

**ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF
SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH
IN KERALA**

By

REGINA VALIYAVEETIL

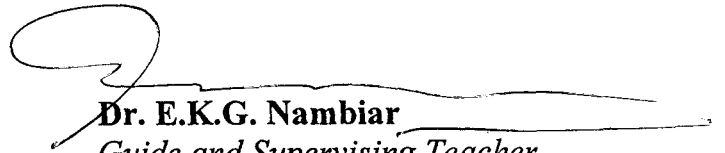
**THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
KERALA**

MARCH 2004

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled "**Origin and Development of Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala**" submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Calicut is a record of bonafide research carried out by Regina Valiyaveetil under my supervision.



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D E C L A R A T I O N

I declare that, this written account entitled "**Origin and Development of Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala**" is the record of research work done by me under the supervision of Dr. E.K.G. Nambiar and it has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree, diploma or other similar titles of recognition.

University of Calicut.
March 20, 2004.

Regina Valiyaveettil

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis on 'Origin and Development of Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Kerala' is the result of my study and research during the years 1997-2003 in the Department of History, Calicut University.

I have been working as a lecturer in the department of History, St. Aloysious College, Elthuruth, Trichur, for the past 12 years. Being a history teacher and a member of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Community, I was interested to know the origin and growth of the church and I have made an attempt to make an analytical study of the church.

With a heart full of gratitude I acknowledge the abundant grace that **God Almighty** has showered upon me without which this work would never been possible.

I deem it my most pleasant duty to gratefully acknowledge the invaluable and scholarly guidance given to me by **Dr. E.K.G. Nambiar, Prof. & Head, Kunhali Marakkar Centre for West Asian Studies, Vadakara**, who has been kind enough to be my guide. I sincerely thank him for the constructive criticisms and useful instructions that enabled me to pursue the research work relentlessly.

I express my deep sense of gratitude to **Dr. K.J. John, Head of the Department of History, Calicut University** who had given me all the necessary co-operation during the course of the preparation of this work.

Dr. Andrews Thazhath, B.D., D.O.C.L., Chancellor of Trichur Arch Diocese, has extended all sorts of help by providing me with all the required materials and he was also kind enough to translate the Latin

and Italian documents. I profoundly thank him for his timely suggestions and constant support.

I express my profound indebtedness to the authorities of Ernakulam and Trichur Arch Diocesan Archives, Libraries and the Directors of various Diocesan associations and the directors of State Archives, Trivandrum, Archeological Museum, Trichur and Madras for kindly permitting me to use their collections and records.

I express my gratitude to **Dr. P.J. Thomas**, for his constant encouragement and help in finding materials which are relevant sources to complete my work.

I would be failing in my duties if I am not expressing my gratitude to V.K. Antony, Mary Kunjuvareed, M. Haridas, P.N. Narayanan, Pius Valiyaveettil, E. Kesavan Namboothiri, who have shared with me some of their green memories that helped me in understanding some significant events connected with Malabar and present Kerala.

I express my profound gratitude to one and all who have helped me one way or other in bringing out this thesis.

Regina Valiyaveettil

C O N T E N T S

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Man, both ancient and modern in his search for truth, peace and happiness is never utterly indifferent to religion, a fact confirmed by the experience of ages past and plentiful evidences in the present. Submission to a supreme powerful unknown being, who controls the whole universe, was the nature of man throughout the ages, at least when he found himself helpless and disturbed because of the realities which were out of his control. He uttered spontaneously the word "God" without knowing who God is and what his nature is. This natural impulse in man moved him towards his creator. Man bowed his head before him and asked his favours in his hours of need for he felt that God is all powerful and good.

Man worshipped God in different forms and called him different names. God revealed himself to man in various ways down to the centuries and there were people who experienced him and who could not experience him.

The Bible reflects the restless search of man for life's meaning and this search was guided by God. Believers understand that ultimately God who is great and holy has bent down through love for man and has spoken to him. God has revealed himself to men under the Old Covenant (Bible) through the patriarchs and prophets and under the new covenant he has spoken to us through His Son Jesus Christ and his apostles.

God has spoken to men to tell them who men are and what men are to do. He has opened to men truths which otherwise would have remained forever secret. Christ came to the world and taught men by his words and by his examples. He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life"¹. "I am the light

¹ *The Holy Bible*, John 14/6.

of the world, whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness”².

The people of Kerala were fortunate enough to know Christ in the first century of Christian era. Apostle St. Thomas, the founder of Indian church according to tradition boldly preached the ‘Good News’ about Christ to the people of Kerala, and the response was astonishing. In course of time Christianity was accepted in Kerala as an indigenous faith and it obtained substantial following among the people. In the early centuries the Syrians and from the 16th Century onwards the Latins (The Portuguese) provided leadership to the Kerala (Malabar) Christian Church and this finally paved the way for the formation of Christians of Kerala into two communities, Syrians and Latins. The Syrian Catholics of Malabar began to be known as Syro-Malabar Catholics. The word ‘Syro’ referred to in their liturgical language ‘Syriac’. Malabar was a region located on the south west coast of India, corresponding in great part to the modern state of Kerala.

Religion is essentially a social phenomenon, which can only be evaluated accurately in relation to the social facts in the structure, organization and sanctions in the society in which it emerges. Unquestionably it is true that the institutions of religion function within the structure of society and under specific social conditions, largely for the purpose of maintaining and regulating human relationships and adjustments, stabilizing economic, political, social and spiritual institutions. Thus at every level of cultural development religion has exercised its functions primarily in a social milieu, enabling human beings to live together in an orderly arrangement of social relations. But the sociological and historical aspects of the discipline should be complementary. As Christopher Dawson has pointed out, “the social way of life influences the approach to religion and the religious attitude

² *The Holy Bible*, John 8/12.

influences the way of life”³. The history of religion, in fact, has entered to a considerable extent in the interaction of all these elements in the maintenance of a stable way of life.

It is now more widely recognized, however, that religions at all the stages of its emergence and development is a living reality expressing and adopting itself to the prevailing conditions of culture and knowledge. Therefore, it must be studied and evaluated seriously, sympathetically, ethically and comparatively at its respective horizons and within its spheres of influence.

The evolutionary approach to the study of the origin and development of the human race, its culture and religion had revolutionary effects upon the philosophical situation in the last century. Considered archaeologically it would now appear that early man was concerned primarily with the most arresting situations with which he was confronted – those of birth, propagation, subsistence and death. These in fact, have been the fundamental events and experiences in human society at all times. Life depended very largely on the hazards of the chase and the precarious supply of natural resources, the vagaries of the seasons and so many other unpredictable and uncontrollable circumstances by the human means available, the emotional tension was endemic. To sublimate this a ritual technique was devised and developed to meet these requirements and to maintain equilibrium in an expanding social structure and religious organization where every scarp of creative intelligence and ingenuity, supported and supplemented by superabundance transcendental assistance was urgently needed. This combination of human ability and the ritual control of natural processes and phenomena, especially on critical occasions, played a predominant part in the dawn and development of culture and religion. Ways and means had to be

³ C. Dawson, *Religion and Culture*, London, 1948, p.57

found to enable man cope with the ever-present perplexing and unpredictable problems confronting him in his terrestrial surroundings.

Prior to the transition from food-gathering to food-production at the end of the old stone age when after the Mesolithic interlude Neolithic culture began to become established in the ancient Near East in the fifth millennium B.C, the principal concern appears to have been centered in the food supply, propagation and the afterlife. Therefore, around an adequate supply of food and offspring of man and beast, the institutions of religion have found expression, apparently from Palaeolithic times. Of all the religions, Catholics and among the modern Oriental Catholic Churches, the Syro-Malabar Church has a unique place. It is the first and largest community of Oriental Catholics of the free world. It stands higher not only in the number of its members but also in every activity and is one of the most flourishing churches of our time.

Among the churches in India, Syro-Malabar Church occupies an important position. Trichur in Kerala is the cradle of Indian Christianity. Cranganore,⁴ where St. Thomas is believed to have landed in 52 A.D., is in the district of Trichur. Even though the Syro-Malabar Church is as old as Christianity itself, it separated and became an autonomous church only in 1887. The study of the remarkable progress of Syro-Malabar church since 1887 is important and interesting. To estimate how far the Syro-Malabar Church has progressed since 1887, one must make a comparative study of its position in society then and now. Its varied activities and achievements in course of the past hundred years are memorable.

The church is not merely an invisible kingdom, but also a visible community. The Syro-Malabar community is well known for its church-centered life. There are two reasons for the remarkable present day interest in

⁴ P.J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay, 1970, p.18.

church; the imposing fact of the church and the moral and intellectual need of the modern man.

The Syro-Malabar church in Kerala has completed a century on the 20th May of 1987. This church claims the senior most rank among the Christian churches of Kerala.

How do the people experience their church, how does the church work on them and on the society as a whole, the effects of the creative forces of the church are the questions that I have tried to analyze in this work.

Objective and significance of the Study

Syro – Malabar Catholic Church (hereafter SMC) in India is one of the most ancient churches of the world claiming nearly 2000 years of History.⁵ Tracing its origin and development and evaluating its contributions and limitations therefore have great historical and academic value and timely too, as it is now stepping into another millenium in its history.

It is self evident that no institution of any nature can survive for such a long time unless it is well organised and has an efficient administrative set up. Hence the administrative set up of the SMC is worth studying and has great academic value.

It is well known that the history of SMC apart from its religious aspect presents an illuminating struggle to preserve its identity against western influence. It is worth examining that its struggle to preserve orientation from ‘westernism’ especially when Christianity in India is generally labelled as something ‘Western’ and becoming crucified by some on that ground.

⁵ Paul Thenayan, *The Missionary Consciousness of the St. Thomas Christians*, Cochin. 1982, p.. 172.

Colonialism in India led to the interaction and domination of different cultures and finally paved the way for the decay of cultures.⁶ Yet it seems that SMC has withstood the test of time political and religious colonialism and has preserved its identity and culture. This fact needs to be tested through a close examination of the liturgy, social, religious and political life of SMC.

An organisation is an ubiquitous phenomenon in modern society. They play such an important role in human life today and it is impossible for one to live without at least a few of the organisations. As Talcott Parsons says, "organisations are the principal mechanism by which, in a highly differentiated society, it is possible to 'get things done', to achieve goals beyond the reach of the individual."⁷ Hence the study of any aspect of an organisation like Church could be atleast a small contribution to modern history

Kerala is one of the most educationally and economically developed states of India and the role played by Christianity in the all round development of Kerala is widely accepted. SMC being the most ancient and dominant Church of Kerala⁸ deserves the dominant share of this credit. Therefore the contributions made by SMC in the various fields also deserve academic attention.

In the course of history SMC has undergone conspicuous changes in the social and religious fields. Hence the objective of the present study is to analyse the changing patterns of this society in Kerala and to examine the

⁶ The reference is to the post colonial theories which questions and challenges the 'Whiteman's burden'. Bart Moore Gilbert, *Post Colonial Theory, Contacts, Practices, Politics*, London.1997

⁷ T.Parsons, *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, London, 1990, p.41

⁸ Numerically the St. Thomas Christians have the dominant share of the Christian population in Kerala. Statistical details are furnished in chapter II.

organisation more thoroughly and scientifically. Hopefully the SMC with a unique organisational feature will be a 'natural laboratory' for a careful and analytical historic study.

SMC had been in the Indian soil nearly for 2000 years. But the Christian population in India and even in Kerala remains 3% and 20% of the total population respectively; indicating that its history has been only a history of survival (and stagnation!) and not a history of growth (or decay). This strikes any student of history who knows that Christianity had exhibited a high potential of growth in the world at least in certain periods of history. The final objective of this study is to explore this phenomenon and to bring out the challenges before the SMC and offer suggestions that come out in course of this historical research.

Finally, the history of SMC too is the history of the challenges and responses. As in the case of the other religions of the world and the world itself unprecedented waves of challenges are before SMC also. It is necessary and relevant to examine these preparedness and strength of SMC to respond to these challenges and offer suggestions.

Methodology, Problems and Limitations of the Study

This study is based mainly on the historical and descriptive materials collected from the Archives and libraries of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The primary sources belong to several categories, of which important are the Government Orders, State and Church chronicles, Diocesan and parish bulletins, ecclesiastical letters, diaries and circulars of Bishops, Annual Reports of religious and state organisations, government gazetteers, government and religious circulars, directories etc. The data is supplemented with personal interviews. The records of the parishes,

institutions and the associations have also been used as primary sources of data collection. Stone inscriptions, remnants of buildings, monuments, paintings, manuscripts, copper plates , coins etc also have benefited as primary sources. The secondary sources have been the monographs, souvenirs and journals.

Though this study is on a religious institution it is purely analytical and descriptive. It is an attempt to explain the life of living cell by mere enumeration of all the material that forms it. To describe a thing is not to explain it fully. Just as the loving child alone can truly know the character of its beloved mother, and just as the deepest element of that character, the tenderness and intimacies of her maternal love, cannot be demonstrated by argument but only learnt by experience, just so only the believing and loving ones can see into the heart of the church, the secret forces and fundamental motive powers of its being. Thus the religious nature of the topic of the study becomes a limitation.

A religious institution can not be studied, understood and evaluated like a temporal institution even if the former has the structures and characteristics of the latter. What appears meaningless, insignificant and irrelevant in the eyes of a non-believer may be most meaningful, significant and relevant to a believer.

Another general limitation of the study is its ethnographic nature. Though it is a historical research, when it comes to the study of the life and culture of a community known as Christian community it assumes the nature of an ethnographical study and all ethnographic studies are bound to be partial. But effort has been made to make it objective.

However the most crucial limitation and difficulty of this study is that the major part of the period of this study covers a period where there is no documentary evidence which necessitates excessive dependence on traditions.

Any historical study about St. Thomas Christian community of the first fifteen centuries is arduous as there exists very few records of their life during that period. The whole story lies shrouded in legends, fables, fictions and enduring details⁹ in which is hidden some fragmentary information. Invariably one has no other option but to fall back on which is claimed as tradition.

The scope of the study is limited to the modern period. Returning to the authentic sources of the ancient period seems to be impossible and hence prevents the study more dynamic, chronological and relative.

PLAN OF STUDY

This study is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter I, the introductory Chapter, besides introducing the subject, specifies the objectives, significance, relevance, methodology, problems and limitations of the study. It also surveys the literature so far made about the SMC.

Chapter II provides a macro level approach to Christianity and St. Thomas, its founder, its historical background, administrative structure, major divisions etc. with special reference to India.¹⁰

Chapter III begins with a brief description of Kerala and its history, as Kerala is the home of S M C and hence the setting of this research. It is followed by an analysis of the origin and development of S M C. This aspect is analysed by dividing its history into three broad periods i.e., Syrian or pre-Portuguese upto sixteenth century, Portuguese or the Padroado and Propaganda period i.e. upto 1900 A.D. and the period under the Indigenous Bishops i.e., the modern period. The Portuguese attempts to Latinise the S M

⁹ A.M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. 1, Bangalore, 1984, p.2.

¹⁰ This study cannot be proceeded without this background knowledge about St. Thomas and his history and the propagation of Christianity in India.

C and the resistance to and results of such attempts as division of the church are also specially dealt in this Chapter.¹¹

Chapter IV – Social, Religious and Administrative structure of Syro-Malabar Church – presents a cross-sectioned view of the S M C. It deals mainly with its structural aspect. This chapter is divided into three sections. Section I deals with the social structure and cultural life of Syro-Malabar Christians. Section II, deals with their Liturgico – and Religious life and Section III deals with the Administrative structure. All these three aspects are analysed with a historical perspective emphasizing the various changes that had taken place to these structures in course of time.

Chapter V is about the Missionary enterprises of St. Thomas Christians. When one speaks of the St. Thomas Christian Church in India, the impression it creates is often of a church that always confined to Malabar, with no roots or rights beyond South India. This chapter try to analyse the attempts of St. Thomas Christians to spread their faith among their countrymen and even outside India.

Chapter VI – The Role of Syro-Malabar Church in the Social, Political and Economic life of Kerala, on the other hand generally deals with the functional aspect of the S M C in the secular life of Kerala. This chapter is also presented in three sections. Section I examines the role of S M C in the social life of Kerala with special reference to its role in social reformation, social service particularly in the field of education including the development of Malayalam language, literature, journalism, etc., and in the field of health. Section II deals with the role of S M C in the political development of Kerala, their role in the freedom struggle and in the modern democratic set up of

¹¹ At certain points there is a slight overlapping of Chapter II and Chapter III. This risk of repetition became unavoidable as the history of Christianity in India is the history of S M C to a very great extent.

Kerala. And Section III deals with the economic life of St. Thomas Christians and their role in the economic development of Kerala with special reference to their migration to the Northern and Eastern parts of Kerala and the development of these areas.

Chapter VII, titled as 'Problems and Prospects of Syro-Malabar Church is an evaluation of S M C with a secular perspective. This chapter attempts to examine the achievements limitations and challenges of SMC in various fields. It also examines the hurdles – past and present stand in her ways and offers suggestions to overcome these hurdles and direct its efforts to achieve its objectives more fruitfully and attain a meaningful existence in the Indian soil by summarizing the major findings of the study.

Review of literature:

Though SMC has a long history literature on its history is comparatively few. The few literature on it can be divided in the following way.

1. General Studies on Indian or Kerala Christianity having glimpses of SMC.
2. Exclusive works on Syro-Malabar Church and general studies on Indian or Kerala Christianity having glimpses of SMC
3. Studies related to particular persons, periods, events or aspects, related to SMC.

Among the note worthy work on Indian Christianity which throw light on SMC are *The Christian Churches of the East* by D. Attwater *The History of Christianity in India from The Commencement of the Christian Era* in two volumes by J. Hough, *The church in Kerala* by T. Inchakalody, *India and Apostle Thomas* by E. Medlycott, *A History of Christianity in India* by G.M.

Moraes, *The story of the Christian Church in India and Pakistan* by Stephen Neil, *A History of Christianity in India* in two volumes by the same author, *Christianity in India* by A.C. Perumalil. *Christianity in India* by Xavier Koddapuzha, *History of Christianity in India*, six volumes published by the church History Association of India *Christian Heritage of Kerala* by K.J. John etc. .

Among the exclusive works on Syro-Malabar Church, the most note worthy are *The Syrian Christian in Malabar* by Bertholomia of Jesus (1917). *The Anthropology of Syrian Christians* (1926) by Ananthakrishan Iyer, *A Brief Sketch of the History of the St. Thomas Christian* by Bernard Thomma, *The St. Thomas Christians* (Mal) Vol. I and Vol. II by the same author. *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas'* by L.W. Brown, *The Malabar Christians and the Church Missionary Society* by P. Cheriyan, *The Syrian Church in Malabar* by J. Daniel, *The Syrian Colonization of Malabar* by Thomas Chazhikadan, *The Malabar Christian and Their Ancient Documents* by T.K. Joseph, *The Syrian Church in India* by C.M. Rae, *The Indian Christian of St. Thomas* by W.J. Richal etc.

In the IIIrd category the following authors and their works on SMC or Syro-Malabar Christian Community (SMCC) deserve special mention.

Placid. J. Podipara is a pioneer historian and prolific writer who has published about two dozen books and scores of articles on various aspects of SMC. His two books, *The Thomas Christians* and *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, discuss the problem of authority in the SMC. According to him, the pre-Portuguese structure of the community was quite decentralised and culturally adapted to Indian milieu. The Portuguese interference not only damaged the cultic and social identity of the community, but also ushered in the centralised, authoritarian mode of administration. By slighting the

authority of the archdeacon they caused great damage to the unity of the community and to its status in the eyes of the non-Christians.

