candidates.

Days of Suffering

The divine Formator helped the chosen one to become the commander-in-chief of the Israelite army, the beloved of the people and the son-in-law of the king. But the happy days did not last long.

The Destitute

David had to leave his home and country in order to save his life. He became a person without an address, and had to wander in forests and wilderness. Once he was forced to act as a mad man (ch.21-29). The chosen one had no way but to take refuge in the land of the Philistines, the arch-enemy of Israel. The patriarch Abraham was asked to leap into the dark. The same course of action was imposed on David as well. He lost the covenant blessing of land; he had no children. Also the presence of God became a past memory. These bitter experiences belong to the formative dynamics of the divine Pedagogue.

The Dark Night of the Soul

Bible has not recorded the inner sentiments of the chosen one who had to run all over the place in order to save his life. We can call those occasions when even the faith was tested “the dark nights of the soul” – to use the articulation of the Carmelite mystic John of the Cross. The bodily, mental and spiritual acts of purification were taking place day after day. The individual laments in the Psalms, (3-7; 9-10; 13; 17; 22; 25; 28; 31; 35; 40; 11-14; 41; 42-43; 51; 54-59; 61; 64; 69; 70; 71; 77; 86; 88; 102; 109; 120; 130; 140-143) which were attributed to David, articulate the heartbeat of that wretched creature. Certain texts are worth citing:

“O Lord how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!” (Ps.3:1)

“Answer me, when I call to you
O my righteous God!

Give me relief from my distress,
Be merciful to me and hear my prayer" (Ps.4:1)

"Why O Lord, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (Ps.10:1)

"Many bulls surround me,
Strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.
Roaring lions tearing their prey,
Open their mouths wide against me.
I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
It has melted away within me.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
I am laid in the dust of death." (Ps.22:12-15)

"Rescue me from the mouth of the lions,
Save me from the horns of the wild oxen." (Ps.22:21)

"Keep me as the apple of your eye,
Hide me in the shadow of your wings,
From the wicked who assail me,
From my mortal enemies who surround me...
They have tracked me down,
With eyes alert, to throw me to the ground." (Ps.17:8-11)

These lines vividly portray the inner emotions and agitations of the persecuted one. He would have felt that the one, who had called him, has forsaken him. Also Jesus, the Son of David had to confront such inner tensions and betrayals. Those were the climax movements of the formation process of the heavenly Father. Also the divine Formator was trying to purify the son of Jesse in order to make him pure gold.

A Positive Response

Even during the times of crisis the chosen one continued to maintain close relationship with the divine Formator. He consulted the Lord before taking each step (22:5; 23:2, 4, 9-11). The formees should follow this example. The Master informed him through others each of the movements of Saul. Sometimes He got actively involved: "God did not give David into Saul's hands" (23:14). It meant that the Formator was not sitting idle.

One Who Protects the Foe

David teaches us how a formee should respond towards the adversaries. He restrained himself and did not retaliate when he got a chance to do away with the king, who was continuously perusing him (ch.24;26). He had to become very strict towards his followers who were bent to exterminate the enemy (24:3-4; 26:8-11). We find here David putting into practice the new commandment which Jesus, the Son of David will later promulgate (Mt.5:34-44). Is not this the model for the disciples of Christ?

A Submissive One

David used to designate the one who was determined to kill him, as "the Lord's Anointed," and "Master" (24:6, 10). He addressed Saul "my Lord, the king" (24:8; 26:17) and "my father" (24:11). He bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground (24:8b). David called himself "your servant". Here we find the mentality which the formees should maintain towards the enemies.

A Reconciler

We see that the formed one of God together with the submissive mentality plays also the role of reconciler (24:8-15; 26:17-25). In his conversation with Saul he used expressions which could melt even the hardened hearts. He brought forward very touchy arguments, stated facts which the king had seen with his own eyes, put stress upon his innocence, and adjured in the divine name. Also he warned that God may judge and vindicate him. At the same time he made clear the folly of looking for a flea.

The words of the formee who invoked the divine name, demand special attention. "It is the *Lord* who gave you into my hands" (24:10); "may the *Lord* judge between you and me. And may the *Lord* avenge the wrongs you have done to me" (24:12); "may the *Lord* be our judge and decide between us. May He consider my cause and uphold it; may He vindicate me by delivering me from your hand" (24:15); "if the *Lord* has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If however, men have done it, may they be cursed before the *Lord*" (26:19); "now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the *Lord*" (26:20).

The humble soul tried to convince the king of the seriousness of his crime. Saul had caused to lose David's portion in the inheritance of the Lord. He had brought out the situation which would force David to worship the foreign deities (26:19). Here the formee points out to

the most tragic situation into which the covenant people might regress. Yahweh had allotted land to Israel and given the ownership to each tribe. Now Saul's action had taken away the God given right; hence he is accountable to the Lord. Even greater is his wickedness in forcing others to serve the foreign deities. Thus Saul has committed two grave offences which deserve the divine punishment.

We find in David's approach the traits of humility and submissiveness. Still he showed courage to tell the truth to the face of the king. He never hesitated to point out the seriousness of the royal offence. Here we find the essential qualities which the formees should exhibit in their dealings with others. One should have the courage to state without hesitation that wrong is wrong. A true formed one should not be the slave of fear; his/her behaviour may have serious repercussions. Still mature formees will not cave in. David had brought forward arguments which every court will approve. Submissiveness, innocence, exposing the folly of the action of the culprit, invoking the Lord, the just judge, making clear the seriousness of the action and the responsibility - a true leader of God should cultivate all these qualities.

Such sharp words of the formee had its effect in Saul, through temporarily (24:16-22; 26:21-25). The king who came to inflict a cursed end, returned with invoking divine blessings on David.

A Man of Mature Behaviour

David and his party had to depend upon others for their daily sustenance. As he was giving protection to the sheep and shepherds of Nabal, he sent some young men to greet him on the feast of shearing sheep, and requested Nabal to give them something (25:2-11). But that fool dared to send back the envoys in disgrace. At this David set out to attack Nabal (25:12-13). Because of the timely intervention of the prudent Abigail he did not execute his plan (25:14-35). The Lord struck Nabal, the fool (25:36-38). At that news David thus said: "Praise be to the Lord, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept me from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head" (26:39). It is not proper for the chosen ones to take revenge. That act is evil in itself. The angry David was guided by such worldly motivation and had set out to avenge himself. Then the divine Formator did not allow him to commit such a heinous action. Now the formed one was ready to acknowledge it and praise the Lord. It is natural for humans to get

provoked to do wrong. David fell into that temptation; but he was ready to confess that weakness as well as his Master's intervention. The formees are recommended to imitate such a behaviour.

In a Dilemma

The wretched destitute was forced to take shelter in the country of the Philistines (ch.27). That pious soul felt great inner agony in doing it. Forcing him to go through such a very difficult situation was one of the elements in the formative process. There happened then a more heart-breaking situation. The Philistines set out to attack the country of Israel, and David was forced to join them (29:1-11). No Israelite will be ready to fight against his own people; rather he would prefer to embrace death. Now the divine Formator came to the help of this beloved disciple. At the strong objection of other Philistine rulers David was sent back from the battle field, since they did not trust his faithfulness to them. It was indeed the divine Pedagogue who caused such a fear in them. God will never put to test his followers beyond their strength.

Another Disaster

When David returned to Ziklag his abode, he had to encounter another critical situation. The Amalekites had burned the place and took away the wives and children of David and his companions (30:1-6). At that juncture his own friends turned against him and were ready to stone him to death. "But David found strength in the Lord his God" (6).

Reflection V

Such a reaction was not easy and natural. In crisis situations it is spontaneous and natural that people remember God and seek His help. David who was "a man after His own heart" (13:14), did exactly that, or better, the Lord helped him for it. The divine Formator gave him strength to face that difficult situation. Those who are in the formation period should never forget the eternal truth that the divine Master will never forsake those who depend upon Him.

One who Consults the Formator

David did not decide by himself what to do in that difficult situation. He consulted the Formator (13:7-8). When he acted according to the divine advice in pursuing the Amalekites, he could defeat them (9-20).