A.M. Mundadan, who has done a number of studies on the history of the SMC, has made a special investigation into the struggle of the community for autonomy in his book, *Indian Christians : Search for identity and Struggle for Autonomy*. In this work Mundadan shows that the community enjoyed great autonomy in the pre-Portuguese period because the administration was fully in the hands of the archdeacon and with the yogam in which the bishops did not interfere and that this autonomy was destroyed by the Portuguese interference. Speaking about the present structure, Mundadan shows that it is very much centralized in bishop but sees attempts for the development of an organizational pattern suited to the genius of Indian culture.

Literature related to particular persons, period, events or aspects related to SMC are *The history of the church of Malabar from 1501 till 1599* by M. Geddes, *The Church in India before and after the Synod of Diamper* by V.C. George, *The Apostolate and Martyrdom of St. Thomas* by the same author and *The Road to Diamper* by K.J. John.

Some other useful books for the present study are *Christians of St. Thomas and Their Liturgies* by G.B. Howard, *The Jesuits in Malabar* (Vol. I and II) by D.Ferrolli, *The Archdeacon of All India* by J. Kollamparabil, *The Orthodoxy of the St. Thomas Christians (Mal)* by P. Kurian, *Christianity in Travancore* by G.T. Mackenzie *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christian under Mar Jacob 1498- 1550'* by M. Mundadan. *The Traditions of St. Thomas Christians* by the same author, *Yogam in the Malabar Church* by J. Palamir, *An Account of a very important period of the Catholic Syrian of Malabar* by Pazeparambil, *A Period of Decline of the Mar Thomas Christian* by J. Perumthollam, *A period of Conflict in the Suriani church of India* by Abraham Jose, *St. Thomas Christians and the Archdiocese*

of Veropoly by L.M. Pylee *The Malabar Church and Rome*. During the early Portuguese period and before by G. Schahammer. *Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan* by P. Thomas, *The Suriani Church of India -Her Quest for Autonomous Bishops* by Varial Cheriyan, *The Freedom Fighters of Thomas Christians* by Kurianal James etc.

The Archdeacon of All-India, a research work by Jacob Kollaparambil, is a historico- juridical study of the important office of Archdeacon that existed in the community till the beginning of the 18th century. The author makes a systematic analysis of the powers, rights, privileges and obligations of the archdeacon. At the end of his study. Kollaparambil pleads for the restoration of the office of the archdeacon: He proposes a number of changes in the existing canon law to this effect.

J. Kollaparambil has also made another interesting historical study about the change of authority and leadership in the community in the 17th century in his book *The St. Thomas Christians Revolution in 1653*. The main cause of the revolt according to Kollaparambil is the misguided religious zeal and shameless temporal interests of the Portuguese.

Another study about Syro- Malabar Church is *The Synod of Diamper* by Jonas Thaliath in which a legal analysis of the event before, during and after the synod of Diamper is discussed Thaliath proves that the Synod was invalid and illegal from every point of view. Besides, two other points are also brought to light by the study. Firstly, the unique administrative style of the SMC till the Synod. Viz., the participation of the clergy and the laity in decision making. Secondly, the study reports the major administrative changes introduced by the Synod.

Varkey Vithayathil, in his research study *The Origin and progress of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy* has analysed the nature and development of the

hierarchical structure of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church from the juridical point of view. An important conclusion that he draws from the study is that even though the hierarchy that was restored to the church in 1923 is “ de jure” oriental and its bishops are Indians, the whole structure ‘ de facto’ continues to be Latin in style.

Joseph Thekkedath, the author of the *History of Christianity in India* (Vol. II) has made research into the 17th Century history of the St. Thomas Christians and has shown how the power interests of both the Portuguese missionaries and the leaders of the Christians clashed with each other to cause the great division of the community in 1653.

G. T. Macenzie, who was British Resident in Travancore and Cochin, has written a very important article on the history of the St. Thomas Christians under the title, *Christianity in Travancore*. Macenzie seems to defend and justify the interference of the Portuguese in the internal administration of the St. Thomas Christians, arguing that the Christians were Nestorians and therefore Archbishop Menezes would have failed in a plain duty which lay before him if he had not done his utmost to bring these Thomas Christians into conformity with Rome. Similarly, Mackenzie also finds nothing wrong in the manner in which the Synod of Diamper was conducted and in the alterations which Menezes introduced in the liturgy of SMC.

A. Kanjirathinkal’s study *A Church in struggle* is a historico-juridical analysis of the reforms of Msgr. Bernardino Baccineli of St. Teresa, OCD, who was the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly from 1853 to 1868. The period under study was the time when serious attempts were being made by the leaders of the SMC to obtain native bishops.

T. Pallipurathukunnel has done research on the history of the SMC from the second half of the 17th Century to the beginning of the 18th. In his book, *A Double Regime in the Malabar Church* (1663- 1716) he points out that it was during this period that the community was brought under the authority of bishops appointed by the congregation for the propagation of Faith, Rome, while the Portuguese bishops were already in authority under the Padroado arrangement.

In a study on the *Genesis and Institutionalisation of the Indian Catholicism*, F. Houtart and G. Lemercinier argue that there were economic, political and religious objectives in the Portuguese attempts to colonise India. But the economic and political interests were neatly camouflaged by a glittering religious garb. According to him the Portuguese intervention caused the transformation of a predominantly traditional type of administration in to a predominantly bureaucratic and legal type.

The charismatic personality and leadership of Rev. Fr. Kuriakos Elias Chavara (1805- 71), an outstanding leader of SMC in the last century has been studied by several authors. (Fr. Chavara was beautified by pope John Paul II at Kottayam during his visit to Kerala in 1986. Chavara is the first Indian to be officially declared ‘ Blessed’ by the Catholic Church). 'The Pastoral Vision of Kuriakos Elias Chavara' by Joseph Kanjiramattathil is a research study on Chavara's spiritual vision, his leadership and heroism in protecting the unity of SMC, his farsightedness in starting a printing press and his contributions to renew and reform the spiritual and socio-cultural life of the SMC.

Two other important studies on the life and works of Chavara are *Fr. Kuriakos Elias Chavara* (Malayalam) by Fr. Valerian, O.C.D. and *Father Kuriakos Elias Chavara* by K.C. Chacko. Both the works are mainly biographical. They also examine Chavara's main contributions to the SMC

and bring to light his charismatic leadership at a time when the community was backward in spiritual as well as social life and was consequently threatened with disunity and schism.

Another outstanding leader of the community, Fr. Emmanuel Nidhiri, has been studied by V.C. George in his book, *Father Emmanuel Nidhiri* (Malayalam). The same personality has also been studied by Abraham M. Nidhiri in the book, *Father Nidhiri, A History of his Times*. These works are not mere biographies but historical studies about the SMC in the second half of the last century.

Another biographical and historical work worth mentioning is the study on *The life and leadership of Mar Louis Pazheparambil* one of the first indigenous bishops of the community, *Mar Louis Pazheparambil: Life and Times* (Malayalam) by I.C Chacko, Mar Louis (1847- 1919) was a close colleague of Fr. Nidhiri in his efforts for obtaining local bishops and effecting the reunion of Jacobites. Later he himself appointed the first indigenous bishop of the vicariate Apostolic of Ernakulam. According to the author, Mar Louis was a relentless crusader for the establishment of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy. The study brings out the leadership that Mar Louis showed in achieving this goal. As I.C.Chacko observes, he was the first among the Syro-Malabar Catholic to demand native bishops instead of bishops from Persia.

M.O. Joseph has made a study of *Thachil Mathootharakan* a powerful leader of the SMC in the 18th century who played an important role in the repeated efforts to get native bishops for the community and to effect the reunion of the separated groups.

Andrews Thazhath's book *The Juridical sources of the Syro-Malabar Church* justifies its title. In this the author has collected all available sources

about SMC and arranged it in a chronological order and make it highly useful for research of particular epochs and institution of SMC.

Another book *The Missionary Consciousness of the St. Thomas Christians* by Paul Thenayan deals with the missionary activities of the St. Thomas Christian and examines the reasons for the meagre outcome of their missionary activities and the issues involved in it.

A recent book *Authority in the Catholic Community in Kerala* by Jose Kuriyath is a sociological study of the changes in the authority structure of the SMC. According to the author the authority in the SMC is centralised in the office of the bishop and is only marginally shared by other clergy and the laity and the authority of the SMC today is highly bureaucratized.

The most recent book *Kerala sabharatnagal* by John Kachiramattam published in Oct. 2000 is a biographical description of the popular persons of the Kerala Christian Community who contributed in different ways for the progress of the Kerala Society. The author seeks to shed light on several areas that are ignored or dismissed by all other church historians like the role of the members of this community in the socio economic and political movements. His attempts to record the scattered source materials in one book deserve attention.

The above review of literature brings out the following limitations of the existing literature on SMC. First of all almost all of them barring a few, are not recent works. Hence they fail to provide recent developments of the Syro. Malabar Church. Secondly almost all of them give undue importance to the struggle of St. Thomas Christians against the Portuguese at the expenses of ignoring other aspects of Syro-Malabar church during that period. They were mere political history of SMC. Thirdly none of them give due importance to the contributions made by the Syro-Malabar Church to the

social , political , religious and cultural life of Kerala. Similarly they did not pay much attention to the problems, limitations, challenges and prospects of Syro-Malabar Church in the modern period.

In short it is possible to say that the available literature on SMC is made by the religious people in a religious context with religious purpose. Serious and comprehensive academic research work on Syro – Malabar Church has been lacking. Church is not a building, But an organisation of a community of people. Hence the study is the Histroy of a community organized under the leadership of the church.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIANITY AND INDIA

Among the religions of the world, Christianity¹ founded by Jesus Christ, commands the largest following² In the Pre- Constantine period, Christianity was making its way as religion without formal official toleration and later in the face of strenuous efforts of emperors to extirpate it. Under Constantine began the official steps through 'the Edict of Milan' in 313 A.D by which Christianity sponsored by the state, become the official cult in the 4th century A.D Soon Christianity began to spread to other parts of the world and the Christian religious community came to be known as the church.³

At the dawn of the Christian era in the basin of the Mediterranean, where Christianity had its origin, and the lands immediately adjacent to it formed the centre of the most powerful and complex culture which man has as yet developed. In to it, poured the influences of nearly all the then known high civilizations.⁴ Its population represented or had the influence of the Jews, Greeks, Romans and most of cultured groups of people. Christianity associated with the Mediterranean culture, reinforcing mutually, entered hand in

¹ Christianity believes that God, the almighty, the Creator and the Father of all, has bent down through love for man and has revealed Himself to man by sending His son Jesus Christ to the world. Since the age 30 Jesus Christ started preaching the Kingdom of God. He loved his fellow men and taught the people to love their friends as well as foes He healed the sick and fed the hungry. His simple life, magnetizing personality, outstanding love and compassion for all drew large numbers of people around him. His teachings and activities roused the opposition of Jewish high priests who accused him of blasphemy. He was crucified under the orders of Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, Three days after his crucifixion, it is believed, Christ was resurrected. With the resurrection of Christ his disciples went about preaching the Gospel, the good news, to all the peoples of the World as entrusted by their Lord.

² The estimated world population in 2000 is 6259.6 million. Among these Christian population constitute 2019.9 that is 32.3 per cent. See : *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, Oxford University Press, London.

³ According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, the word " Church" refers both to the Christian religious community and to the building used for Christian worship.

⁴ Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* Vol. 1. New York, 1971, p.7.

hand a new era of geographic extension. No other faith has ever obtained an undivided allegiance of a people of high culture unless associated with military conquest. It has seldom since succeeded in becoming the predominant faith of any people which at the time of their conversion possessed an advanced culture.⁵

When Christianity entered upon the scene, the Greco Roman world had already started showing signs of a long fatal illness of cultural disintegration. For a considerable period before the advent of Christianity the traditional state and family cult of the Greco-Roman world had been losing its hold, especially among the educated people, as it was outdated⁶. Since the time of Alexander the Great the Mediterranean World had been in a state of flux. The barriers that divided people rapidly dissolved and the intermingling of the individuals and ideas weakened the old cultures and religions. It was a period of serious moral degradation; an age perplexed by the transitoriness of all things and by the desire for immortality.⁷ Christianity supplies what the Greco-Roman world was asking of religion and philosophy. The ethical, philosophical and religious ferment of Christianity contributed to its remarkable spread.⁸ The political unity under Augustus, the famous Roman roads, and the favourable conditions for trade, all facilitated the movement of groups, individuals and ideas. The expansion of Christianity through trade routes was only natural. The presence of Greek language as the 'lingua franca' and the popularity achieved by the Latin language also proved favourable to the Christian expansion. Christianity glorified in its appeal to the Jews and the Gentile, the Greek, and the Barbarians.⁹

A high standard of morality and spirituality was another reason for its success. The manifest exhibition of love in practice drew many to the Christian faith. For Christians Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, all

⁵ Latourette, *op. cit.*, p.7.

⁶ Lawrence. W.Brown. *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia*, Cambridge, 1933, p.1.

⁷ Stephen Neil, *A History of Christian Missions Great Britain*, 1984, p.40.

⁸ Paul Thenayan. *The Missionary Consciousness of St. Thomas Christian, Cochin*, 1982, p.39.

⁹ *Ibid.*,

are one in Christ Jesus. This attitude helped social reformation also indirectly weakening the institution of slavery.¹⁰

The persecutions both weakened and strengthened Christianity. The attitude of the martyrs made a deep impression even on the hard Roman Public.¹¹ To a certain extent persecutions created an ability for the young Christianity to persist and spread in the face of bitter and often sanguinary opposition.¹² As it spread, certain cities became key centres of Christian life and missionary endeavor notably Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople in the East, and Rome in the west – with the result that their practices and rites became diffused throughout their spheres of influence.

Later the church split into two broad groups, the western church under the Pope in Rome and the Eastern Churches under the Patriarchates of Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople.¹³ Still later, further series of disruptions took place mainly centered on the dogmas or the authority of the pope, the most vertical division among them was the division of the

¹⁰ Paul Thenayan, *op. cit.*, p.39.

¹¹ Stephen Neil, *op.cit.*.p. 43

¹² Latourette, *op. cit.* p. 162

¹³ There are six liturgical families in the Christian tradition. They are Roman, Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian, Church of the East (Chaldean) and Byzantine. All these except the East Syrian had their origin and development within the Roman Empire. When the Roman Empire was divided into eastern and western in the fourth century the Roman liturgical tradition spread in the West. But the Churches of the important centres like Constantinople (Byzantium) Antioch, Alexandria etc., of the Eastern Roman Empire developed their own liturgical traditions which gradually spread into the neighbouring regions as well. The church of Rome with its Latin liturgical tradition spread into North Africa, England, Ireland, Scandinavian countries, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal and later, during the colonial period, into the North and South Americas and Afro- Asian countries. The Alexandrian liturgical tradition was shared by the neighboring Church of Ethiopia. Similarly the Antiochian liturgy was welcomed in Syria and Lebanon and from the 17th century also into India. The Byzantine liturgy spread from the Byzantine Greek world into the various Slavic countries. Constantinople, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Albania, Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia etc., form part of the Byzantine liturgical family. The East Syrian liturgical tradition which developed within the Churches of the St. Thomas Tradition was welcomed by the Christian in the East, i.e., of China, Mongolia, India etc., the neighbouring regions as well. The church of Rome with its Latin liturgical tradition spread into North Africa, England, Ireland, Scandinavian countries, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal and later, during the colonial period, into practical autonomy of the local Churches enabled them to develop their own indigenous identity. The churches outside the Roman Empire did not share the same ecclesiastical administrative systems which was developed within the roman world. See Xavier Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, Kottayam, 1998, pp.23-24.

Church into Roman Catholic Church under the pope and the Protestant¹⁴ church which does not accept the authority of the pope.

Today the Roman Catholic Church or the universal Church, under which the topic of the present study, the Syro- Malabar Church comes, is a communion of individual Churches which developed in different places in course of history. It has a hierarchical organization. At its apex stands the pope enjoying primacy of jurisdiction over the Universal Catholic Church. He is elected by the cardinals who are chosen by the pope to serve as his principal assistants and advisers in the central administration of church affair

Next to the pope stands the Patriarchs, subject only to the pope, a Patriarch of the East is the head of the faithful belonging to his church throughout the world. Patriarchs are elected by Bishops of their rites. They receive approval and the Pallium¹⁵ symbolic of their office from the pope.

Below the patriarchs comes the Metropolitan Archbishop commanding jurisdiction over an ecclesiastical province consisting of several dioceses each of which are under a bishop. To assist a bishop in his administration of the diocese there may be auxiliary bishop or Episcopal Vicar who act as a deputy of a bishop for a certain part of diocese or for a determined type of apostolic work, or for the administration of a certain rite. Vicar Apostolic is usually a titular bishop over a mission territory and Apostolic Administrator is usually a bishop appointed to administer an ecclesiastical jurisdiction temporarily. All these categories are appointed by the Pope. A bishops' deputy for the

¹⁴ Protestantism emerged as a result of those developments that began attacks on the authority of the church and pope and objectionable practices – like accumulation of fabulous wealth by the church, luxurious life of the pope and the clergy, granting of dispensations for money etc., of the Catholic Church from men influenced by the spirit of Renaissance and familiar with the practices of the Church like Martin Luther (1517) and from new national leaders.

¹⁵ Pallium is the band of white wool marked with black crosses and worn over the chasuble. The pope wears the Pallium, and he sends it to other high ecclesiastics such as archbishops as a symbol of full Episcopal power. P.J. Podipara, *The St. Thomas Christians*, Bombay, 1970. p. 148

Catholic Church in the World

Statistical Data

1. Pope		7. Personal Prelature	- 01
2. Patriarchs (Sui Juris)	- 6	8. Territorial Prelatures	- 51
2. Major Archbishops	- 2	9. Territorial Abbacies	- 14
3. Cardinals	- 151	10. Apostolic Exarchates and Ordinariates	- 22
Cardinal Bishops	- 6	11. Military Ordinariates	- 33
Cardinal Priests	- 124	12. Vicariates Apostolic	- 71
Cardinal Deacons	- 21	13. Prefectures Apostolic	- 46
4. Bishops	- 4329	14. Missions 'sui juris'	- 09
Diocesan	- 2474	15. Apostolic Administrations	- 14
Titular	- 1042	16. Patriarchal Exarchates	- 08
Emeritus	- 813	17. Archiepiscopal Exarchate	- 01
5. Sees	- 2677	18. Episcopal Conferences	- 111
Patriarchal	- 13	19. Patriarchal and Major Archiepiscopal Synods, Assemblies and Episcopal Conferences of Oriental Rite	- 18
Major Archiepiscopal	- 02	20. International Groupings of Episcopal Conferences	- 14
Metropolitan	- 506		
Archiepiscopal	- 73		
Episcopal	- 2083		
6. Titular	- 2044		
Metropolitan	- 92		
Archiepiscopal	- 91		
Episcopal	- 1861		

Source: *Annuario Pontificio 2000*

Population by Religion

Source: Census of India.

Religious group	1961		1971		1981		1991	
	Number (million)	% age to total	Number (million)	% age to total	Number (million)	% age to total	Number (million)	% age to total
Hindus	366.5	83.5	453.4	82.7	549.7	82.6	672.6	82.4
Muslims	46.9	10.7	61.4	11.2	75.6	11.4	95.2	11.7
Christians	10.7	2.4	14.2	2.6	16.2	2.4	18.9	2.3
Sikhs	7.8	1.8	10.4	1.9	13.1	2.0	16.3	2.0
Buddhists	3.2	0.7	3.9	0.7	4.7	0.7	6.3	0.8
Jains	2.0	0.5	2.6	0.5	3.2	0.5	3.4	0.4
Other	1.6	0.4	2.2	0.4	2.8	0.4	3.5	0.4
Total	439.2	100.0	548.2	100.0	665.3	100.0	812.3	100

administration of a diocese is known as Vicar General. A diocese is divided into several Forane churches and it again subdivided into several parish churches under Parish Vicars who may be assisted by assistant Vicars. All the members of this hierarchy are trained and ordained priests who accepted celibacy as their life status.