A Generous Soul

David's attitude towards those who could not join in military expedition because of weariness, offers the portrait of a true formed one (13:21-25). When those who were with him did not want to share the booty with such people, the generous soul thus responded: "No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the Lord has given us. He has protected us, and handed over to us the forces that came against us" (23). He was magnanimous to send a share of the booty to the elders of Judah with a message: "Here is a present for you from the plunder of the Lord's enemies" (26). He even volunteered to send a portion to all those with whom he was familiar (27-31). Here we can find a basic quality with which the formed ones of God should be endowed. It is the Lord who gives us every gift, and humans are mere channels of that donation. The elected ones are bound to continue the magnanimous attitude of God by offering to others what they had been given.

Lamenting at the Death of the Enemy

When Saul who was continuously trying to kill him met a tragic end, David thus reacted (2Sam.1:16). When the Amalekite who killed the king according to the royal instruction approached David with that news, he asked that fellow: "Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" All at once he asked the bystanders to kill the Amalekite. Then David and his group tore their clothes and lamented and fasted for the dead Saul, Jonathan and for all those who fell in the battle field. He composed an elegy on behalf of them (19-27).

The Royal Anointing

The Obedient Formee

The Lord has earlier anointed David to be the king over his elected people. Now the chance has come to realize the divine design. First of all the formee consulted his Master. In accordance with God's instructions he returned to Hebron of Judah (2:1-4a). The people came and anointed him king over the house of Judah.

A Gentle Approach

After becoming the king David sent message of congratulation to the inhabitants of JabshGilead, who came forward to bury Saul (2:4b-7), and condolence to Hanun, son of Nahash at the death of his father

who had earlier shown kindness to him. To be a person of gratitude – the formee should be fortified with this sentiment. One has to be grateful not only to God but also to human beings.

Opponent of Unrighteousness

A disciple should never connive at injustice, even if it may be profitable. They are supposed to oppose it. When Abner, who belonged to the party of Saul, came forward to join David, the new king respectfully welcomed him. Then that former military general brought the tribes of Israel and Benjamin to his side. At this David prepared a banquet in honour of Abner and companions (3:6-21). As he left, Joab brought him back in the name of king and stabbed him to death (3:22-24). At the news David showered curses on Joab's family. He publically told others that he had no share in the innocent blood and it will fall upon the head of Joab. Further he asked the people to mourn for the deceased, walked behind the bier and also composed a lament for Abner (28-39). The king fasted till evening.

Likewise David ordered to kill the two men who had murdered Ish-Bosheth, the son of Saul (4:1-12). He did it by swearing an oath in the name of the living Lord, "who has delivered me out of all trouble." Humanly speaking the killings of Abner and Ish-Bosheth were beneficial for him, since both of them would have eventually revolted against him. Even then the formed one of God felt pain, mourned and punished the murderers. Here we find a behaviour befitting the divine mentality.

The Lone Master

As all other candidates were dead, the tribes of Israel made David their king (5:1-5). Thus he ruled over all the twelve tribes, and "become more and more powerful because the Lord God Almighty was with him" (10).

Reflection VI

One will become more and more formed in proportion to the conviction that it is the presence of the divine Formator who makes him/her strong. At the same time the formee should nourish another thought. The Lord has only one intention in raising him/her to the high office and maintaining in it: He/she should serve the people of God. It was for the sake of Israel that Yahweh had made David king and strengthened his kingdom (5:12). Nobody is elected for him/herself; every call is oriented towards saving others.

A Submissive Behaviour

The formee was growing up to the expectations of the divine Formator. He did everything only after consulting the Master. Thus he enquired of the Lord whether he should attack the Philistines. Yahweh consented and handed the enemies into his hand (5:19-20). Again David consulted his Formator when the Philistines came to attack Israel. The Lord gave him precise instructions how to confront the aggressors. The formee did everything accordingly so that he could defeat the Philistines (5:23-25).

One Who is Devoted to the Lord

As David could settle peacefully in Jerusalem after solving the problems concerning kingship, his whole attention has turned to the Ark of Covenant, the symbol of the divine presence. He wanted to bring it to Jerusalem, and immediately started the process.

A Solemn Procession

He made the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant a very devoted and religious procession from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem (6:1-5). "David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating *with all their might* before the Lord with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals" (5). The phrase, *with all their might* demands attention. The chosen one was fulfilling the instruction of Dt.6:5 about loving Yahweh "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." The example of David should inspire the consecrated ones of today who are very often engaged with a half-hearted attitude in God's service and in the service of others.

The Procession to Jerusalem

The heartfelt desire of David could not be immediately realized. The Ark of the Covenant was being carried in a cart, and when the oxen stumbled, Uzzah took hold of the Ark of God. At that irreverent act, Yahweh struck him down (6:6-11). David was frightened and did not dare to bring the Ark into Jerusalem. He left it in the house of the gentile Obed-Edom.

That foreigner was blessed with the divine presence. At that the king felt confidence and brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem with all solemnity (6:12-19). The joyful procession was now and then interrupted by offering sacrifices. David threw away his royal robes and wearing only a linen ephod danced before the Lord *with all his might*. The people celebrated and blew the trumpets. Then the Ark

was set inside the tent that the king had pitched for it. Afterwards he sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings, and blessed the people in the name of Lord Almighty. Everyone was given bread and cakes.

A New Adam

The chosen one who without formal dress danced *with all his might* before the Lord was becoming the symbol of Adam the first human being. Adam and Eve wore no clothes and felt no shame at all (Gen.2:25). Only those who live in space and time will feel shame at nakedness. Those who live, move and have their being in the divine milieu (Acts.17:28) are freed from such fetters of limitations and finiteness. They become the living images of God who is clothed only with splendour and majesty (Ps.104:1-2). David, the symbol of new Adam could transcend the spatial relations and could become like God, a being of celebration and praise and glory. Thereby he was transformed into the likeness of the divine Formator. One may say, the chosen one reached the summit of the formative process. David was granted the grace to move in the mystical world. From the very beginning formators should aim at such a mystical horizon.

A Brave Person

Queen Michal looked at this action of David from a worldly perspective and rebuked him (6:20-22). She accused David that he had forfeited the royal dignity. The chosen one was not disheartened at it. He thus responded: "it was before the Lord who chose me... to be ruler over His people that I celebrated. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes." This is the authentic portrait of a formed one. Such persons could forget the dignity and status of the world as well as the protocols proper to the office. They will not be bothered about the opinions held about them by others.

A Zealous Ascetic

At the end of political and social disturbances David built a palace for himself. But when he thought about the Ark of the Covenant, he could not sleep or even go to his bed (Ps.132:2-5). The faithful formee swore an oath that he will not take rest till he builds a house for the Lord Almighty (2 Sam.7:1-12). True formed ones should be fully engaged in the divine affairs. The one who is after the heart of Yahweh would challenge the present generation who does not burn with the zeal for God.

Reminding, A Formative Art

“I, I Alone”

As David shared with Nathan his plans, the prophet gave him permission to proceed accordingly. But the Word of the Lord came to Nathan that very same night (7:4-11). Yahweh enumerated his acts of mercy showered upon David, who was then a shepherd boy. In that speech He repeated eight times the first person pronoun “I”. One may call it the eight beatitudes. The story of David was indeed the story of the divine graces. The Formator was reminding David about it.

Reflection VII

To make the candidate remember the divine favours showered upon him/her from the time of birth onwards – this is one of the most effective pedagogy of formation. The more one delves into the depths of the divine graces in the life, the more that person will be transformed into a being of praise and faithfulness. This is a positive way of self-formation. Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara was a man who dwelt in the theological realms of remembrance (*dukрана*). As he felt that the Almighty had showered upon him the ocean of mercy till the last drop (*The Compunction of the Soul, II: 57-60*), tears of gratitude and love flowed from his eyes. Such shedding of tears will be more effective than thousand exhortations and warnings.

Gift-giving, a Medium of Formation

After reminding the disciple of the past favours, the divine Master promised to that zealous formee unimaginable and wonderful graces (7:12-16). Yahweh foretold David that He will establish his kingdom forever. Giving gifts was the main element in the four formative methods (*samam, bhedam, danam and dhandam*) of the divine Master. We have to give more emphasis to this positive approach in today’s formation process.

Thou and I

As the formed one heard about God’s unconditional showering graces upon him, his reaction was typical (7:18-29). He went and sat before the Lord. David was thus setting himself in a status of freedom in which he was liberated from the world of worries and anxieties. Then he was transformed into an embodiment of praise.