St. Thomas -the founder of Christianity in India

The glory of the introduction of Christ to India is by time honoured tradition, ascribed to saint Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ According to this tradition so dearly cherished by St. Thomas Christians. St. Thomas landed at Malankara, in 52 A.D. or more correctly, at Maliankara near Cranganoor (Kodungallur), the Muziris of the Greeks, or Muyirikode of the Jewish copper plates.¹⁶

Even though there are some who cast doubt Saint Thomas tradition due to the lack of any monuments, documents or inscriptions contemporary to the event, later historical studies support the traditions. Naturally, the first question one would ask is: was it possible for St. Thomas to find an easy passage from Palestine to the South of India? Inorder to understand the traditions in its true historical perspective it is necessary to trace in brief the history of the early foreign contacts of west coast of India or Malabar, now part of Kerala State.

As 'the gate of ancient India' as well as an emporium of trade, even from the B.C. centuries, the Muziris port attracted the foreign merchants like the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans' for the pepper and other spices.¹⁷ Ancient Kerala had been famous for her spices and it was her

¹⁶ Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari, *Castes & Tribes of South India*, (reprint), Vol.vi Delhi .1975, p. 408

¹⁷ K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Madras, 1995, Vol.IV, p.396.

fame as the land of spices that brought foreigners and cultures to her shores. Malabar was known as the mother of pepper.¹⁸

The fact of Phoenician intercourse with India is based on indubitable philological evidence. We are told in the Bible (old Testament) that King Solomn's ship (1000 B.C.) traded under his Phoenician seamen. "And they came to Ophir and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon."¹⁹ In the Greek version of the Bible made in Alexandria, the translators render Ophir as Sopheir and Sophara. Sopara was formerly the capital of the Kingdom of Aparanta, stretching from Navsari, north of Bombay to Gokarnam, the sacred northern city of Kerala and in ancient days. (1000 B.C) it was a great port.²⁰

The Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians in the 3rd and 2nd millennia B.C carried an extensive trade in spices from the Kerala coast. In 1500 B.C the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut sent an expedition of five ships down the Red sea to obtain spices from the East.²¹

The Old Testament contains plentiful references to cinnamon and cardamom, spices, indigenous to Kerala. One reference in the Holy Testament to the use of spices is in connection with the visit of Queen Sheeba to King Solomon of Isreal (1015-966 B-C). It is said that Queen sheeba came to Jerusalem "with camels that bear spices" and that "there came no more such abundance of spices as those that queen Sheeba gave to King Solomon"²²

Arabs and Phoenicians were also among the early pioneers of the spice trade with the Kerala coast and the east. Herodotus (484-413 B.C) the Greek

¹⁸ K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op. cit.*, p.395.

¹⁹ I Kings IX verse. 28 (Bible Old Testament); V. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manuel*, Vol. II, Trivandrum, 1906, p.80.

²⁰ S.G. Pothan, *The Syrian Christians of Kerala*, Bombay, 1963, p.7.

²¹ Elamkulam. P. N. Kunjanpillai, *Studies in Kerala Hitory*, Trivandrum, 1970. p. 125.

²² *Ibid.*, p.124.

historian, had recorded the trade monopoly of the Egyptians and Phoenicians in the last centuries of the B.C.²³

The Greeks and Romans carried on extensive trade with Kerala in the closing centuries of the era before Christ. Cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric, and pepper are among the spices mentioned by Dioseorides (40-90 A-D), the Greek Physician and contemporary of Pliny, in his 'Materia Medica' as possessing medical virtues. We have the following account of Pliny in 70 A.D about the pepper of Malabar.²⁴ Although pepper is a product of many countries of the east, that which comes from Malabar is acknowledged to be the best.

To epoch-making discovery of Indian Monsoon winds by a Roman merchant named Hippalus in 47 A.D. helped the foreigners to make very successful voyages across the sea to India.²⁵ "In later times" says Pliny, "it has been considered a well-ascertained fact that the voyage from Syagrus, the Promotory of Arabia, to Patala, reckoned at thirteen hundred and thirty-five miles, can be performed most advantageously with the aid of a westerly wind, which is there known by the name of Hippalus.²⁶ If the wind, called Hippalus, happens to be blowing it is possible to arrive, in forty days at the nearest mart in India, Muziris by name. Muziris (Cranganore) and Barace (Purakkadu) were the chief ports of the time from which a great quantity of pepper, the chief product of Malabar, and other spices were transported to Europe.²⁷

²³ M.O. Joseph Nedumkunnam, *History of Christians of Kerala, Cochin*, 1972, p.31.

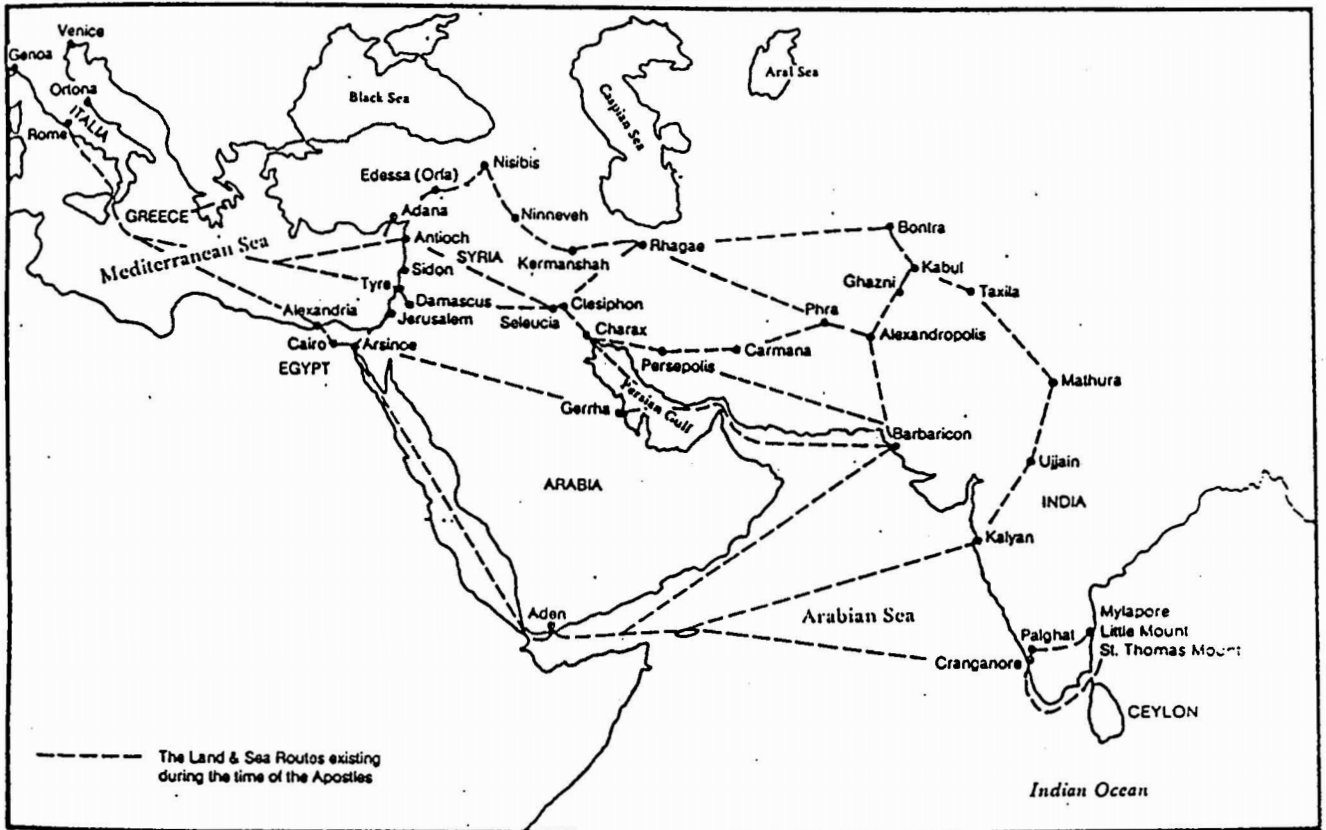
²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.20.

²⁵ The pattern of Monsoons was discovered by the Greek Hippalus in Probably during the reign of Potency Euergetes (146-116 B.C.) when these may have been regular sailing between Egypt and India. G.P. Hourani, *Arab seafoaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and early medieval times*, Beirute, 1963, p. 41.

²⁶ Pliny, *Natural History*, Trans. by H. Rackham, Cambridge, Mass, 1949, p. 20.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

THE JOURNEYS OF APOSTLE THOMAS AND THE ROUTES OF APOSTOLIC TIMES



Great was the effect of this vigorous trade with India. Pepper, for instance, was in great demand in Rome at the time of Pliny (30-79 A.D). This we can understand from his own writings. "It is quite surprising that the use of pepper has come so much into fashion, seeing that in other substances which we use, it is sometimes their sweetness and sometimes their appearance that has attracted our notice; whereas, pepper was nothing in it that can plead as a recommendation to either fruit or berry, its only desirable quality being in certain pungency; and yet it is for this that we 'import' it all from India. Who was the first to make trail of it as an article of food? And who I wonder was the man that was not content to prepare himself by hunger, only for satisfying of a greedy appetite? Yet inspite of Pliny's complaints this demand for pepper continued in Roman circles. The continued use of it in cooking raised its price to 15 denarii a pound for long pepper, 7 for the white and 4 for the black pepper.²⁸ Even now in the 21st century the people of Europe are quite familiar with the land of pepper, the Malabar. There is a saying among the Europeans, "go to the land where the pepper grows" when they get irritated and feel lonely.²⁹

Number of Roman coins, even those of the Republican period, are occasionally discovered in Malabar and in other parts of India.³⁰ In 1947. some gold and silver Roman coins were obtained from Eyal, a village in Trichur District, not very far from Cranganore. They are now in the government Museum in Trichur.³¹ Cranganore, known to the Romans as Muziris, was the chief port on the Malabar coast where Roman vessels anchored to export pepper and other spices.

²⁸ Pliny, *op.cit.*, p.12.

²⁹ An interview with John Clemens, a German, who visited Kerala for Ayurvedic research on 2.2.03.

³⁰ V. Nagam Aiya, *Op.cit.*, p.181.

³¹ Trichur Government Museum Collections.

Precise information of the geography of the Indian coast, and marts can be found in the *Periplus Maris Erithrae*, a guide book for mariners published by an anonymous author about 60 A.D.³² According to Periplus, pepper was exported in large quantities to Europe from Muziris (Cranganore) and Nelkinda (Kallada).³³

If groups of traders from different parts of the world could come to the west coast of India even in the pre Christian era why cant the same possibility hold good in the case of St. Thomas.?

Let us now examine some details of the St. Thomas traditions and other evidences. There are local traditions called Malabar tradition and coromadal traditions, testimony of the church fathers, foreign writings, Tomb of Mylapore etc.

Malabar tradition

Of course, we are dealing with a tradition which can not be substantiated with monuments or documents or inscriptions contemporary to the event. It is a fact that all written accounts of the Malabar tradition are probably of the post- 15th century period. Even though these traditions are recorded in a very later period it is not contradicted by any other rival traditions or accounts. It connects the labours of St. Thomas with definite places and even families.

The chief written accounts of the Malabar tradition are (a) The Veeradian song, (b) The Song of Rabban Thomas and (c) The margamkali song.³⁴ The first has remained oral rather than written for a long time. These songs are being sung on solemn occasions. The Veeradian song is being sung by the people of a particular Hindu caste, on the occasions of the feasts of the

³² S.G. Pothan, *op.cit.*, p. 7

³³ K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 196.

³⁴ P.J. Podipara, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

St. Thomas Christians. Another song called the Panan song may be taken along with the Veeradian song.³⁵ Panans are non Christians. On marriage occasions of the Thomas Christians, at the reception of the bride and bridegroom the Panan would suddenly make his appearance by singing the song. The custom of the Veeradians and the Panans singing their songs have almost become obsolete.

Ramban song and Margamkali song seem to be post 16th century compositions in their actual or modern forms. The two songs agree each other though the first is more elaborate and more detailed than the second. According to the description of the Ramban Song: "The South Indian King Chola sends Haban to get an architect to build a palace. From Arabia Haban starts with Thomas and lands near Cranganore. They go to Mylapore and China and then to the Chola king. Thomas gets money from the king to build the palace. . But spends it for the poor; he goes to Cranganore where he converts many with the royal family of Chera; he makes conversions in Quilon, Niranam, Chayal; he goes to Cranganore, Palayur, Mylapore. The chola king imprisons Thomas for not building the palace. The King's brother sees the palace in Heaven, Thomas is freed and the royal brothers baptized. The king of Chandrapuri is made high priest. Thomas visits Malayattur, Palayur, Cranganore, Parur, Kokkamangalam, Quilon, Niranam and Chayal. Finally he goes to Mylapore where he is stabbed to death by the priests of Kali for not worshipping Kali. Thomas converted Jews, Brahmins and other castes in Malabar. Kepa of the royal family of Chera and Paul were made high priests.

The song say that it is a simplified redaction of the one composed by the second priest of the Maliekal family of Niranam in 1601. In Niranam can

³⁵ The present writer knew an old Panan who lived in Trichur.

still be seen the compound where the house of the Maliekal family stood. The redactor calls himself the 48th priest of the family".³⁶

The existence of an ancient community known as St. Thomas Christian community in Kerala down to the modern period may be taken the most important local evidence. They have been deeply attached to their St. Thomas heritage and consider themselves as *Thomayude Makkal*, the sons of Thomas, the apostle. The oral traditions seem to be carried from generation to generation about St. Thomas and they are strong, persistent and living among the Malabar Christians even now. In most of the Malabar Christen families there is a member named Thomas. According to current tradition the Syrian church was founded in Malabar about 52 A.D. The apostle founded at first seven churches, five of them being in Travancore state, one in Cochin and one in British Malabar.

Two of these have been since completely destroyed; and the remaining five being in a condition which is little better than decrepit. The early converts to the new church were Nambutiri Brahmins. The Ministers of the Church at Palayur which is one of the seven churches referred to above were first ordained by the apostle himself. These were chosen mainly from two families, Pakalomattam and Sankarapuri. The higher order of the Syrian priesthood remained, for centuries, practically hereditary in these two families.³⁷ Each of the priests calls himself as the 50th or the 61st and so on, of his family, counting from the first who is believed to have been ordained by St. Thomas.

In spite of the fact that all written accounts of the Malabar tradition are probably of the post 15th century period, the tradition itself is as strong, definite and living as it was when it was begun to be written down, or when

³⁶ P.J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p.21.

³⁷ A narrator from present Palayur church Museum.

the Portuguese gave testimony to it in the beginning of the 16th C. There is no anachronism nor anything else that may in any way weaken its force. It connects the labours of the Apostle with definite places and even families. What may even today be seen and heard in such places as Palayur, Panur, Kokkamangalam, Niranam, can not be easily dismissed as absolutely legendary since these places, pointing to definite spots and families as related to St. Thomas, betray their quondam connections with Hindu worship and since the Hindu themselves of the place bear traditional testimony to the work of St. Thomas there. As an example we may take Palayaur 20 k.m. away from Cranganore. The Christian church of Palayur stands in a compound where there are seen remnants of Hindu worship such as a tank, a well for drawing water for sacrifice (*Poojakinar*) the round stone with which this well was covered etc. The Brahmins in the neighbourhood of Palayur even today do not eat or drink anything, nor do they bathe in the Palayur locality which their ancestors cursed and called Chapakad (anglicized as Chowghat), which means a cursed place. Both the Christian and the Hindu traditions say that when St. Thomas converted some Brahmins of the place, the rest ran away to a nearby locality called Vemmanat saying *Iniyathekuli Vemmanat* i.e. "the next bath at Vemmanat" which expression has become even a proverb in the language of Malabar. In Palayur there is a compound called Kalath and in Vemmanat there is the Brahmin family of Kalath which according to tradition is one of the Brahmin families that ran away from Palayur to Vemmanat. In Malabar families take their original name from the names of compound they live in. The Malabar tradition is not contradicted by any other rival tradition. It has remained the proud patrimony of Thomas Christians who, however, have always looked, not to any place in their own region but to the far off region of the coromandel coast, for the tomb of their beloved founder. Again, in the Christian families of one locality in Malabar which traditionally trace their origin from Apostle, do not contradict the same traditional claims of

other families found in the same and other localities of Malabar. The tenacity with which these family traditions have been held and the fact that they existed certainly before the coming of the Portuguese make it difficult to discredit them completely.

Coromandal Tradition

Coromandal now stands far the south east-coast of India. The tradition about the apostolate of St. Thomas is vivid on the coromandel coast and it centres round Mylapore where the Apostle's Tomb is pointed out.³⁸ The little and the big mount here, are also called St. Thomas Mount by the people. It is believed that St. Thomas died a martyr having been pierced through by the lances of the soldiers.

Testimony of the Church fathers

The fathers of the church belong to the early centuries of the Christian era, who were eminent in holiness and learning and have authoritatively interpreted and taught the Christian faith enshrined in the authentic ecclesiastical traditions. Some of the early traditions of the different churches regarding St. Thomas origin of the church are given below.

- (a) *Teaching of the Apostles* an important Syrian document written at Edessa around 250 A.D. gives the information on the source of the priesthood of the church in India from the apostle St. Thomas.³⁹
- (b) St. Ephrem (300-373) a great father and poet of the Syrian church refers to the apostolate and martyrdom of St. Thomas in India.⁴⁰ He shares the common tradition of his Church which was in close and frequent contacts with the Church in India.

³⁸Thurston, *op.cit.*, p.409.

³⁹ Xavier Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, Kottayam, 1998, p.33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p..35

(c) St. Gregory Nizianzen (329-390) who belong to the Greek Church in his work *Contra Ariamos et de Seipso* states that the apostles went to places which were not always familiar to them. In this context he associates Thomas with India.⁴¹

Ancient writings and Legends

The oldest (?) written account that speaks of the labours of St. Thomas in India is the work known as the *Acts of Judas Thomas* written most probably in Syrian in the second or third century. A.D.⁴²

It deals with the acts of apostle Thomas who was brought to India by an Indian merchant Haban for his king Gudnapar. This work is apocryphal and is also romantic with Gnostic touches. The Latin tradition about the death of Thomas is followed in this work. Still many in later times hesitated to assign it any historical value until some coins of Gondaphares (syriac = gudanapar) were discovered in Afganistan in the 19th Century.⁴³

The Tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore

According to ancient tradition Thomas suffered martyrdom at Mylapore Little mount in the Pandiyan Kingdom, now in Tamil Nadu ,the neighboring state of Kerala.⁴⁴

When the Portuguese visited Mylapore in the early part of the 16th century they found the tomb held in veneration and also a church over the same. The description of this ruined Church given in the Portuguese's texts indicates that it was typically East Syrian. In 1523 the Portuguese opened the tomb and found in it a vessel containing, fragments of a skull and a few bones

⁴¹ A.C. Perumalil, *The Apostles in India, Fact or Fiction*, Patna, 1952, p. 56..

⁴² P. J. Podipara, *.op..cit.*.p.16.

⁴³ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁴ See The stone inscription kept in the Little mount St. Thomas Church, Madras.

with the iron head of a lance⁴⁵. The iron head of a lance found in the tomb coincides with the tradition about the death of St. Thomas.