The Formative Art of Acknowledging

“Who am I” – thus the formee began his colloquy with the Master. He was filled with wonder at the infinite acts of mercies of the Lord. He could not understand the reason why the Master has lifted him up as well as his family. The formee depicted himself as the servant (*ebed*) of the Lord (19, 20, 21, 26, 27 (twice), 28, 29 (twice)) –all together nine times. It is *Thou* the Lord who was the cause of everything. The second person pronoun *Thou* is persistently repeated in his response (16 times). *Thou* art great; there is no one like *Thou*; there is no God but *Thou*. Thus David over and over again acknowledged Yahweh as the Lord Almighty. *Thou* redeemed Israel; *Thou* established Israel; *Thou* became their God; *Thou* revealed this good thing; *Thou* hast given this good promise to *thy* servant; *thy* words are trustworthy.

My Story, the Story of the People

The formee was finding in his story the very story of Israel. There are no other people like them whom Yahweh has redeemed and established. By that act the Lord was glorifying His own name. He was proud of becoming the God of Israel.

The Realm of Supplication

David joined to the act of praise the realm of supplication. At the end of his colloquy he was humbly reminding Yahweh that He should fulfil His promises. He asked the Lord to bless him as well as his family, since he could stand in the divine presence only by the strength of the divine blessings.

Reflection VIII

The human teachers have to imitate this *Thou-I* element in the process of formation. The formee should be trained to acknowledge even the minute details of the acts of mercy of God in their lives. Those who could become stupefied at the reality of *thou* and *I* realms could grow into the divine maturity. The candidates could find in their own stories the story of the people of God. They should be taught to combine both the praising and supplication realms.

The Formator as the Giver of Gifts

The divine Formator felt happy in the growth of the formee. He blessed the disciple who has entered into the inner world of divine union (8:1-14). The Lord gave David victory in everything undertaken by him. By God’s power the king could easily defeat the enemies.

The Generous Formee

David responded with gratitude to the Blessing One. He dedicated the articles captured from the enemies to the Lord (8:11). David dealt with magnanimity to the crippled son of Jonathan by accepting him as a member of the royal family (9:1-13). Only when one grows in generosity towards God and people, he/she will become an authentic disciple of Christ.

Fall and Decline

The Circumstances that Led to the Fall

The fall of David is a warning to the religious and priests. Self-complacency that one has attained perfection is a most dangerous thing. The attitude that "I'm" somebody is an indication of the awaiting downfall. The king got ample opportunities to enjoy life, which made him lazy and indolent. Succumbing to easy life and enjoyment the king ceased to go to battle fields and idly spent his time in the palace (11:1).

The Fall

David began spending his time in his bed until late. He got used to leisurely walk on the roof of his palace (11:2-5). During one such strolls he observed a beautiful woman bathing in a nearby pool. The king immediately brought that married woman into the palace and slept with her, and she got pregnant. One who was supposed to be the model for the common people had voluntarily committed adultery.

Further Sinking in the Mud of Sin

Now the formed one was trying to escape from the responsibility of his immoral act. He tried to call Uriah, the husband of that woman from the battle field in order to send him to his wife (11:6-9). But he was unwilling to go and sleep with his wife, as the soldiers were fighting for their life (10-13). Then David had to take recourse to a devilish plot. He made Uriah to stand in the front line of the battle without proper reinforcement, so that he could be struck down by the enemies (10-15). Thus that honest man was murdered (16-17). After the time of mourning the king made that woman his wife (26-27a).

The Displeased Formator

The king thought that his wicked deed will not be known to others. But the divine Master from whose eyes nothing could be hidden was

very much displeased (11:27b). It pained Him that the one whom He has chosen to become a man according to His heart, has sunk into the mire of unrighteousness. What could be the response of the common people when they come to know about this immoral behaviour of their leader? Will not it encourage them to embrace a life of wickedness? Thus the Formator was compelled to discipline his beloved disciple.

Judgment and Repentance

A Conscientizing Act

The divine Pedagogue did not directly appear on the scene reprimanding to wrong doer. The Lord sent Nathan as his envoy (12:1-12). The prophet came to the king with the story of a little ewe lamb that belonged to a very poor man, which was forcefully taken away from him by a rich man in order to entertain his guest. As David heard this story he was burnt with anger and in the name of the Lord condemned the rich man to death. Actually he was pronouncing death sentence upon himself. Now Nathan burst out: "You are the man!"