The first century of the Christian era, was according to European and Indian sources the golden age of Roman commerce with south India, where they exchanged their wine and pottery against pepper, pearls, and precious stones of the country. In the year 30 B.C. the Romans conquered Egypt and five years later about 120 ships sailed yearly from the Red Sea to Kerala; the monsoon winds took them to India in 40 days and (in the same year) back in the same time.⁴⁶

In Arikamedu, South Pondicherry (Pondicherry is about 150 km to the south of Mylapore on the sea coast), a Roman trading station was excavated in 1945. For the first time in the history of Indian archaeology, a Roman trading station was discovered, begun at the time of Emperor Augustus and abandoned towards the end of the second century after Christ. The oldest Arikamedu bricks of 1st century A.D measure about 15 x 8 and 2'9 thick.⁴⁷ This is also the measure of the bricks found in the St. Thomas tomb in Mylapore ! Only first century bricks of Arikamedu have this measure, not those of the 2nd century.⁴⁸

In the light of all that we have brought out above we can summarise that the Malabar and the Coromandel traditions in their substance enjoy more than what one would demand of traditions that are in possession. There are no rival traditions nor rival tombs nor rival Thomas Christians in the whole

⁴⁵ The Catholic Register , Mylapore, 1993, Feb p.12

⁴⁶ Schurhammer. About Mailapur and its St. Thomas traditions ..Rome 1964. p,257.

⁴⁷ H. Hosten S.J., *Antiquities from San thome and Mylapore*, Calcutta 1936, p.21.

⁴⁸ R.E.M.Wheeler ; "Arikamedu An Indo Roman Trading station of the East - Coast of India" in *Ancient India*, (Bulletin of the archeological survey of India). No..2, New Delhi, 1945, p.22.

world. The details and the definiteness of these traditions above all the Mylapore tomb and everything connected with it, both oral and written would seem sufficient enough to convince us.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORY OF KERALA AND SYRO-MALABAR CATHOLIC CHURCH

Christianity in India had its beginning in Kerala, a small state in the south west corner of India and Kerala can be rightly regarded as 'the Vatican of Christianity in India' for several reasons. First of all it was in Kerala that St. Thomas, one of twelve apostles of Jesus Christ reached and started preaching the Gospel¹. Secondly it was in Kerala that the Portuguese missionaries, who shaped the history of Christianity in India in the later period landed for the first time and started their missionary activities. Thirdly almost all the important events in the history of Christianity in India like the Synod of Diamper 1599 at Udayamperur, Coonan cross Oath 1652 at Mattanchery, major splits of 1874 in Trichur etc. all had taken place.² Finally nearly half of the total Christian population of India and nearly half of the Catholic population of India who constitute 20.56% and 36.48% respectively of the total population of India live in Kerala. Christians are the third largest religious group (20.56%) in Kerala after Hindus (58.15%) and Muslims (21.25%)³.

The History of Kerala

Kerala is a small state in the south west corner of India. Kerala, during the first five centuries of the Christian era was part of Tamilakam. Tamilakam comprised an extensive area of South India. The land was divided into five divisions on the basis of topography viz. Venad, Kuttanad, Kudanad, Puzhinad and Karkanad. The Cheras, the Pandayas and Cholas were the principal powers

¹ We have discussed the traditions in Ch-II

² For a detailed description of Synod of Diamper, Coonan Cross Oath and major splits see page 52-54 of this chapter

³ Statistical profile of the Christian population in India is given in page 63 of this study.

who ruled these kingdoms. The exact boundaries of their territories are not known. The Cheras established themselves as an important power in Kerala during this period. The Chera Kingdom corresponded to present Kerala excluding the extreme south⁴.

Even from time immemorial, Kerala, the land of spices, had contacts with the countries of the outside world. The Arabs and the Phoenicians were the early pioneers of the spice trade. Pliny and Ptolemy, the classical writers gave detailed accounts of the ports through which Kerala kept up her commercial and cultural contacts. The most important of these ports were Muziris, Tyndis, Barace and Nelcynda. Among these Muziris, modern Cranganore in Kerala had undoubtedly the place of pride.⁵ It was 'the gateway' of ancient India. It was with the epoch making discovery of the monsoon winds by Hippallus that Muziris acquired importance as a trading centre. In 45 A.D the discovery by Hippalus⁶ of the existing monsoon winds regularly blowing across the Indian ocean gave an impetus to trade between Kerala and the west for voyage along the coast line and there after gave place to oceanic voyage direct to muziris after a trip of 40 days from Ocelis near Aden. Muziris was the capital of Chera empire. It served as an emporium of trade for the Phoenicians, Syrians, Persians, Arabs, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans. According to living traditions St. Thomas, the founder of Christianity in India, landed in Muziris in the year 52 A.D⁷

The history of Kerala in the 6th 7th and 8th centuries is lost in obscurity. The only information we have of this period is from the records of the South Indian powers like the Chalukyas, the Pallavas, the Pandayas and the Rashtrakutas in which they claim to have over- run Kerala⁸. By about 800 A.D

⁴ Elamkulam P.N. Kunjanpillai, *op.cit.*, p.137

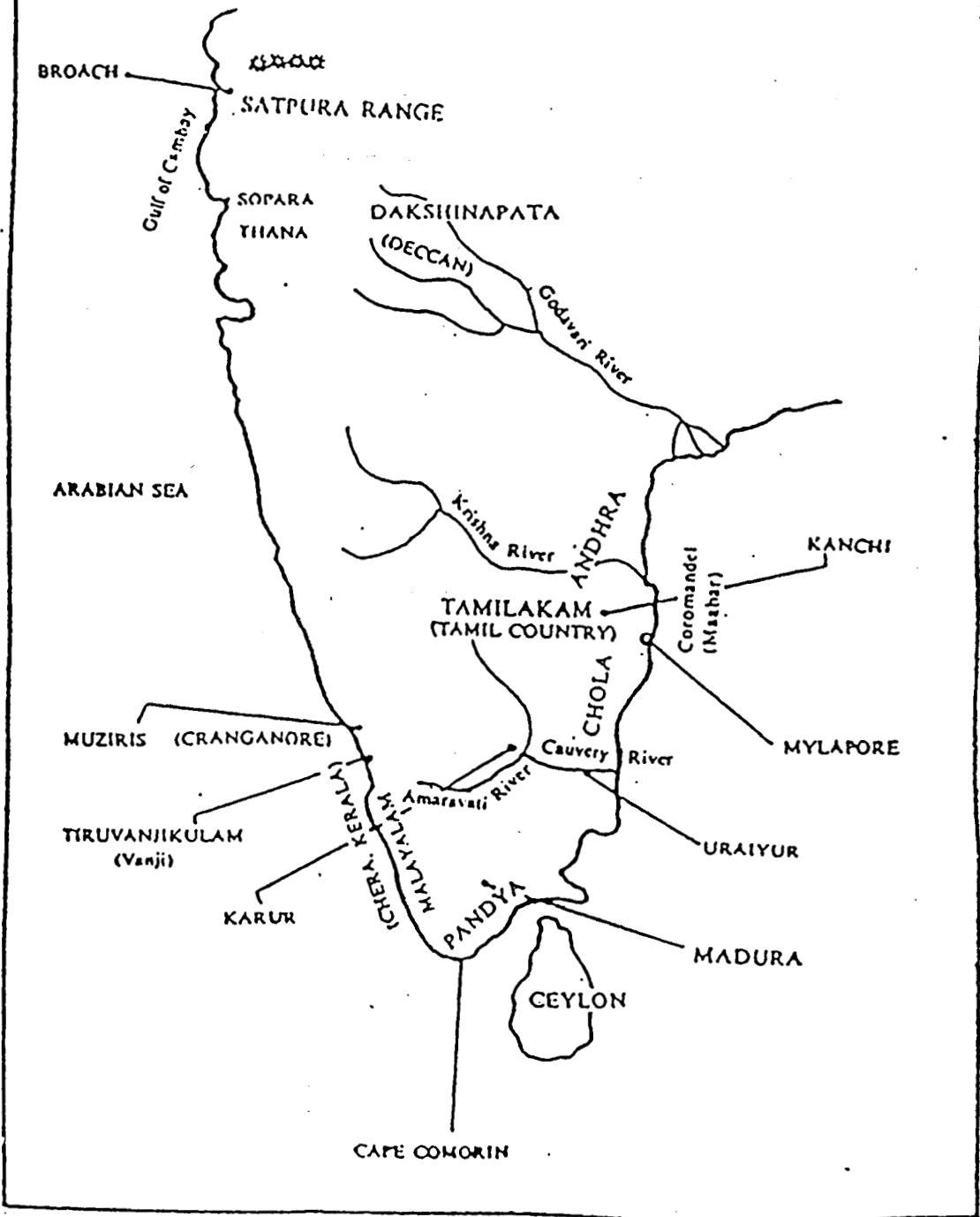
⁵ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, Madras, 1952, p.76.

⁶ G.P. Hourani. *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁷ E. Thurson, *op.cit.*, p.408.

⁸ Elamkulam. P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.130.

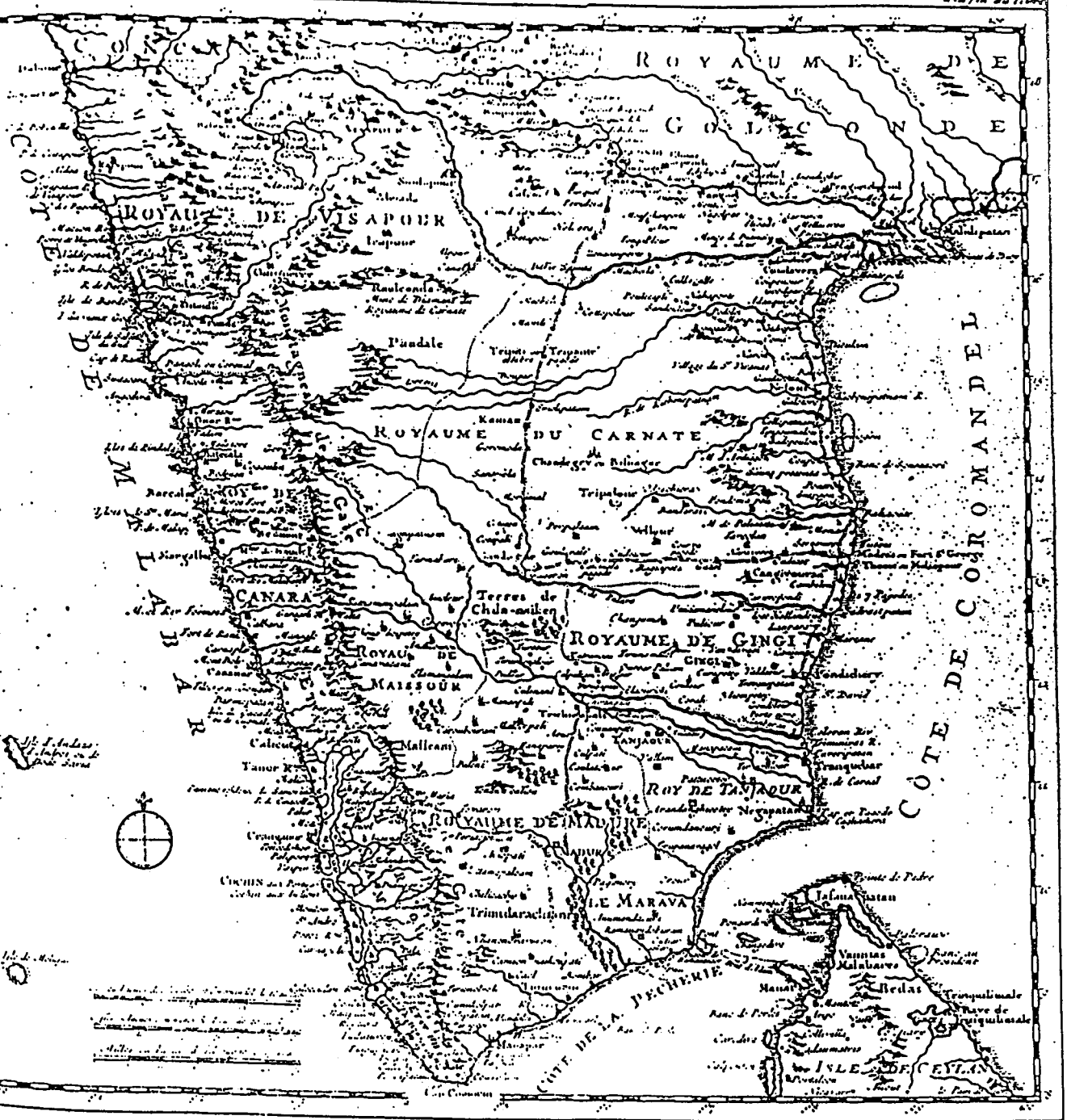
WEST AND SOUTH INDIA IN
THE EARLY CENTURIES OF
THE CHRISTIAN ERA



10.3

COTES DE MALABAR ET DE COROMANDEL

à la fin du livre



Among the better known contributions of the Dutch to the study of India and Indian life are the botanical work *Hortus Malabaricus* (1678) by Johannes Caesarius, *The Superstitions of Heathens in East India* by Philippus Baldaeus, and the *Gentilismus Reserutus* by Abraham Rogerius. Not well known are their historical records and maps. Some of the earliest and best maps of South India especially after the renaissance of cartography in the early 16th century were produced by the Dutch, as is evidenced by the above map from the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the Hague

the Chera power was revived in Kerala under Kulesekhara Varman. An illustrious line of kings known as Kulesekharas ruled over Kerala from 800 to 1102 A.D. Their rule constitute a golden age in Kerala history. Under their benevolent rule Kerala enjoyed the benefits of settled administration and all round progress. The Kulesekhara empire comprised practically the whole of modern Kerala, Cuddalore and some other portions of the Nilgiri district and parts of the Salem - Coimbatore districts. It was divided for administrative purposes into a number of nadus or provinces. Mahodayapuram, was the capital of the Kulesekharas. The period was one of peace and tranquility with no major social upheavels or foreign invasions. However, by 999 A. D the Cholas had started on their career of aggression against Kerala and the whole of the 11th century witnessed the great conflict between Cholas and Cheras. During the period of the Chola – Chera war compulsory military training was introduced in Kerala. The war led to far reaching economic and social changes. The way of life which emerged in Kerala at the end of the war was radically different from what it was before. Thus the 11th century A.D saw the break up of political unity of Kerala. In the proceeding two centuries Kerala was a homogeneous political unit under the centralised administration of the Kulasekharas. The viceroys or Naduvazhis of the different Nadus carried on the administration under the effective control exercised by the central government. The conditions created by the war in the 12th Century A.D. weakened the authority of the centre which encouraged the Naduvazhis to assert their independence. Thus the later Kulesekhara age therefore saw the rise of several petty principalities. A number of independent swarupams (states) rose in different parts of the country. Of these in addition to Venad in South Kerala, the most important were the Kingdoms of Kolathunad, Cochin and Calicut⁹.

⁹ P. Shungoony Menon, *History of Travancore*. New Delhi, (reprint) 1985. p.91.

Cranganore came under the control of Cochin state (perumpadappu Swarupam). The history of Cochin during the pre-Portuguese period is lost in obscurity. The inscriptions and literary works give us the names of some of the rulers of the period. Cochin came into political prominence only in the beginning of the 16th century. But it had its origin as an independent principality immediately after the fall of the Kulesekhara empire. The Cochin state had its seat at Chitrakutam in the Perumpadappu village in Vanneri till the end of the 13th C.A.D. Due to the aggressive advance of the Zamorin of Calicut, the Perumpadappu Chief shifted his capital to Cochin which was outside the immediate orbit of the Zamorin's conquests. Moreover, as a result of the heavy floods in the periyar river in 1341 A.D Cranganore had lost its commercial importance and the Cochin port had risen into prominence as a rival to it¹⁰.

In the 15th century began a prolonged conflict between the Zamorin of Calicut and Raja of Cochin for political supremacy of Central Kerala. The internal dissension in the Cochin royal family helped the Zamorin in his aggressive designs. The Zamorin succeeded in bringing a large part of the neighbouring principalities under his suzerainty. The Cranganore area was included in the conquered territory of the zamorin of Calicut.¹¹ Later this area was occupied by the Portuguese and the Dutch in the days of their predominance.

The Portuguese navigator, Vasco de Gama landed at Calicut in May 1498. It was a period of bitter rivalry between the Zamorin of Calicut on the one side and the Raja of Cochin, the Kolathiri and other minor powers, on the other, The Cochin Raja saw in the arrival of the Portuguese on the Kerala coast, a golden opportunity to get foreign assistance against his traditional enemy. The

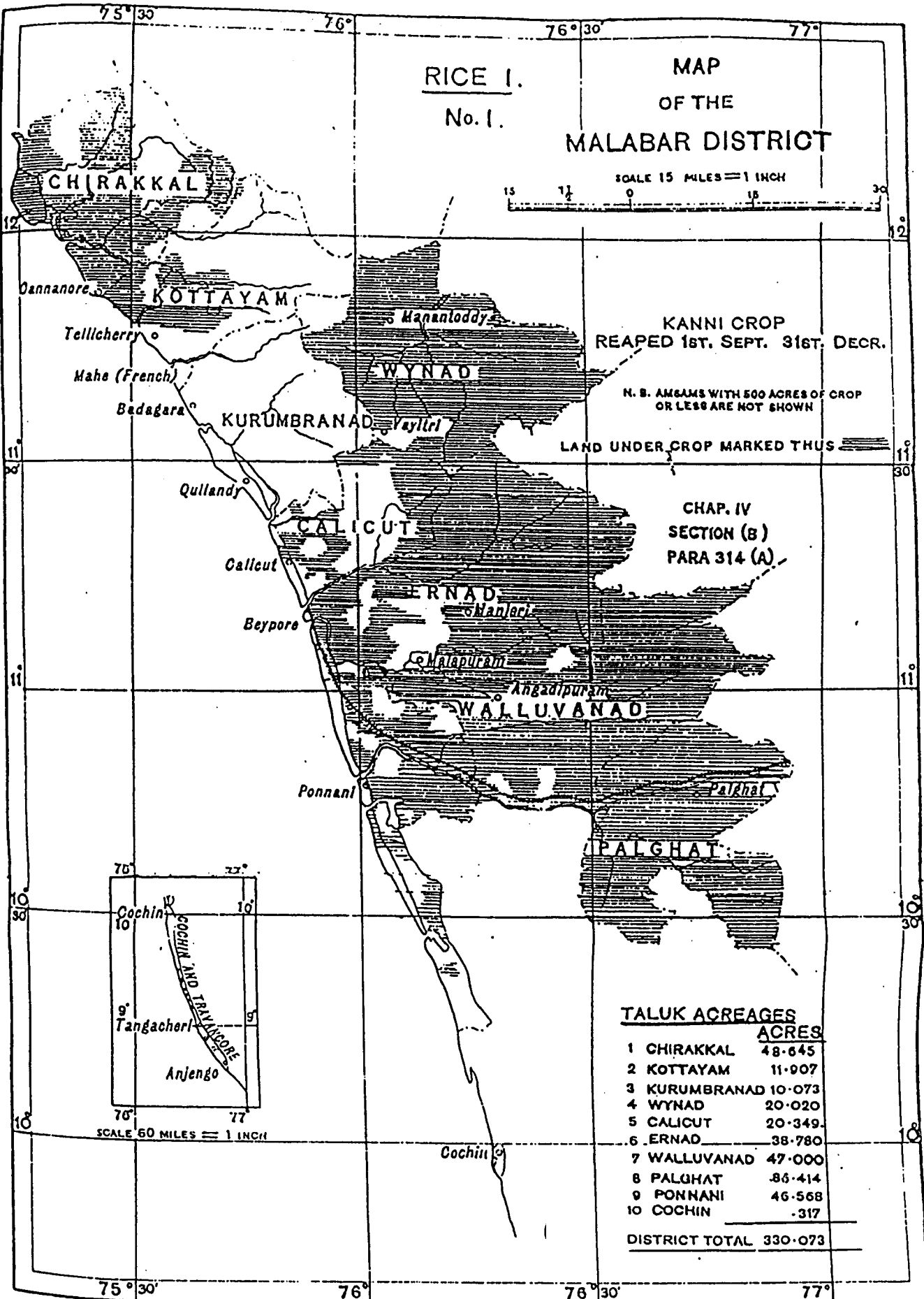
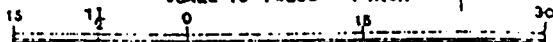
¹⁰ Appan Thampuran, *Cochirajacharithangal*, (Mal.), Trichur. 1927, p.41.