Reflection IX

This is a very effective method that every formator can take recourse to. The culprit should first of all be made conscious of the gravity of his/her offence. The candidate should him/herself pronounce the verdict. Thus the formee will not dare to justify him/herself or to disdain the gravity of the offence. Then the candidate will be convinced that he/she deserved a severe punishment.

Repentance

The Formator's representative pronounced then the divine judgement (11:7-12). After enumerating one by one the divine favours bestowed on the formee the Lord launched at David a devastating question: "Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in His eyes" (9)? The punishment was then pronounced.

All at once the chosen one confessed his guilt: "I have sinned against the Lord" (13). Psalm 51 gives articulation to the compunction of the sinner: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are

proved right when you speak and justified when you judge" (1-4). This is indeed a model confession of a penitent.

The Compassionate Master

This compunction touched the heart of the divine Formator. He mitigated the punishment (11:14-19). Although the sin was forgiven, its stain remained. Hence there took place in the life of the king a series of misfortunes and tragedies. The child born from adultery died a premature death, even though David tried his best to save its life through fasting, penance and prayer.

Reflection X

Although a Formator could forgive even grave sins, still he/she should be conscious of its grave consequences. The king, who was supposed to behave in an exemplary way in front of his people, had committed a crime against one of the citizens. Because of this the seriousness of his offence increased. The Formator did not give him a chance to save his skin through a single act of confession. The Lord brought upon David a lot of misfortunes, which may serve as a lesson for his people. Everybody involved in the ministry of formation should be aware of this divine justice.

A Feeble Hearted Man

The divine chastisement served as a turning point in the life of David. He became a very tender hearted person. At the same time the king became the victim of a vice, inordinate affection and tenderness towards his children and conniving at their faults. This brought a terrible consequence in his life. Few instances are cited below.

When Amnon, the elder son raped his half-sister, David did not take any action (13:1-21). Because of this sin Absalom murdered Amnon. Then the king tore his clothes and lay down on the ground (30-31), and day by day shed bitter tears for the killed one. Later the murderer was unconditionally forgiven with a kiss (14:33).

A Misfortune and a Flight

The Bitter Result of Blind Affection

David had to face the dire consequence for giving full freedom to Absalom for doing anything he wanted. The young man conspired against his father and proclaimed himself as king (15:1-12). The poor David had to flee Jerusalem in order to save his life (13-37).

The Suffering Servant

David was called to become a man after the heart of the Lord. Hence the divine Formator brought upon him the crosses which are the true mark of the followers of his Son. Thus the king was granted the grace to become the pre-figure of the suffering *Ebed* of Is. 52-53. The fleeing David from Jerusalem presents a pathetic picture, which will touch every heart. First he offered sacrifices before the Ark of God. Then he instructed to take the Ark back into the city (24-25). The king was weeping throughout the journey, his head being covered and walked barefoot, in the company of his best friends (30).

One Dedicated to the Divine Will

We can justly surmise how the heart of that devotee ached as he was forced to leave the holy city. So much he had loved that place of the divine presence. Even then he tried to unite his will with the divine will, and said: "If I find favour in the Lord's eyes, He will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. But if He says, 'I am not pleased with you,' then I am ready; let Him do to me whatever seems good to Him" (15:25-26). Is not this utterance the words of a formed one who had grown to the divine maturity?

On the way Shimei, a former servant of the king began to curse David and to pelt stones at him (16:5-14). The provoked companions of the king tried to kill that wicked man, but David did not allow them to do it by saying: "If he is cursing because the Lord said to him, 'curse David,' who can ask, 'why do you do this?'" "It may be that the Lord will look on my distress and the Lord may repay me with good for the cursing of me today" (10-12). The formed one was seeing the hand of God even in the painful events. Still he does not lose his hope that the merciful Lord, who caused him to be cursed by humans, may feel pity upon his wretchedness. Even when he was traversing the valley of darkness, David could proclaim his firm trust in the Lord. One may say that the king was successfully finishing the formation process through such an act.

A Suppliant

When the king heard that Ahithophel, his expert adviser joined the group of Absalom, he became desperate. The possibility of returning to Jerusalem seemed to have come to an end. Even at that time we find the formed one becoming a man of prayer: "O Lord, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness!" (15:31).