¹¹ Adoor K.K. Ramachandran Nair, *Kerala State Gazetteer*, Vol. I, Trivandrum, 1986, p.26.

RICE I.
No. 1.

MAP
OF THE
MALABAR DISTRICT

SCALE 15 MILES = 1 INCH

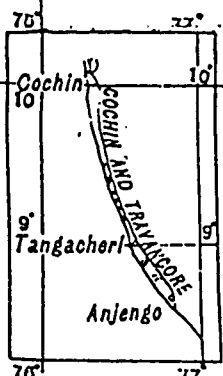


KANNI CROP
REAPED 1ST. SEPT. 31ST. DECR.

N. B. AMBAMS WITH 500 ACRES OF CROP
OR LESS ARE NOT SHOWN

LAND UNDER CROP MARKED THUS

CHAP. IV
SECTION (B)
PARA 314 (A)



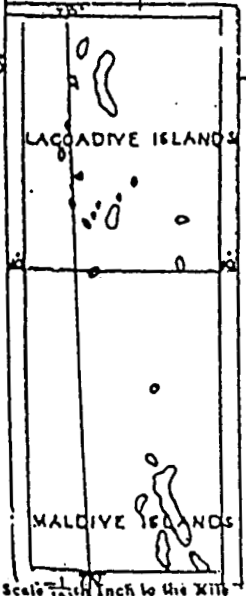
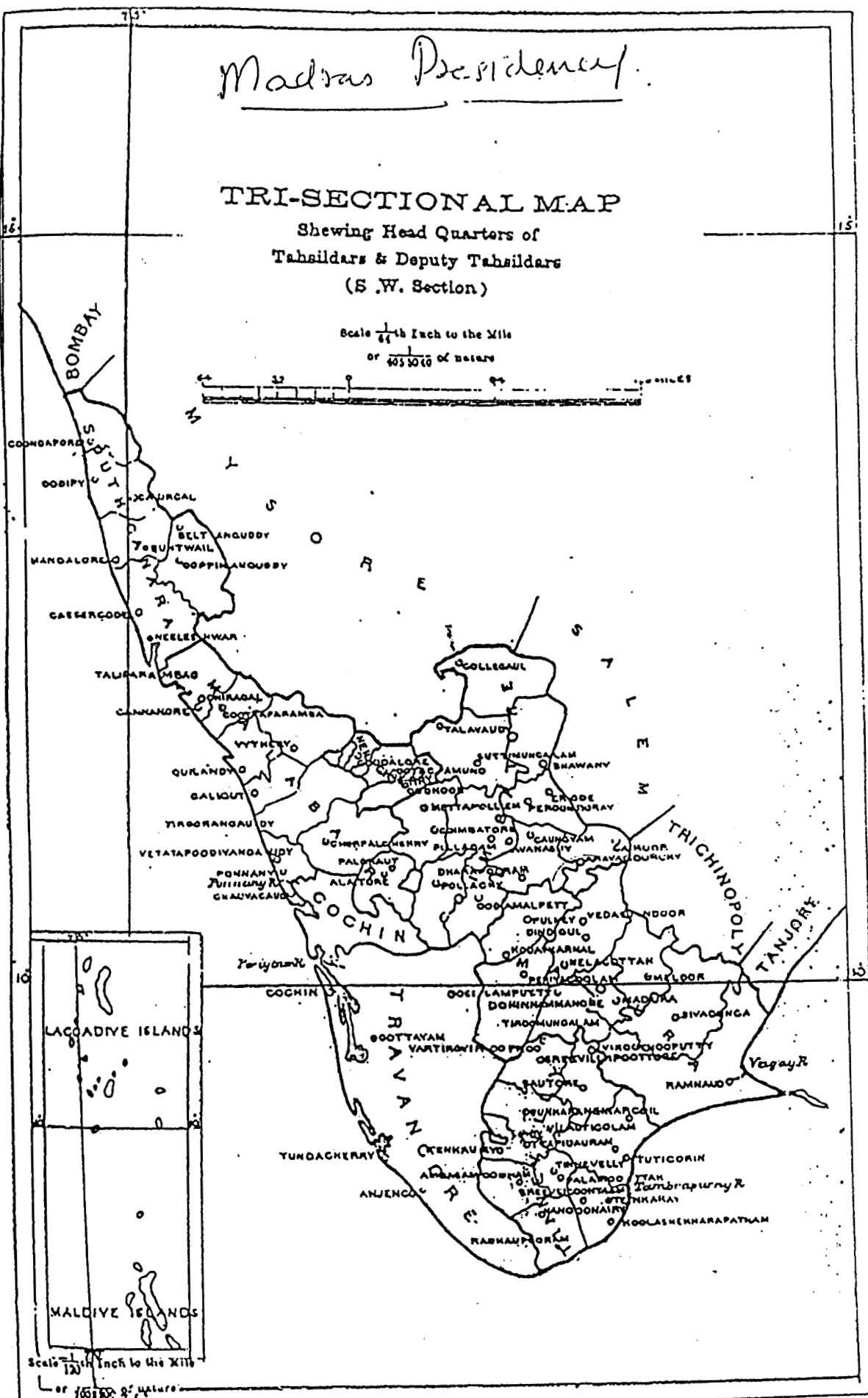
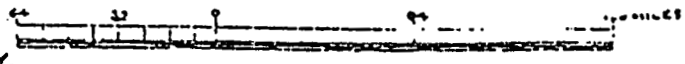
SCALE 50 MILES = 1 INCH

TALUK ACREAGES	
	ACRES
1 CHIRAKKAL	48-645
2 KOTTAYAM	11-907
3 KURUMBRANAD	10-073
4 WYNAD	20-020
5 CALICUT	20-349
6 ERNAD	38-780
7 WALLUVANAD	47-000
8 PALGHAT	86-414
9 PONNANI	46-568
10 COCHIN	-317
DISTRICT TOTAL	330-073

Madras Presidency.

TRI-SECTIONAL MAP Shewing Head Quarters of Tahsildars & Deputy Tahsildars (S.W. Section)

Scale $\frac{1}{64}$ Inch to the Mile
or $\frac{1}{4053016}$ of Nature



Scale $\frac{1}{128}$ Inch to the Mile
or $\frac{1}{8106032}$ of Nature

cold reception meted out to the Portuguese at Calicut helped to bring the Cochin Raja and the Portuguese closer together. The Portuguese were given all facilities for trade at Cochin. The Kolathiri too rendered much help to the Portuguese. These helped the Portuguese to establish their commercial supremacy on the Kerala coast for more than a century and a half. It was in 1504 that the Portuguese captured the Trichur area including Cranganore town from the Zamorin and fortified it¹².

In the meantime the Dutch had appeared on the scene as a serious rival. With the purpose of expelling the Portuguese from the Indian soil the Zamorin of Calicut entered into an alliance with the Dutch. By 1675 the Dutch conquered many of the Portuguese strongholds in Kerala like Quilon, Cranganore, Purakkad, Cochin and Cannanore¹³.

The storm of Mysore invasion under Hyder Ali produced complications for the Dutch. In 1766 Hyder Ali captured Calicut. In 1776 Sirdar Khan, the Mysore General entered Cochin territory via Chowghat and occupied Trichur, Tippu Sultan, the son and successor of Hyder Ali entered into an allegiance with Rama Varma, the Raja of Cochin and brought large area of Cochin territory under his control. But immediately after the exit of Tippu, in 1791, a treaty was concluded by Rama Varma with the English East India Company by which the Raja agreed to throw off his allegiance to Tippu and became tributary to the company for his territories then in the possession of Tippu and to pay an annual subsidy of one lakh of rupees. On their part the company agreed to protect him from his enemies and to assist him in recovering the territories conquered by Tippu¹⁴.

¹² C. Achutha Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911, p. 82.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁴ T.M. Satchit, ed., *The Madras states and Mysore Directory*, Cochin, 1938, p. 573.

Rama Varma, who ascended the throne as the Raja of Cochin, in 1790, is known in history as Sakthan Tampuran (the strong Prince). His region up to 1805 was an epoch of economic and social progress. He is the architect of Trichur town. He took interest in the execution of many public utility works. Markets were opened in all major centres. Justice was administered without fear or favour. He suppressed the power of the feudal nobility. He gave the Syrian Christians land and settled them in the heart of the important towns like Trichur, Chalakudy, Kunnamkulam, Irinjalakuda, Tripunnithara etc. with a view to promote industry and commerce¹⁵.

It was during Sakthan Tampuran's time that the two ministers of Travancore and Cochin planned a secret revolt to drive the English out of Cochin and Travancore, since the English had interfered in the internal affairs of Cochin and Travancore and created difficulties for its administration. The plot failed, Paliath Achan and Velu Tampi, the ministers of Cochin and Travancore were defeated. It was this unhappy event that led to the signing of the treaty of 1809 with the English by which the English East India company tightened their grip over the rulers of Cochin and Travancore¹⁶.

The administration of Travancore and Cochin then onwards passed under the indirect control of the British. According to the new terms of the treaty, the administration of Travancore and Cochin is conducted in the name and under the control of his highness the Maharaja. The Diwan is His Highness Chief Minister and the Chief executive officer of the state, with whom the agent to the British Governor General and heads of Departments corresponded in all official matters. From the time of Col. Munro's appointment as Diwan of Cochin state in 1812 till the abolition of the office of Diwan in 1947 Cochin was served by a long line of able Diwans. During this period present Trichur area was part of Cochin state.

¹⁵ C. Achutha Menon, *op. cit.*, p.3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.315

COCHIN STATE

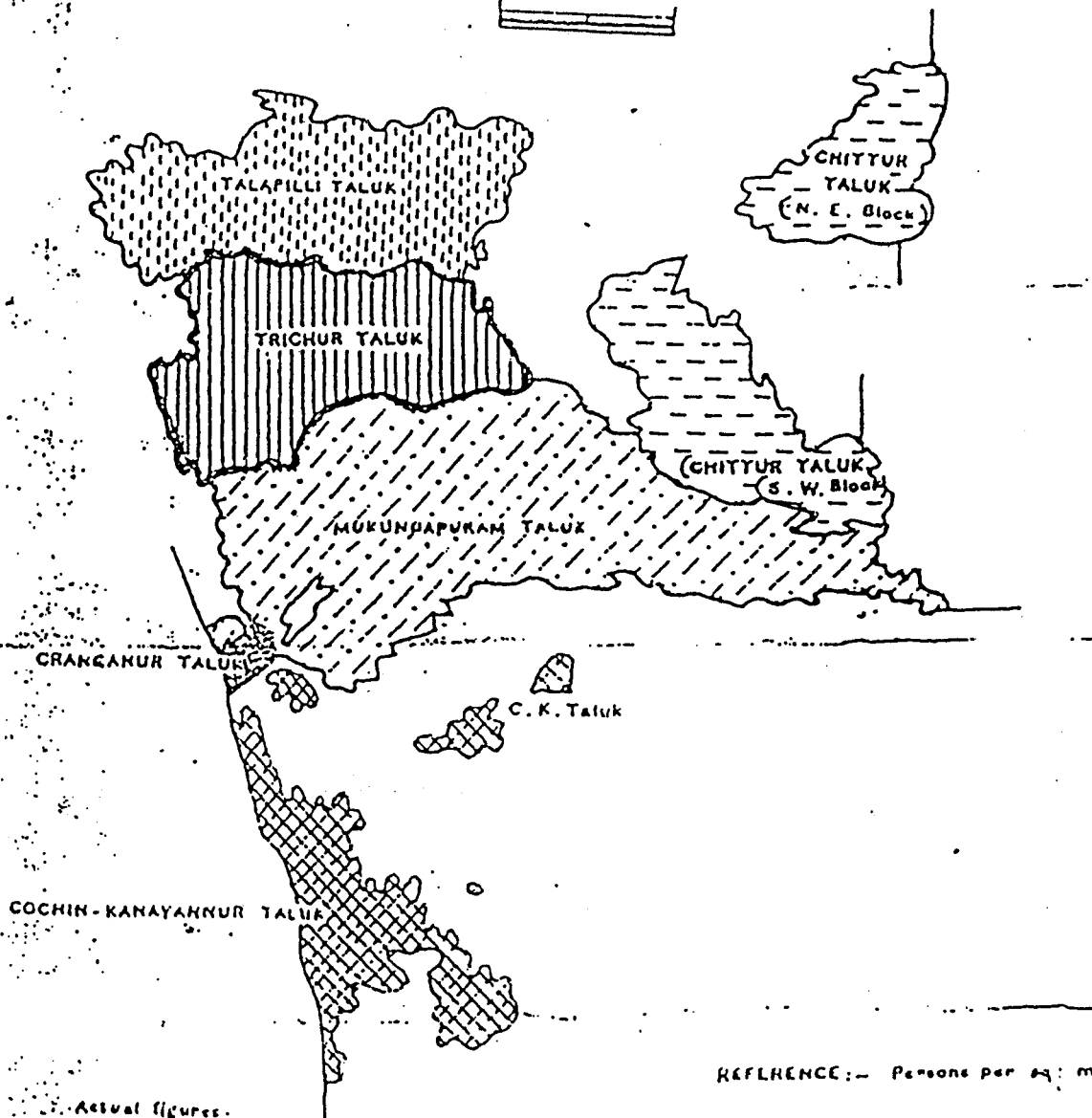
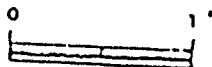
1938

showing

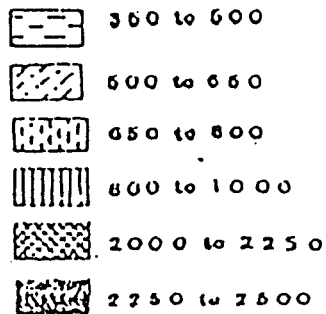
Density of the Population

Per Square Mile by Taluks

Scale 1" = 12 Miles



REFERENCE:— Persons per sq. mile



Actual figures.

Persons per sq. mile

Cochin-Kanayannur Taluk	2210
Cranganur Taluk	2420
Mukundapuram Taluk	517
Trichur Taluk	975
Talapilli Taluk	701
Chittur Taluk	365

For administrative purpose the Cochin state was divided into six Taluks, viz., Cochin – Kanayannur, Mukundapuram, Trichur, Talapilli, Chittur and Crangannore¹⁷.

Cochin state was integrated with Travancore on July 1, 1949, to form, the new state of Travancore – Cochin under the states Re-organization Act. The four southern taluk of Tevala, Agastivaram, Kalkulam and Vilvavancode and a part of Shencottah Taluk were separated from Travancore – Cochin and included in Madras State. The district of Malabar and Kasargod Taluk of South Canara districts were added to the remaining portions of Travancore – Cochin to constitutes the new state of Kerala. The state of Kerala formally came into existence on Nov.1 1956¹⁸. Though Kerala is a small state with an area 38,863, 59 km which represent only 1.18% of the total area of India, 3.43% of the total population of India is in Kerala. Among these 58.15% are Hindus, 21.25% Muslims and 20.56% Christians¹⁹. Kerala which now divided into 14 districts is noted for its high percentage of literacy i.e. 90.6% and comparatively high per capita income, religious toleration etc.

The History of Syro-Malabar Church

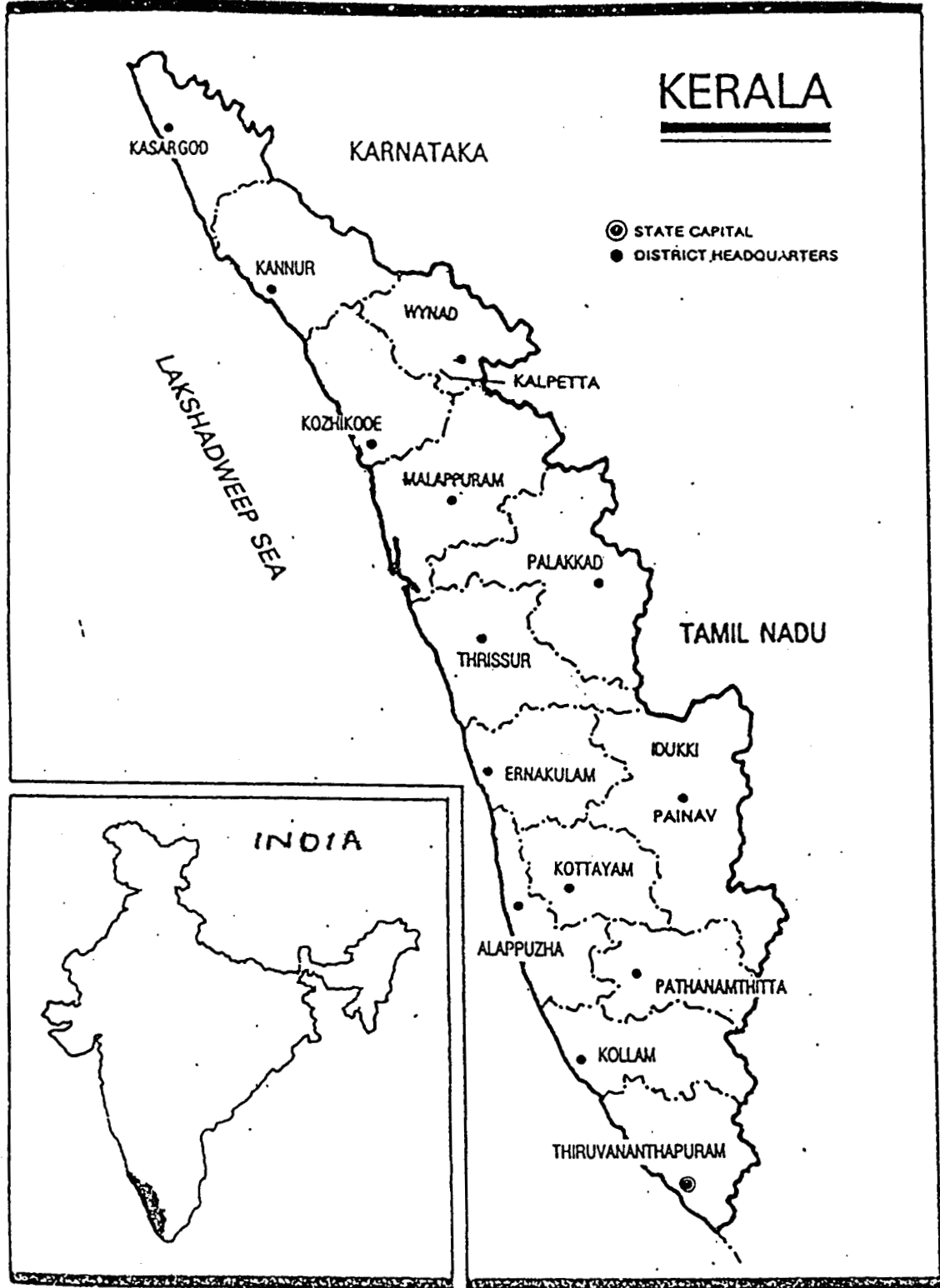
Christianity in India traces its origin back to St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ and so they are known as St. Thomas Christians . According to the strong and living traditions of St. Thomas Christians. St. Thomas came to India by sea and landed at Muziris or Cranganore in Kerala in 52 A.D²⁰. Hence Kerala is the cradle of Indian Christianity and St. Thomas is claimed to be the founder of Christianity in India. St. Thomas converted many high caste Hindu in Kerala to Christianity and founded seven Christian

¹⁷ T.M.Satchit, *op.cit.*, p.573.