A Gratified Formator

The Master was well pleased with this divine mentality shown by the chosen one.

The Downfall of the Adversary

The one who dethroned David and captured power had to meet a tragic end (16:15-18:18). The reason was this. "The Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom" (17:14). Humanly speaking the possibility of returning was a closed chapter. But it is Yahweh who is the Lord of history. How could the divine Formator pretend not to see the bitter tears of his beloved one whom he had forced to drink from the chalice of suffering till the last drop? He gave back to David whatever he had lost and the king as a new being took hold of the reigns of the kingdom.

A Bewailing Formee

As we know the heart of God is like the heart of a father. The Lord gave such a tender mind to David. At the tragic death of the son who publically humiliated the king and forced him to flee, he wept aloud (18:19-19:18): "O my son Absalom! My son, my son, Absalom! If only I had died instead of you - O Absalom, my son, my son" (18:33)! At this heart-rendering cry, even the soldiers felt sad and left the place. The king was actually forgetting the royal responsibilities. Joab, the commander-in-chief got angry and accused him thus: "You love those who hate you and hate those who love you... I see that you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead" (19:6). At this harsh reproach the king got up to take his responsibilities.

A Man Who Advocated Unity

It was not easy to bring together the scattered people. As a good shepherd David tried his best to reconcile all and give each of them worthy positions and honours. Thus he could steal the heart of the people of Judah and they stood united with him (19:14). The king was noble to forgive even Shimei who had cursed him and hurled stones at him. David strongly rebuked his companions who wanted to kill that ignominious fellow. He showed generosity even to Mephibosheth (19:24-30), who wanted to become king in his place (16:1-3).

One Who Atoned for the Sin

Saul had earlier slaughtered many Gibeonites. Now David had to bear the aftermath of that cruel act (21:1-6). There was a famine of three years in the land. It was when David consulted the Lord that the cause was revealed to him. Promptly the king summoned the Gibeonites and asked them what kind of reparation he should do for the sin of his predecessor. He complied with their demand.

Disciple as a Living Hymn

To render thanks to the graces – that should be the trait of an authentic formed one. David began to dwell in the milieu of praise (22:1-51). That hymn began with enumerating the divine titles which were related to his life. “Yahweh is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation; He is my stronghold, my refuge and my saviour” (2-3). Then he recited the concrete acts of deliverance of his Master (4-20). The poet could see in the phenomena of the nature the picture of the One who came to save him. One can designate this song of praise as an articulation of his soul which was intimately united with the Lord. When the chosen one is favoured with such a vision, he/she could look at all things from the divine perspective. It can dwell in the world of the Psalmist who exclaims, “In your light we see light” (Ps.36:9).

Through verses 21-25 David pinpoints the righteousness which is essential for winning the divine graces. The king enumerates before the Lord his virtuous acts. Nothing is wrong with such an attitude. We can find there the figure of Hannah who poured out her soul to the Lord (1Sam.1:15). Through verses 26-30 the devotee addressed Yahweh in the second person singular. He is faithful to those who are faithful to him, and blameless to those who are blameless (26-27). The Lord saves the humble and brings low the haughty. Yahweh is his lamp who turns his darkness into light. With the divine help David could advance against a troop and scale a wall (29-30). Here the formed one becomes the paradigm of unshakable faith in the Lord, with whose help everything becomes possible to him.

The song ends with David’s firm determination to sing the divine praises among the nations (50-51). To put it briefly, we find in the hymn an overflow of different themes. Praise, confession, blessing, honouring the divine name, thanksgiving – all such acts are contextured in it. Third person pronouns and second person pronouns are inter-mixed in David’s address to the Lord. The hymn transcends all the logical norms, with which the ordinary people are accustomed

to use in their colloquy with God. Thus the song provides an excellent model of the freedom that human beings can enjoy in their conversation with the Lord.

Provocation and Chastisement

In the story of David we have the story of a man with flesh and blood. Thus we find in him who seemed to have attained the highest milieu of divine union, the tragic fall from the heights. His fall makes clear that the whole life has to be understood as a formation period. Stumbling and falling down as well as chastisement need to be repeated again and again throughout the whole life.

A Stumbled Disciple

David seemed to have succumbed to arrogance due to his many achievements in life. All on a sudden he decided to take the census of the people. The egoistic thought that he was the boss of innumerable folk induced him to take such a step. According to 1Chr.21:1-6 it was Satan who guided him in it, so that the devil wanted to bring disaster upon Israel. This made the Lord angry (2Sam.24:1-9), and the Formator was ready to punish the formee. Then David confessed his sin and said: "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now O Lord, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing" (2Sam.24:10).

Yahweh announced the punishment through Gad, the prophet (24:11-13). The guilty one can select one from three sanctions, three years of famine, three months of fleeing from the pursuing enemies, and three days of plague in the land. The king did not want to be captured by the enemies. Hence he opted for the third evil, thinking that Yahweh is merciful (14). Accordingly God sent plague on Israel and seventy thousand people died. When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord himself was grieved and asked the angel to stop the slaughter (15-16).

Act of Confession and Sacrifice of Atonement

When David saw the angel striking down the people, he confessed his guilt: "I am the one who has sinned and done wrong... Let your hand fall upon me and my family" (17).

At this confession the Formator relented. He instructed David through Gad to build an altar on the threshing-floor of Arauna the Jebusite (18). The king did accordingly (18-25). He bought the threshing-floor,

built an altar and sacrificed to the Lord burnt offerings and peace offerings. Then the plague ceased.

Reflection XI

Formators should be always ready to forgive even greatest offences of the formees, if they repent and atone for the sins. The whole formation process should be built on the awareness that the humans are feeble minded. The guilty ones should not be content merely by repentance by word alone. They should be ready to pay the price for their sin. Only then the formation will become effective.

The Last Days

We do not have very detailed account of the further days of the life of David. The old man was shivering all over with cold (1Kgs.1:1-4). Concerning the choice of his successor, he fell into the influence of Bathsheba and Nathan, and made Solomon king (15-40).

His Testament

A Divine Mentality

David gave the following exhortation to the new king: "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, show yourself a man and observe what the Lord your God demands: walk in His ways, and keep His decrees and commands, his laws and requirements as written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, and that the Lord may keep His promise to me: if your descendants watch how they live and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel." These words come from the lips of an authentic formed one of the Lord.

The Echo of Immaturity

Unfortunately the subsequent words do not exhibit a divine ideal (5-9). David was displeased with two deeds of Joab who had served faithfully throughout his life. Now he asks Solomon to punish him (5-6). Also the new king should take vengeance against Shimei who had cursed David (8-9). This advice brings out the fire of revenge which was burning in the heart of the one whom God has designated as a man after His own heart. This sentiment will ever remain a blemish in the personality of David.

The next request was to show kindness to the sons of Barzillai (7). Here we find only the idea of loving those who have loved the family.

Thus there is no trace of the ideology of Christ who said: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt.5:44). The present formees should be guided by the acts of the heavenly Father who causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Mt.5:45).

The Final Reflection

Man is an insignificant and inconsistent being, one who is formed from dust, and has to return to the dust, a mere *qaton*, one who does not have anything, one who is not anything, a feeble creature who is always inclined to sin. The portrait of David provides us a true picture of the wicked and despicable man. The divine Formator was well aware of this eternal truth. Still he designated David as one after His own heart, and filled him with the blessings. The Lord made the shepherd boy king and lifted him to the heights of perfection, and transformed him into a being of praise. The chosen one generally responded well to the divine graces, and showed submission, hatred for evil and lived in communion and communication. Still now and then the formee failed to live up to his call. At such occasions the Master tried to bring his beloved back to the right track by disciplining him. Acts of repentance and confessions of sins were repeated again and again. But the divine Formator never became disgusted with his formee and leave out his formative process. According to the situation He made use of the four methods of *samam* (pacification), *bedam* (splitting), *danam* (donation) and *dhandam* (torture). Still the old man in David did not die even till the last moment of his life. He communicated his son the message of revenge.

Can we say whether God had succeeded in his formation? Certainly it was not a hundred percent success, thanks to the failure of the formee. Still the Master loved his disciple with his heart and soul and promised him an everlasting dynasty. The divine Formator trusted the one who was not trustworthy. This was indeed the folly in human eyes, but wisdom from the divine perspective (1Cor.1:25). This is indeed the sublimity of the art of divine formation. Let the human formators take inspiration and courage from this noble model of God.