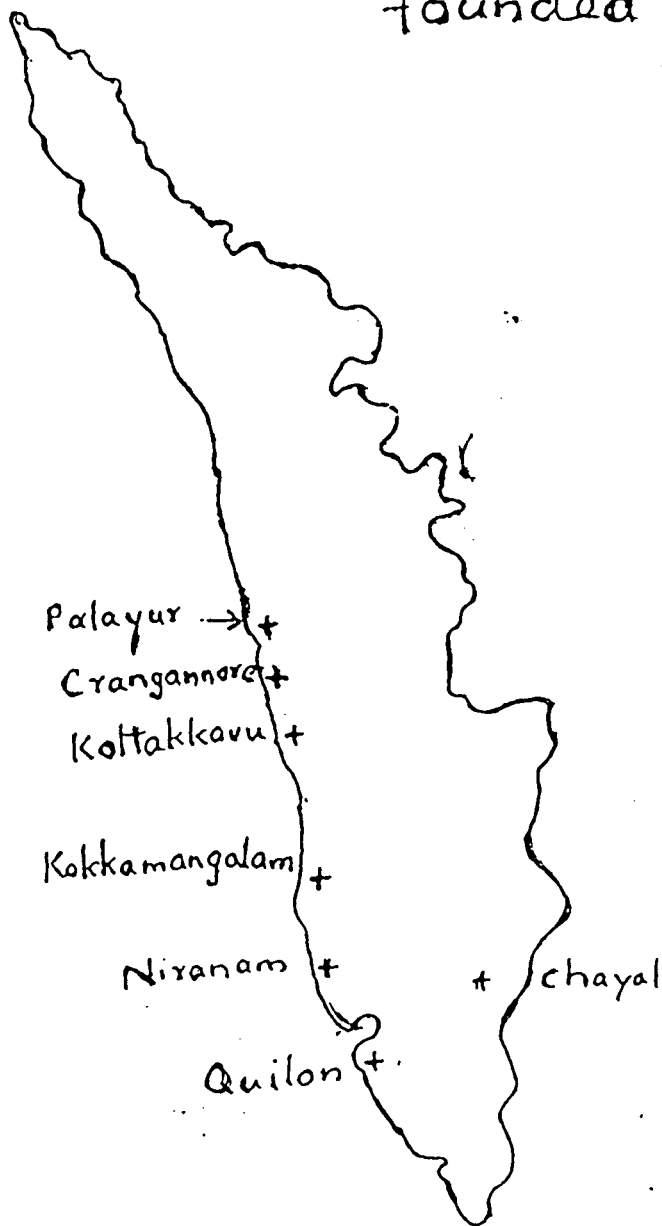
¹⁸ A recent map of Kerala is given in the next page.

¹⁹ Census 1991.

²⁰ A.F.Klign, *The Acts of Thomas*, Leiden, 1962, p.4ff.



Places in Kerala where St. Thomas
founded churches.



communities (churches) at Palayoor, Cranganore, Parur, Kokamangalam, Quilon, Niranam, and Chayal.²¹ St. Thomas visited the Coromandel Coast, made conversions, crossed over to China and preached the gospel, returned to India and organised the Christians of Malabar under some guides (Priests) from among the leading families he had converted and erected few places of worship. Then he moved to the coromandel and suffered martyrdom on or near the little mount²², Madras. His body was brought to the town Maylapore and was buried in a holy shrine he had built.

St. Thomas Christians in the early period

The scarcity of the documentary evidences of the early centuries is a grave problem to the students of history both secular and religious. Hence it is difficult to get an adequate picture of St. Thomas Christians in this period. But we do possess certain evidences which serve as mile stones along the lonely route of the past history of this period.

St. Thomas Christians and the Chera Kings

The Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were the rulers of south India in the early centuries of Christian era. The communities founded by St. Thomas flourished under the Chera Kings, the then rulers of Chera kingdom who were known for their religious toleration. In the early centuries of the Christian era, the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were at constant war in South India. All accounts show that the Chera king had a powerful ally in the Christian merchants of Muziris. They were in a position to advance the Chera king large sums of money and supply him with arms in his campaigns against the Pandyas

²¹William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, new edition, Vol.1, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.199.

²² Church monument inscription – Little mount St. Thomas Church Madras.

and Cholas. This was probably the real cause of hostility of Pandyas and Cholas towards Malabar Christians who enjoyed the patronage of the Cheras.²³

Up to the fall of the Chera Kingdom the Thomas Christians of Malabar were under the Chera kings. Afterwards they were under many kings and chieftains. In this early centuries Cranganore was the centre of Christians. But the situation changed with the invasion of Arabs. The Thomas Christians and the Jews moved to other places like Quilon and Cochin.²⁴ Angamale rose up in importance during this period. According to tradition the 8 days fast observed even today was started at this time as a vow to preserve the virginity of the Thomas Christian girls and women against the attacks of Arabs.²⁵

St. Thomas Christians and the Persian church

The available sources of the early period reveal the existence of an old Christian community in Malabar known as St. Thomas Christians and they are also known as the Persian Christians or Syrian Christians; St. Thomas Christians because of the belief that St. Thomas preached the messages of Christ for the first time in Malabar and succeeded in establishing Christianity there.²⁶

St. Thomas Christians were also known as Syrian Christians because of the observance of Syrian ritual, Syriac language and also the ecclesiastical solidarity with the Syrian Church²⁷. The church in Malabar was in close alliance and ecclesiastical solidarity with the Persian or East Syrian Church. This alliance is based on several factors. As it had been the custom of the early church, the church in India also formed part of the regional grouping of the

²³ P.Thomas, *Christian and Christianity in India & Pakistan*, London, 1954, p.29.

²⁴ S.S. Koder, *Kerala and Her Jews*, Cochin, 1965, p.2.

²⁵ George Menachery ed., *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia*, Vol. II, Trichur, 1973, pp.133-134.

²⁶ K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, p.444

²⁷ *Ibid.*,

churches. The local churches in the East outside the Greeco Roman world developed a kind of solidarity and the Patriarchal See of Selucia-Ctesiphon, the capital of Persian empire, emerged as its centre. The Church in Persia holds on the tradition that St. Thomas on his way to India did visit Persia and founded there first Christian Community.²⁸

The church in Edessa, Persia claims the same tradition through Mar Addai, a disciple of St. Thomas. The church of Seleucia – Ctesiphon, the capital of the Persian empire also defends the St. Thomas tradition on the ground that Mar Mari, a disciple of Mar Addai founded the church there.²⁹ This ecclesiastical solidarity based on the same apostolic tradition may be an expression of their Thomastic affinity. Such a common patrimony did build up a common solidarity. The close commercial relations which existed between the middle East and Malabar reinforced this solidarity. It is also believed that a colony of Syrians had settled in Malabar in the early years of the Christian era, and that the present Syrian Christians are the descendants of that colony by inter marriage with the native population.³⁰

The presence of the colony of the Jewish merchants and the early converts from among them paved the way for the use of the Syriac language for worship. From the very beginning of their church the Syriac heritage has always been a source of inspiration and prestige for the Thomas Christians. During the time of persecutions in the Persian Empire many Christians fled for safety to India and these immigrants were welcomed into this community in India. At a later period the persecutions in the middle East under the Islamic rulers was another occasion for the exodus of the Christians to India.

²⁸ Xavier Koodapuzha. *op.cit.*, p.49.

²⁹ P.J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p.37.

³⁰ *Ibid.*,

The relation between the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire was far from cordial. In such a situation the churches in the East which were outside the Roman Empire were practically forced to develop their own administrative system which resulted in the emergence of an effective ecclesiastical set up centered on Seleucia – Ctesiphon. Within this set up the church in India developed its own autonomous administrative system maintaining its hierarchical communion with the church of the East. The hierarchical organisation also followed the pattern of regional grouping of the churches. The important administrative centres with the Roman Empire emerged into great metropolitan sees. Similarly in the East Seleucia, the Capital of the Persian Empire, also gradually become the metropolitan see of the churches in the East which were outside the result of the urgency to have their own administrative autonomy without depending on the patriarchal sees within the Roman Empire.³¹

The presence of the Syrian Christians in India and the relationship with their church have paved the way for accepting the Syrian rituals and language in the very beginning itself by the St. Thomas Christians. In a society like India, where the people of other religious traditions like Hindu and Muslims were using Sanskrit and Arabic respectively for their worship, the use of Syriac in the worship of the Thomas Christians was considered quite normal

‘The Chronicle of Seert’ , an important East Syrian document of the 7th or 8th century A.D. makes reference to a bishop named David, who allegedly evangelised the Indian people between 295-300 A.D.³². In the list of the Bishops who attended the Nicean council of 325 A.D held in Seleucia is mentioned one ‘John the Persian’ who according to the history of Galasius written in the Second half of the 5th century, was bishop of the whole Persian and greater India.³³

³¹ P.J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p.37.,

³² *Ibid.*, p.50

³³ *Ibid.*, p.50.

These references indicate that some relation existed between the Christians of India and the church of Persia.

Immigration of Thomas of Cana and Syrians to Malabar

The immigration of a large number of Syrians into Malabar under the leadership of a merchant prince called Canai Thoma in 345 A. D.³⁴ is an epoch making event which places Christianity on a firm footing in India. His personality and wealthy following impressed Cheraman Perumal, the then local ruler and Thomas of Cana and Syrians received a royal welcome from the Perumal. Many a Malayalam ballad describes in glowing terms the greatness of Canai Thomas and the prosperity that descended on the Perumal's kingdom because of the alliance between the king and the merchant prince. The copper plate grant contained many privileges which tradition says, Thomas Cana got from the Perumal, has not come down to us³⁵.

The Syrians and Malabar Christians soon entered into matrimonial relations and merged into a single community. The Syrians brought a new vigour to the Malabar church. From now on the Christians in Malabar began to be known as Syrian Christians. A regular flow of clergy and bishops was kept up from Syria. They organised the Malabar church and introduced Syrian liturgy. More direct relations of Malabar were established in later centuries, the ecumenical council held in Nicea in 325 A.D at the instance of Emperor Constantine was attended among others, by Johannes who is described as the "Metropolitan of Persia and India".³⁶

³⁴ P.J.Podipara. *op.cit.*, p.63.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.64.

³⁶ P.Thomas, *op.cit.*, p.39.

It is believed that from the time of Thomas of Cana, Syrian priests used to come to Malabar to look after the spiritual affairs of the Christians here. The letters of the two Persian patriarchs, Mar Ishoyab III (647/8 or 650/1) and Mar Timothy I (780 – or 789 – 823) mention the juridical dependence of the Indian church on the East Syrian or Persian church. The Malabar tradition hails the activities of two saintly persons from Persia by name Sapor and Prot who are said to have come to Malabar in the eighth – ninth centuries³⁷.

In 1490 A.D the Malabar church sent a delegation of 3 members to Babylon with the purpose of getting bishops for Malabar. The Chaldean Patriarch Mar Simon IV (1437 – 1467) sent two bishops, Mar Thomas and Mar John to Malabar. Mar Thomas returned to the Patriarch with offerings and good news from Malabar. After hearing his report patriarch Elias V (1502 – 1503) consecrated three more bishops and sent them to Malabar. These three namely the Metropolitan Mar Jahabalaha, Bishop Mar Denha and Mar Jacob together with Mar Thomas and Mar John formed the hierarchy of India at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Of the five prelates, Mar Jacob governed the Thomas Christians for a long period until his death around the year 1552. Apart from the Bishop there was an Archdeacon to look after the temporal affairs of the community. There was also yogam (assembly) consisting of the heads of Christian families to assist the Archdeacon to make appropriate decisions³⁸.

The Malabar Christians enjoyed high social status. Their position was almost equivalent to that of Nairs. The cast Hindu believed that the ceremonial touch of the Christians would purify the vessels, water and other objects polluted

³⁷ Bartholomew of Jesus, T.O.C.D., *The Syrian Christians in Malabar*, Mangalore, 1917, p.37.

³⁸ Andrews Thazhath, *The Juridical Source of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Kottayam, 1987, p 71.

by the approach or touch of the low castes. The Malabar Christians distinguished themselves in such professions as agriculture, trade, and military service.³⁹

The rise of Islam and the dominance of the Indian seas by Muslims put the affairs of the Malabar Christians in a bad shape. The seaborne trade of Malabar passed from the Christians to the Muslims. There was considerable animosity between the two and the flow of bishops from Syria was obstructed by the Muslims. The political upheavals in Syria and Persia had their repercussions in Malabar too. Christian fleets disappeared from the trade routes and Muslims captured the trade of the Malabar ports. Cranganore was sacked by the Arabs and the centre of trade shifted to the newly risen port of Calicut in the north. The authority of the Perumal himself waned. Three independent kingdoms – kingdoms of Calicut, Cochin and Travancore arose in its place. Of these Calicut under its ruler Zamorin was a staunch ally of the Muslim power, its enemy Cochin, an ally of the old but broken Christian power⁴⁰.

The church in the early Portuguese period 1489-1599

In 1498, Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese Navigator, landed at Calicut. Groups of merchants, soldiers and missionaries followed him to India. The arrival of the Portuguese in India marked the beginning of a new era in the religious history of the Malabar Christians.

The Zamorin, the ally of the Arabs, viewed the Portuguese with suspicion. The Raja of Cochin was eager to court the friendship of the Portuguese and build up the trade of Cranganore lost to Calicut with the rise of the Muslims. The greatest rejoicings were, however, of the Syrian Christians impoverished by the loss of trade to the Arabs and fallen in prestige and power on that account, they entertained hopes of re-establishment of their lost glory by

³⁹ Anantha Krishna Iyar, *The Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, Ernakulam, 1926, p.99.

⁴⁰ P.Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.38.

the Portuguese friendship and patronage. They promptly sent ambassadors to Vasco da Gama who himself was eager to befriend his co-religionists in the strange land he had reached. The result of the first contact between the Malabar Christians and the Portuguese was one of extreme cordiality.⁴¹

In 1510 the Portuguese conquered Goa and rebuilt the city and made it the capital of the Portuguese empire in the east. It was also the headquarters of ecclesiastical authority and missionary activities. In 1534 Goa was raised to a Bishopric and in 1557 to an Archdiocese with Cochin and Malacca as suffraganes.⁴²

Franciscans were the pioneer missionaries of Portuguese India. In 1541 they founded a seminary in Cranganore. In 1542, the Jesuits and in 1548 the Dominicans, extended their missionary activities to India. The missionary work of Francis Xavier, a Jesuit priest who landed at Goa in 1542 is worth mentioning.⁴³ He was struck by the object distress of the lower classes of Hindus who were treated as subhumans by high caste Hindus, Muslims and Christians alike. So he catered to the social and spiritual needs of these miserable people first. It was during this period that a large number of low caste conversions to Christianity has taken place.

Portuguese - Latin regime : Unrest, Revolt, Schism 1599-1887

The Malabar Christians were also known as Syrian Malabar Christians because of communion with the Eastern or Oriental Churches of Persia and Syria. At the time the Portuguese came to India, the Syrian church in Malabar was under the care and control of the Christian Patriarch of Babylon. They were

⁴¹ P. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.45.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.50.

⁴³ Jesuit Archives, Rome, Goa, 47, cited in P.J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p.120.

following the Syrian rite, their liturgical language was Syriac. They had given an Indian colour and shape to their liturgy and such other religious practices.⁴⁴

When the Portuguese who were following the Latin rite and language came and settled in India they began to insist that the religious practices of the Syrian Malabar Christians should be conformed to Latin usages in every respect. They preferred the Latin language and customs in liturgy. The Syrian Christians of Malabar who claim their origin to apostle St. Thomas insisted that the ' Law of Thomas' was different from ' the law of the Latin Church. But the Portuguese with their sense of superiority were not ready to accept a Christian way of life different from their own. They became suspicious of the orthodoxy of the Syrian Christian's faith. They considered some of the Syrian Christians Liturgical practices as heretical and superstitious. The attempts made by the Portuguese bishops to substitute the Latin rite for the ancient Syrian rite paved the way for the hostile relationship between the two groups. But what made the relations really hostile was the efforts of the Portuguese, with the help of the political powers to cut off the relation of the Syrian Christians with the patriarch of Persia and to bring them under their own jurisdiction. After the death of Mar Jacob, who was the Bishop of Malabar at the time of arrival of Portuguese, the latter made every effort to prevent new Persian bishops from reaching Kerala. Mar Abraham who managed to reach Kerala had to suffer severe opposition and threats of deportation from the Portuguese authorities. But he managed to rule the Christians till his death in 1597⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ *Catholic Directory*, p.141.

⁴⁵ P.J.Podipara, *op.cit.*, p.134.

The synod of diamper (Udayamperur) 1599

After the death of Mar Abraham in 1597, Menezes, the archbishop of Goa visited the churches of Malabar Christians. In 1599 he convoked the synod of Diamper, 130 clergy and 660 laymen met at Diamper (Udayamperur) in the territory of the king of Cochin. In this Synod the Thomas Christians were prevailed upon to condemn the patriarch as a heretic and schismatic and to swear they could not accept any bishops except the one immediately nominated by Rome. The Patriarch thus condemned was Denha Simon who was in explicit communion with Rome.

The Synod enacted fundamental changes in the rite and ecclesiastical laws of the Thomas Christians; dealt with doctrine, morals, discipline, abuses, superstitious practices and so on. It also changed several religious rituals to suit the Latin customs, introduced administrations according to Latin canon law and abolished many social and cultural practices of indigenous origin. Thus the Synod gave official stamp to the Latinization of the Syrian Malabar Christian community.

The question is whether Don Menezes, who convoked the Synod had any right to conduct that Synod which he called "a diocesan synod according to the sacred canons". The titles for conducting the Synod, according to his convocation letter, were: the two Briefs of Pope Clement VIII, his own position as primate of the East and the absence of a cathedral chapter in the vacant see of Angamale. None of these points, nor all put together, could give Dom Menezes any right to celebrate a diocesan Synod in the metropolitan epharchy of Angamale which was not even his suffragan See at the Synod, though in the acts of the Synod he says it was his suffragan See. Nor was Angamale under the

Padroado of the king of Portugal at that time Angamale was also not included in the Latin hierarchy of the time.⁴⁶

The 'padroado' jurisdiction in Kerala Aug 5, 1600

The term Padroado means the patronage exercise by the king of Portugal on the Christian church in India. Under this scheme the king of Portugal undertake to evangelise the countries conquered by them for which service the Holy see (the Pope) granted the king certain privileges. The chief among these privileges was the right of presenting suitable persons to be bishops of dioceses created in the conquered or colonised territories. Thus Latin Archbishops under the Padroado jurisdiction were appointed in Kerala. The first archbishop thus appointed was Francis Roz, S.J. (1600-1624). Installed first at Angamally, he transferred his seat later on to Cranganore. He was succeeded by Stephan Britto (1624-41) and Francis Garcia (1641- 59)⁴⁷. The Syrian Malabar Christians naturally did not like to be ruled by the Portuguese Bishops nor did they appreciate the latter's Latin customs. Moreover, under the Portuguese Bishops, the Archdeacons who had been in the past the ' defacto' rulers of the community were reduced to a mere titular position with no real powers. People resented these changes and longed for a bishop from Persia, if not from themselves. They began to send requests to the Patriarch of Babylon.⁴⁸

Coonen cross oath at Mattancheri, Cochin, 1652

In 1652, the Patriarch of Babylon, at the request of Syrians, sent Bishop Ahathalla to Malabar. But the Portuguese authorities refused to allow him to land. They deported him to Goa. A false rumour spread that, Ahathalla was drowned by the Portuguese off the coast of Cochin. Emotionally upset by the

⁴⁶ P.J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p.139.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.147.

⁴⁸ Jose Kuriedath, *Authority in the Catholic Community in Kerala*, Bangalore, 1989, p.9.

news, the Syrian Christians assembled near the open air cross at Mattanchery Church. They decided that no Syrian worth his name should owe allegiance to Goa and Portuguese.⁴⁹ Everyone was asked to swear by the cross of the Mattanchery church, made famous by this day's events, that he would not accept the authority of Goa. To make the Oath effective, it was necessary for every individual to touch the cross. The huge crowd tied long ropes to the cross in all directions and touched the rope when they took the solemn pledge. This event is known in Syrian Christian History as the Coonen (Crooked) Cross Oath or the revolt of Coonen Cross.⁵⁰

In a few days those who took the oath convened a meeting at Alangad. Twelve priests imposed their hands on Archdeacon Thomas Parambil and ordained him as their Bishop. But many realizing the wrong direction of the movement did not approve this step. This was the beginning of a great schism (separation) in the history of the Syrian Malabar Christians. The group with the Archdeacon Thomas later got affiliated to the Jacobite church of Antioch and came to be known as Jacobites.⁵¹

The others remained under the Latin rule in order to be in Catholic communion and later they were popularly known as Syro-Malabar Catholics⁵².

⁴⁹ Nagam Aiya, *op. cit.*, p.184.

⁵⁰ P.Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.104.

⁵¹ Jose Kuriendexth, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

⁵² The use of the term ' Syro-Malabar church' is seen for the first time in the writings of the missionaries in 1788. When the catholic Thomas Christians were separated from the Latins in 1887 their Church was called' Syro- Malabar Church' ' Syro' referred to the liturgical language Syriac, Malabar is a region located on the South – West Coast of India, corresponding in great part to the modern federal State of Kerala.

Italian Carmelites 1657

The Roman ecclesiastical authorities realised the damage done to the Indian Christianity by the misplaced zeal of the Portuguese missionaries. Pope Alexander VII now sent to Malabar one Father Joseph Sebastian and a few Carmelite priests to study the situation. With the help of two influential native priests, Fr. Chandy Parambil and Fr. Chandy Kadavil, Fr. Sebastian succeeded in getting back as many as 40 churches from the side of the separated group under Archdeacon Thomas. On Sebastians' return to Rome in 1648, he was consecrated Bishop and sent back as Vicar Apostolic of Malabar. By 1663, the total number of churches reunited to the Catholic faith under bishop Sebastiani was 84.

Dutch intervention, the demand for indigenous bishops

In 1663, the Dutch captured Cochin and expelled all other Europeans from the country. The Italian Carmelite priests had to leave the country. Bishop Sebastiani, before leaving Malabar, concerted Fr. Chandy Parambil and appointed him Vicar Apostolic of Malabar. On his death, the Italian Carmelites, having secured the consent of the Dutch to reside in the country, again became Vicars Apostolic of Malabar, with Verapoly as their seat. The Carmelites were under the Roman congregation for the propagation of faith commonly known as 'Propaganda Regime'. Portuguese Jesuits under the patronage of the Portuguese king (Padroado) got charge of the Archdiocese of Cranganore. Thus the Syro Malabar Catholics were divided into two separate jurisdiction till the end of the 19th century, Rome and Portugal, i.e., Propaganda Regime and Padroado Regime respectively.⁵³

⁵³ P.J. Podipara. *op.cit.*, p.155.

The attempts of the Syro-Malabar Catholics to get a bishop either from Persia or from themselves continued. In the 2nd half of the 18th C two representatives authorised by the Syro-Malabar community, Fr. Joseph Cariattil and Fr. Thomas Paremakkal. They made a long journey to Portugal and Rome to appraise the Padroado and Propaganda authorities of the grievances of the community, the cruelty, the unedifying behaviour of the missionaries, failure in the administration of justice, and the superiority complex of the missionaries were some of their grievances. Though Cariattil was made Bishop of Cranganore he could not rule his people as he on his way back, died in Goa, in 1786 under mysterious circumstances. Before his return he had appointed Paremakkal as Governor to his See and the latter ruled the Padroado See of Cranganore from 1786 to 1799. After Paremakkal's death, the administration again fell into the hands of foreigners⁵⁴.

The Roccas schism – 1861

The Syrians still continued their request to secure for themselves a bishop of their own rite. When Mar Roccas, Bishop of Perath, sent by the Chaldean Patriarch Mar Josepy Audo against the will of the Holy See, began to usurp jurisdiction in Malabar several apostolic briefs were sent from Rome condemning this.⁵⁵ By the brief 'Naper nobis of Pope Pius IX dated 26 September 1862, the Chaldean Patriarch was forbidden to send to Malabar any more bishops and thus the Chaldean jurisdiction over the Thomas Christians came to a formal end. Here in Malabar because of the confusion about the leadership only 84 churches accepted Roccas. Thus started the schism.

During this crisis Fr. Chavara Kuriakose Elias was appointed as the vicar general for Syro-Malabarians.⁵⁶ Fr. Chavara wrote many pastrols in fulfillment

⁵⁴ Jose Kuriedath. *op.cit.*, p.11.

⁵⁵ Andres Thazath, *op. cit.*, p.215.

⁵⁶ C.D. Valerian, *Chavara Kuriakose Eliasachan (Mal.) Mannanam*, 1939, pp.160-161.

of his assignment.⁵⁷ He with great ability strenuously fought against Roccas. The Pope ordered the patriarch to recall Roccas under pain of excommunication in 1862.⁵⁸ The majority of the Thomas Christians who followed Roccas were under the impression that Roccas had his mission from Rome and all of them returned to the obedience of the former church.

The Mellus Schism, 1874-1882

This Schism was particularly due to the efforts of the Syrian Catholics under the Padroado administration. The people of Trichur took the lead in this affair. In 1874, the Syro-Chaldean Patriarch sent, as before another Bishop Mar Mellus. The people thought he had been duly sent with the permission of the Holy See Rome and he was given a warm reception at Trichur. The Trichur church of “our lady of Dolours” was his centre of work. He persuaded large number of people into his fold. However, Mellus, was excommunicated by Archbishop Leonard, by the order of the Pope. The people were disillusionized and many of them abandoned his cause. But a few families continued in the schism, Mellus was recalled and he left Malabar on 5th March 1882. While the schemas of Roccas dwindled with his departure from Malabar in 1862. The schism of Mellus left behind as small community in Trichur and its vicinity (the Surais) which eventually submitted to the Nestorain Patriarch of Chaldean and thus estranged itself from Roman communion⁵⁹.

Separate Apostolic Vicariates for SMC in 1887

Having found that contacts with the Persian church would only bring further schism in the church the Syro-Malabar Catholics began to petition the Roman authorities directly. After persistent requests for a long time, the Holy

⁵⁷ C.D. Valerian, *op. cit.*, p.159.

⁵⁸ Andrews Thazath, *op. cit.*, p.215.

⁵⁹ See The Surai church inscriptions preserved at Trichur Surai Church.

see designed to heed their legitimate prayer. The first positive step Rome adopted towards the independence of the Catholic Syrians was to appoint in 1877 Fr. Marcellinus Coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic with special charge of the Syrians. Other measures followed in quick decision. In 1886 pope Leo XIII established the hierarchy of the Latin Rite. Veropoly was made an archdiocese and the archdiocese of Cranganore was suppressed. In 1887 the Syrians were completely separated from the jurisdiction of Veropoly, Latin rite - Separate apostolic Vicariates were constituted for the Syro-Malabar Catholics - Trichur and Kottayam with Adolf Medlycott (An English Prelate) for Trichur and Bishop Charles Lavingane S.J. (A French Prelate) for Kottayam as their rulers⁶⁰.

Even now, the community did not cease petitioning Rome to appoint a bishop from among themselves. So finally in 1896, the Holy See erected three Vicariates Apostolic under the Propaganda, viz. Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry, with indigenous bishops, Mar John Menachery, Mar Aloysius Pazheparambil and Mar Mathew Makil respectively. In 1911, a new Vicariate Apostolic was erected at Kottayam exclusively for the Southists. (The earlier Vicariate Apostolic of Kottayam that had been established in 1887 had been suppressed in 1896). Mar Mathew Makil was transferred to Kottayam and Mar Thomas Kurialacherry was appointed at Changanachery. Under indigenous bishops, the Syro-Malabar Catholics began to make fast progress in all fields.

The erection of a Hierarchy for SMC in 1923

The progress made by the Syrian Catholic community under indigenous bishops and their sincere devotion to the Holy See were highly appreciated by Rome and as a result on 21st Dec. 1923, the Syro-Malabar hierarchy was established by Pope Pius XI.⁶¹ The name of the church by usage in the official

⁶⁰ The Papal Bull. No.1. of Pope Leo XIII, 1887, Archepharchial Archives, Trichur,

⁶¹ See Bull, No.11, in the same source.

document was changed to Syro-Malabar church. Ernakulam was raised to Metropolitan status and the eparchies of Trichur, Changanacherry and Kottayam were made its suffragans. In 1956 Changanassery also was raised to the status of Metropolitanate. By that time the number of the eparchies for St.Thomas had increased to seven⁶².

SMC, after the historic Vatican council of 1962

The second Vatican council was held in Rome between 1962-65⁶³ promulgated 16 documents that were expected to reform and update all area of the life of the Catholics. Various changes took place in the structure and leadership pattern of SMC after the council. Two documents, 'Constitution of the church' and 'Constitution on the church in the modern world' were concerned with structure and functioning of the church. With regard to the structure of the Catholic church the most important change during our time is the shift from the papal, monarchic and pyramidal model to the collegial and communion model. But the changes reached India only after 3 decades.

SMC, A major Archiepiscopal Church, 1992

From 1956 onwards the SMC found itself in an anomalous situation of having two Metropolitans – Ernakulam and Changanassery – and without a common head. Besides, the 9 dioceses outside these provinces, which were erected from the year 1962 onwards were not suffragans of any of these two. As the CCEO (Code of Cannons of the Eastern Church) was promulgated in 1990 it became imperative to rectify this anomaly. Thus on 16 Dec. 1992⁶⁴. Pope John Paul II raised the SMC to the status of a major Archiepiscopal church with

⁶² *The Catholic Directory*, 2000, p.3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁴ Papal Bull, No.115, 1992, preserved in Major Archdiocesan Archives, Ernakulam.

the title of Ernakulam – Angamaly. The Metropolitan of Ernakulam was made its major Archbishop.

Mar Antony Padiyara was made the first major Archbishop and Archbishop Abraham Kattumana was appointed as Pontifical Delegate to complete the process with the power of major Archbishop exercised by him temporarily.

In 1997 Pope John Paul appointed Fr. Varkey Vithayathil, as the apostolic Administrator of the SMC with the power of the major Archbishop. He was made major Archbishop in 1999. The Major Archbishop is the head and Father of the church. He has all the power of the Patriarch.⁶⁵ The major Arch Bishop is the head of an individual church. He, with the Synod of Bishops of the church constitute the highest authority under the Holy See. The church will have a proper territory where the major Arch Bishop can exercise his authority. Thus SMC attained full autonomy since a patriachate is established with jurisdiction over the whole of India and is allowed to develop its own mode of worship and other socio-religious practices suited to the genius of Indian culture.

Present Syro-Malabar Church

As have seen above, the Syro- Malabar church has now 15 administrative units in Kerala and 11 outside Kerala. In Kerala the 15 dioceses are grouped into two provinces Ernakulam and Chenganacherry.⁶⁶ Under the archdiocese of Ernakulam are the dioceses of Idukki, Irinjalakuda, Kothamangalam, Mananthavady, Palghat, Tellicherry, Thamarassery and Trichur. The province under the Archdiocese of Changanacherry comprises the dioceses of

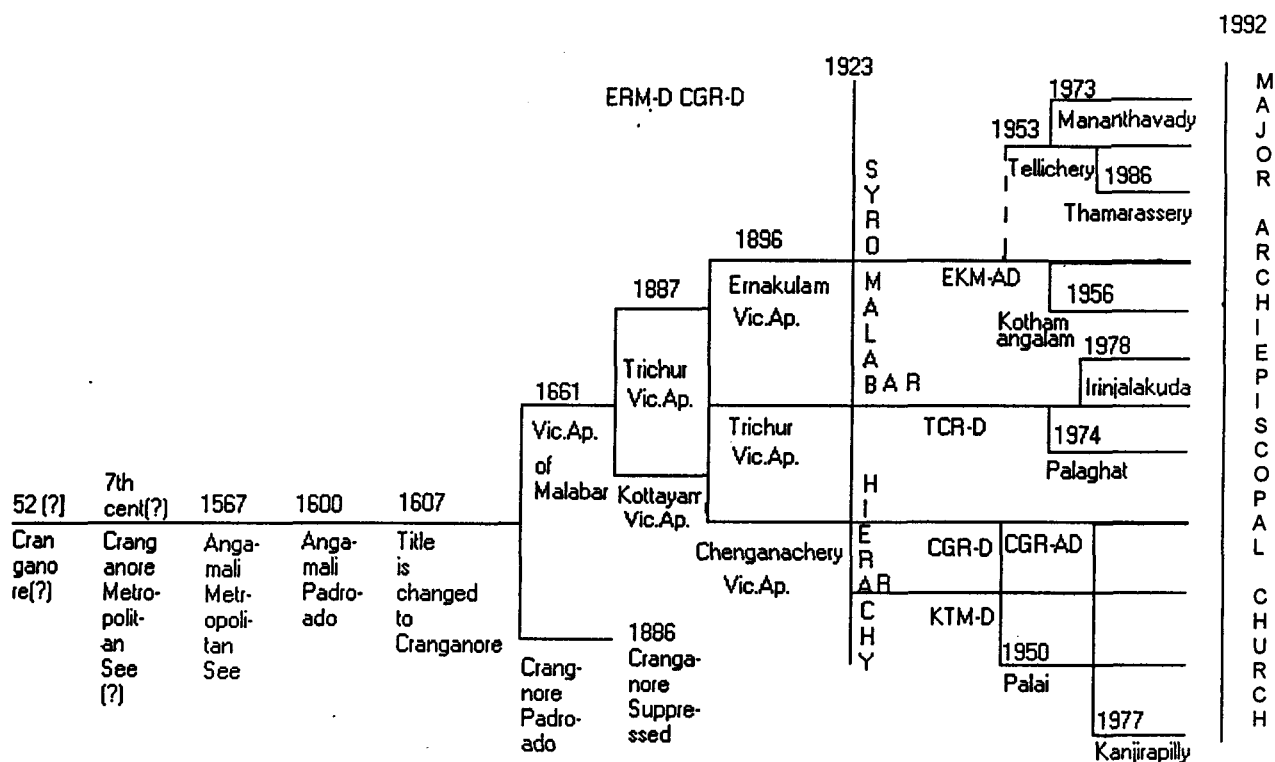
⁶⁵ The Catholic Patriarch is a bishop who enjoys power over all the bishops including the metropolitan and other Christian faithful of the Patriarchal church over which he presides. The Patriarch appoints bishops and erects new dioceses.

⁶⁶ *Archeopharchy of Trichur Directory*, 2002.

Belthangady, Kanjirapilly, Kottayam, Palai and Thalassery. These fifteen ecclesiastical units constitute the Syro-Malabar hierarchy of India. The eleven dioceses of Syro-Malabar rite outside Kerala are Adilabad, Bijnor, Chanda, Chicago, Gorakhpur, Jagadapur, Kalyan, Sagar, Satna, Rajkot and Ujjain.

A statistical profile of the Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala is given in the next page.

A graphic presentation of the Syro- Malabar dioceses in Kerala according to their origin



Catholic church in Kerala

The term Catholic comes from the Greek and means universal or concerning all. Historically the term has come to denote the totality of the Christian communities which are in communion with the church of Rome. In the

English speaking world this meaning is often made clear by the expression 'Roman Catholic Church'⁶⁷.

The church founded by Christ was first taught and governed by the apostles of Christ and St. Peter was the head, the first Pope⁶⁸ and Vicar of Christ on earth. Hence the church is apostolic, doctrines being direct from Christ through apostles.⁶⁹

The three rites of Kerala Catholic church

In order to complete the picture of the catholic community in Kerala we give below a very brief accounts of the three rites. By rite it means 'The way in which liturgical worship is carried out, that is, the words and actions used in performing a religious ceremony'. Rites were historically local origin. Different rites have evolved in course of church history, giving to liturgical worship and church life in general form and usages peculiar and proper to the nature of worship and the culture of the people in various circumstances and places.

There are three catholic churches in Kerala which follow three different rites. 1. Syrian rite (Syro-Malabar Church) 2. Latin rite (Latin Church) 3. Syro – Malankara rite (Syro-Malankara Church)

According to the Census of India, 1981, the number of Christians in Kerala is 5,233, 865 forming 20. 56% of the total population of the state. The Christians are the third largest religious group in the State after Hindus (58. 15%) and Muslims (21. 25%)⁷⁰.

⁶⁷ Jessie Corrigan Pegis, *A Practical Catholic Dictionary*. New York, 1956, p.43.

⁶⁸ The word Pope comes from the Latin Papa, which is an affectionate term for father.

⁶⁹ Thomas J. Arukalil, *The Catholic Church of Kerala*, Kottayam, 1996, p.10.

⁷⁰ *Census of India*, 1986.

According to the Catholic Directory of Kerala, 1986, there are more than 4 million (4,271, 660) Catholics in Kerala. They account for 36.48% of the total Catholic population in India.

The table below gives the distribution of Catholics by Rite in Kerala.

TABLE 1.1
Number and Percentage of Catholics in Kerala by Rite⁷¹.

Rite	Population	% to the total population in the State	% to the total Christian population in the State	% to the total Catholic, population in the State
Syro- Malabar	2,697,677	10.60	51.54	63.15
Syro- Malankara	285,191	1.12	5.45	6.68
Latin	1,288,792	5.06	24.62	30.17
Total	4,271,660	16.78	81.61	100.00

The table shows that the Catholic population of Kerala is 16.78% of the total population of the State. The Syro- Malabar Catholics form the majority of not only the Catholic population of Kerala (63.15%) but even of the total Christian population of the State (51.54%).

Table 1.2 in the next page gives the organizational strength of the Catholics, viz., the number of ecclesiastical provinces, dioceses, parishes and priests in each rite. Proportionate to the strength of the population, the organizational unit and personnel of the Syro- Malabar Church account for the majority of the total units and personnel of the Catholics in Kerala.

⁷¹ *Catholic Directory of Kerala*, Angamali, 1986, p.507

TABLE 1.2

Number of Provinces, Dioceses, Parishes and Priests in each Catholic Rite in Kerala⁷²

Rite	Provinces	Arch dioceses and dioceses	Parishes	Priests		
				Diocesan	Religious	Total
Syro-Malabar	2	12	1233	2041	969	3010
Latin	1	9	340	614	285	899
Syro-Malankara	1	3	550	320	93	413
Total	4	24	2123	2975	1347	4322

A brief history of Syro-Malankara Catholic and Latin Catholic church

In order to complete the picture of the catholic community in Kerala, we give below very brief accounts of the Syro-Malankara and Latin Catholic Communities also.

(a) Syro – Malankara Church

While narrating the history of the St.Thomas Christians, it was mentioned that a section of the community which revolted against the Jesuit rule in 1653 later separated itself from the catholic communion and got affiliated to the Jacobite Patriarchate of Antioch. They adopted the Antiochean mode of worship and ecclesiastical discipline and came to be known as Jacobites. Later due to a number of disputes, of which the most important was over the nature of the jurisdiction of the antiochean Patriarch over the local community the Jacobites were divided into two groups: the Orthodox church which claimed complete

⁷² *Catholic Directory of Kerala, op. cit., pp.506-507.*

autonomy to the local church in all administrative matters, leaving only spiritual leadership to the Patriarch; and the Jacobite church which favoured a closer link with the patriarchate.

Since the end of the world war I, one Orthodox priest, P.T.Geevarghese, was active in bringing about the spiritual renewal of his church. In 1920 he founded the first Orthodox religious order in India, the order of the imitation of Christ with male and female branches. They became known as the Fathers and sisters of Bethany, after the name of the first monastery of Metropolitan of Bethany under the name of Mar Ivanios with special jurisdiction over his religious houses and the people attached to them. Three years later one of his monks was also ordained bishop, suffragan to him, under the name of Mar Theophilos.

Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos wanted to reunite their church with Rome. Accordingly, they began correspondence with Rome. At last in September 1930. Mar Ivanios and his companions were officially received into communion with Rome. They were followed by all the Bethany sisters, most of the Bethany men, some 35 diocesan priests and about 4000 faithful. Contrary to initial expectations, the majority did not follow Mar Ivanios. However, in 1932, the holy see, through the apostolic constitution 'Christo Pastorum Principi' erected a new hierarchy under the name 'Syro-Malankara church' for the reunited group.⁷³

The Syro-Malankara hierarchy consisted of a single ecclesiastical province with Trivandrum as the Metropolitan see and Tiruvalla as its suffragan. Recently, in 1978, a new diocese was added to the province with Bathery as its head quarters.

⁷³ E.R. Hambye, "The Catholic Thomas Christians 1653-1970", in *Christianity in India*, ed. by H.C Perumalil and E. R. Hambye, Alleppey, 1972, pp. 191-192. For the history of the Syro-Malankara church, see also Cyril Malancherupil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Alwaye, 1973.

Like the Jacobites, the Syro-Malankarites also follow the antiochean customs in liturgy and other religious practices. The administration of the church is, however, carried out according to oriental canon law of the Catholic church and the ancient indigenous customs of the community.

(b) Latin Catholic Church

The Latin church of Kerala originated from the successful missionary work of the Portuguese. The Portuguese ⁷⁴activity was not restricted to the 'reformation' of the St. Thomas Christians as we have already described. They converted many Hindus to Christianity in different parts of the country. It was in Cochin that the Portuguese settled first and began to do evangelisation. By the middle of the sixteenth century, there were about 15000 Christians in Cochin. Similarly, large number of conversions took place in Cannanore, and Chaliyam⁷⁵.

The Portuguese also promoted marriage between native women and the Portuguese merchants and sailors. The chief promoter of such mixed marriages was Alfonso de Albuquerque, the conqueror of Goa⁷⁶.

Later the missionary works of St. Francis Xavier gave great boost to the Latin missions. In 1544 Xavier baptised over 10,000 Mukkuva fisherfolk in Tranvancore and, thereby, laid the foundation of the Latin Christianity there. In Quilon also they converted many and build a church for them⁷⁷. He continued his missionary work in India till 1552 in which year he left India for the far east. His life came to an end in the same year in the island of Sanchian.

⁷⁴ Mundadan, ~~History~~, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. 1., Bangalore, pp. 355 – 390.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.364 – 67.

⁷⁷ Wicki S.J., "The Portuguese Padroado in India in the 16th century and Francis Xavier", in Perumalil and Hambye, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

Missionaries belonging to different religious congregations continued their work after the death of Francis Xavier. Many more conversions took place in Cochin. Many parishes were established and were entrusted to the diocesan clergy. In 1558 a diocese was erected in Cochin under Padroado. The Latin Christians of the southern parts of India who had earlier been under the archdiocese of Goa were brought under the new diocese. Later, in 1661, the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar with its head quarters at Verapoly was established under propaganda with jurisdiction over Latins and Syrians.

In 1886, the Latin hierarchy of India was established and the Vicariate of Malabar was changed into Archdiocese of Verapoly. When separate Vicariates were established for the Syrians in 1887, Verapoly became an archdiocese of Latins only. In 1930, it got its first indigenous archbishop in the person of Dr. Joseph Attipetty. Today the Latin ecclesiastical province of Kerala consists of one archdiocese and eight suffragan dioceses, viz. Calicut, Cochin, Kottapuram, Vijayanpuram, Alleppey, Quilon, Punalor and Trivandrum.⁷⁸

Besides the three Catholic Communities mentioned above, there are several other Christian group in Kerala. the most important among them are the Jacobite Church, the Malankara Orthodox Church, the Marthoma Church, the Nestorain Church, St. Thomas Evangelical Church, Thozhiyoor Sabha, Church of South India, the Church of Brethren, Pentacostal Church, Salvation Army, Seventh day Adventists, Church of God, Jehovah's witnesses and Lutheran Church. Some of these groups are of indigenous origin while others are branches of churches from abroad. The members of the first six churches or groups belong to the original St. Thomas Christian community which in the course of history became divided into separate groups due to various reasons.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ M.D' Suza, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, Vol. I, Bombay, 1910. p.75.

⁷⁹ For detailed treatment of the history of Christianity in the 19th and 20th centuries, see P.J.Podipara, *op.cit.*, pp. 184-201.

Catholic Dioceses at a Glance: Syro-Malabar

Dioceses	Catholic Population	Parishes and Stations	Priests			Nuns	Bros.	Institutions													
			Dio cesan	Relig ious	Total			Ecclesi-astical	Educational								ORPH.	HOST.	HOSP. & DISP.	PUB.	
									COL	HSS	HS	UPS	LPS	NS	TS	Te.S					PROF
Adilabad	10,500	19	3	27	30	138	2	1	-	-	11	1	-	-	1	-	-	17	2	11	-
Belthangady	20,000	44	28	06	34	126	-	1	-	-	3	5	-	7	4	-	-	1	6	8	1
Bijnor	1,896	29	12	27	49	174	02	2	-	-	9	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	12	-
Chanda	12,877	32	14	48	52	269	4	4	-	4	5	14	-	-	1	-	-	24	5	25	2
Changanacherry	3,80,000	261	344	563	907	3586	2	17	9	5	52	30	75	147	7	23	-	24	35	19	4
Emakulam	4,45,377	325	360	251	611	3960	109	18	15	4	48	68	127	159	-	145	-	55	39	65	11
Gorakhpur	2,225	21	17	19	36	162	8	3	2	3	14	1	17	-	-	1	-	-	8	11	-
Irinjalakuda	2,54,863	135	87	107	194	1700	-	11	13	2	27	14	44	75	10	-	5	34	23	9	1
Jagadapur	6,411	24	04	60	64	270	55	9	-	2	3	6	-	-	-	-	-	2	27	23	1
Kalyan	1,00,000	48	37	69	106	210	-	-	-	-	4	14	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	9	1
Kanjirappally	1,88,000	121	215	269	484	1600	108	10	10	3	30	28	34	110	-	-	-	21	24	27	2
Kothamangalam	4,89,700	226	298	143	441	2708	58	6	6	10	47	41	68	111	-	-	-	26	11	22	3
Kottayam	1,43,383	139	148	84	232	1195	4	7	6	6	20	17	53	80	42	-	2	06	22	13	2
Manathavadi	1,63,500	133	153	106	213	1200	24	30	4	2	18	21	47	85	5	-	-	44	3	15	3
Palai	3,38,000	157	433	1209	1642	3820	167	19	9	8	55	135	125	166	3	-	19	47	45	20	7
Palghat	65,075	130	82	71	153	1424	-	11	8	11	25	17	44	77	1	-	5	27	27	20	1
Rajkot	1,000	51	4	82	86	375	-	4	1	9	26	-	27	71	-	-	-	6	5	53	-
Sagar	6,500	27	17	23	39	200	7	2	7	5	8	11	-	-	-	-	-	2	11	17	1
Satna	2,640	23	26	23	49	127	7	11	4	4	9	4	1	17	3	12	-	8	-	9	1
Thalassery	2,89,569	189	218	76	291	1291	5	9	6	4	26	33	45	107	-	-	2	19	23	20	1
Thamarassery	1,17,105	88	119	76	195	914	1	1	3	3	29	33	41	60	18	-	-	19	-	12	1
Thukkalai	22,000	42	22	12	34	185	2	1	-	4	12	10	19	65	-	-	-	13	-	4	1
Thrissur	4,31,000	211	249	85	334	3965	68	19	22	7	56	42	92	93	-	35	5	50	45	50	7
Ujjain	2602	39	10	64	74	191	-	5	-	7	10	10	9	-	-	6	-	4	15	17	1
Total	34,94,223	2514	2900	3500	6352	29,700	633	201	125	103	547	565	868	1441	95	222	38	449	382	491	52

Source: Indian Christian Directory, 2002

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHRISTIANS

The life of the Syro-Malabar Christians in the social and religious fields are intermingled as in the case of other communities. Christian converts from the high caste Hindu families of the time were proud of their high origin and still retain many customs very similar to that of the high caste Hindus although many such customs were suppressed during the later years. On becoming Christians they did not change their social customs nor lose their high social status from among the Hindu brethren. In family life and social ceremonies, in personal life and even in religious observance, a close similarity is noticeable between the Syrian Christians and high caste Hindus. The Syro-Malabar Christians are "Hindus or Indians in culture, Christians in religion, Syro-Oriental in worship."¹

A. Social system

The social set up of Malabar was a quasi-feudal one, composed of various castes or social groups each of which with its specific profession or professions contributed to the society. In the social scale the Syrian Christians stood next to the Brahmins.² The fair complexion, the sound economic position, high social and cultural background of the SMC members earned for them this social status. The Syrian Christians were called ' Nasrani Mapilas'. Mapilas mean nobles, Nasrani is the local derivation of the word Nazarene, Jesus of Nazareth.³

¹ George Menachery, ed., *St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India*, Vol. II, Madras, 1973, p. 107.

² *Ibid.*, p.107

³ P. J. Podipara, *The St. Thomas Christians*, Bombay, 1970, p.85.

The Syro Malabarians used to maintain a joint family system. Like the family lineage of the Hindu Brahmins that of the Syrians was of a patriarchal nature. The father was the supreme head in the family. The children considered it a sacred duty to help their aged parents. These Christians gladly welcomed the children as God's gift. They were anxious about the initiation of their children into the mystery of faith. Immediately after the birth of the child the words "Maron Iso Misiha" (Our lord Jesus, the saviour) was whispered into its ear.⁴ The children were brought up in obedience, humility and discipline.

The parents choose the partners in marriage for their sons and daughters. Mixed marriage are not very common, although at times it happens. The parents do not encourage such marriages since the danger of loosing the faith of the Christian partner is always present. Marriage took place in the church in the presence of a priest. Along with the wedding ring prescribed by the Syrian Rite, the Syrian Christians of Kerala use a small gold ornament called 'Thali' which the bridegroom tied to the neck of the bride. A cross of 21 minute beads distinguished the Christian Thali from the Brahmin one. The couples attached great spiritual significance to 'Thali'. Therefore the married women never take off 'Thali' from their necks. On their death, it was buried or dropped in the church treasury. The presentation of the bridal veil called 'Mantrakodi' by the bridegroom to the bride was also Brahmin in origin. The bride's parents had to give a sum as dowry to the boy. Makathaya system (the son inheriting from the father) was in force among the Syrians. Among the Brahmins only the eldest son inherited from the father but among the Christians, all the male children inherited.⁵

⁴ George Menachery, *op.cit.*, p.129

⁵ Andrews Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro Malabar Church*, Kottayam, 1987, p. 32.

The fidelity of the couples to the marital bond was remarkable. The husband and wife lived in strict adherence to the moral teachings. Husband was the breadwinner. Wife was mostly confined to the house preparing food and looking after the children. The Syrian women won't go out of the house much except to the church. The women are allowed to attend the prayer services along with the men in the churches. But in the modern period the women go outside for work in order to supplement their family income. The devotion of the wives to their husband is proverbial. The modesty of women in their dress and behaviour contributed much to the sanctity and solidarity of the family life. They have been renowned for their modesty, nobility and chastity.⁶

The Syro Malabarians by nature are peace loving. All the religious communities live in harmony and co-operation. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people.⁷ Paddy, coconut and spices are the chief cultivation. Trichur area was a business centre of SMC members. Elementary education has never been neglected and every effort is made to acquire the benefits of higher education. The number of graduates is annually increasing, and if judge by the success at examinations, the community must be said to be keeping pace with the times, and bids fair to take in the rank of nations and classes making rapid progress in the cultivation of knowledge and intelligence. It was during the period of Rama Varma, Sakthan Thampuran, the Raja of Cochin from 1790 , Trichur area became a business centre, because he suppressed the power of the feudal nobility. He gave the Syrian Christians land and settled them in the heart of the important towns of the present Trichur district like Trichur town, Chalakudy Kunnankulam, Irinjalakuda, Tripunnithara etc. with a view to promote industry and commerce.⁸ The industries such as clay, timber, textiles,

⁶ George Menachery, *op.cit.*, pp. 133- 134

⁷ Willian Logan, *Malabar Manual*. Vol. I, Madras, 1952, p.210.

⁸ *Trichur District gazetteer*, Trivandrum, 1960.

canning etc. were flourished. Their daily meals consisted of boiled rice and curry. This curry was a mixture of different kinds of herbs and spices. The Syrian Christian women are good cooks. There are many dishes and preparations and recipes which are specially Syrian Christians like Avalose, Avalose unda, Achappam, Kuzhalappam, Neyyappam, Inderiappam etc. These sweets and preparations do not spoil easily and will be always available in the Christian homes to treat the chance guests. In the matter of hygiene and cleanliness the Syrian Christians were quite conscious. They took great care in keeping the house and premises neat and tidy. Widows would not marry except after the period of mourning which was one year from the death of their husbands.

The Syro Malabar Christian were very particular to celebrate the 'Pula' and 'Chatham' feasts for the commemoration of the dead. These feasts are in name and nature Hindu, but christianised by the prayer and blessing of priests. Pula feast is on the 11th day after the death of their dear ones or at least before the 16th day. 'Chatham' is the feast celebrated on the anniversary day of the death of ancestors.⁹

The Syrian Christians are very religious minded. True to their origin from a priestly class they maintained a home centered liturgy. It consisted of prayer, fasting, devotion to sacred heart of Jesus, Mary and St. Thomas. The recitation of the rosary and bible reading are important ways of their home prayer. They visit the churches as frequently as possible. Majority of them, especially women are so regular to the Sunday mass and they participate actively in the church liturgy and other religious activities. People used to offer to the churches fowls

⁹ P.J .Podipara, *op.cit.*, p.92

and products of their agriculture. They were put to auction and the price went to the church treasury.¹⁰

Each village had a church and their homes usually located around the church. But those who lived in remote village had their houses built in separate compounds very much apart from one another. The village church or parish is a source of spiritual inspiration and unity for the people. But in the present century only the unemployed house wives are mainly confined with this church centered activities. The working women and men are not much bothered or involved in the church activities since they are engaged and busy with other secular associations which provide them a lot of freedom and economic security. They celebrate the feasts of saints and Mother Mary with a lot of expenses. They had a great respect for the most Holy Eucharist.¹¹

The Syro Malabar women have many peculiarities in their customs and manners which distinguish them from the other women folks of Kerala. They wore a white cloth seven yards long and one and a half yard broad. A number of fringes forming a fan like appendage behind rendered their dress artistically elegant. The upper portion of the body including the belly and arm is completely covered with the loose blouse called kuppayam or chatta. As they went to the church they had a veil like outer garment, with gold brocade, reaching to the ground.¹²

The ornaments worn by them also manifest their nobility. They wear gold chain, necklaces and bangles. Gold bangles often representing the highest in

¹⁰ N.A Ouseph, "*Family Life and Spiritual Heritage of Thomas Christians in Kerala*, in *Souvenir* published on the occasion of the visit of Pope John Paul at Trichur, Trichur, 1986, p.86.

¹¹ Christ instituted the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist at the Last supper. The word Eucharist is used both for the sacrament and sacrifice of Jesus Christ truly present under the appearances of bread and wine.

¹² P.J. Podipara, *op.cit.*, p. 82

craftsmanship cover both the arms. The weight of these gold ornaments vary with the wealth of the wearer. The unwritten tradition is that the first delivery of Christian woman takes place in her father's house. It is the father's responsibility to look after the woman and child for the first ninety days and thereafter to send them to the bridegroom's house with household utensils like bronze vessels, wooden or steel furniture etc.¹³

Of late however changes have come in the customs and manners of this Christian group of Kerala Joint family system is no more. Women are now dressed in sari and blouse. Women now a days do not mind going out of the house or even out of Kerala for different purposes. The case of Syro – Malabar women nuns, nurses, teachers, engineers and doctors working in different parts of the world bear ample testimony to this.

Though the Syro Malabrians are intelligent, hardworking, dependable and adventurous they lack social consciousness. They are to a great extent hyper-individualistic.¹⁴ This may be, due to the fact that they live in house built in separate compounds which isolate them from the neighbours. They feel themselves self sufficient. This is one of the reasons why they have produced only a few outstanding leaders. They are yet to learn the lesson that it is in helping others they are also helped. Anyway, at the moment the youngsters are awakened to an awareness of social dimension.

B. The hierarchy and religious structure of the SMC

The catholic church is a community of the children of God. Catholicism is not just a collection of beliefs and practices but a community of persons united

¹³ Mrs. K.M. Mathew. "The Syrian Christian Women", in George Menachery, *Op.cit.*, p 134

¹⁴ Sadhu Ittyavirah, "Community traits of Thomas Christians", George Menachery, *op. cit.*, p.133.

in the name of Christ. This communitarian concept applies not only to the universal church but also the particular churches. The Catholic church believes that Christ, the head of the church died and was raised for the sake of all men.¹⁵

In order to shepherd the people of God, Christ set up in his church a variety of offices. He chose twelve apostles and commissioned them to preach the gospel and establish His church.¹⁶ These apostles he constituted in the form of a college or permanent assembly at the head of which he placed Peter chosen from amongst them, Christ promised the primacy to Peter Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven".¹⁷

Since Christ willed that his Church should continue to exist until the end of time he chose Peter to be the leader of the Apostles, His vicar on earth, the visible head of the church, the first Pope. He promised and conferred on him the office, powers, duties and prerogatives of the chief shepherd.¹⁸ Hence they passed on to his successors in that office viz., the Bishops of Rome (Pope). Established by St. Peter as the seat of papacy, Rome is the principal See of the Roman Catholic church. Like wise the other apostles were also sent by Christ to establish his church. According to the promise of Christ. "... You shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the remotest part of the earth"¹⁹. This divine mission which was committed by Christ to the apostles, is destined to last until to the end of the world.²⁰

¹⁵ *The Holy Bible*, Rom, 8/ 32

¹⁶ *The Holy Bible*, : Mark 3/ 13- 19

¹⁷ *The Holy Bible*, Mathew..16/ 17-19

¹⁸ *The Holy Bible*, John 21/ 15-17

¹⁹ *The Holy Bible*, Acts. 1/ 8

²⁰ *The Holy Bible*, Mathew 28. 20

For that very reason the apostles were careful to appoint successors in this hierarchically constituted society. This apostolic tradition is manifested and preserved in the whole world by those who were made bishops by the apostles and by their successors down to our own time. In that way, with priests and deacons as helpers, the bishops received the charge of the community. Thus the ecclesiastical ministry is exercised in different degrees by those who even from ancient times have been called bishops, priests and deacons.

We do not know much about the growth of the churches or communities founded by apostle St. Thomas, in Kerala. In the folk songs prevalent among the Malabar Christians, namely, Rambban Pattu, Margam kali pattu etc we see St. Thomas preaching the gospel, doing numerous miracles of different kinds, establishing seven Christian churches (Communities) at important places and appointing²¹ bishops and priests to look after these communities. These priests were traditionally chosen from some reputed families. According to tradition the apostle ordained priests from some important families like Pakalomattam, Sankarapuri etc. According to a Rambban song, “Kepa of the Royal family of chera and Paul were made high priests by the apostle. The song says that it is the 17th century redaction by the 48th priest of Maliekal family of Niranam from the original composed by the second priest of the same ancestry.”²²

In Palestine the land of its origin, the Christian community in the apostolic and post-apostolic periods was led by teachers, prophets, evangelists and other helpers.²³ Besides there were different types of ministers like bishop’s presbyters and deacons. In the beginning there was no sharp distinction between these various roles.²⁴ What the apostles simply did was to appoint their

²² Jose Kuriedath, *Authority in the Catholic Community in Kerala*, Bangalore, 1989, P. 79.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 79

²⁴ *Ibid.*,

successors to look after every spiritual and social need of the community. These successors were bishops, priests, teachers and evangelists, all rolled into one. More or less the same must have been the case of the early organizational structure of Syro Malabar Christians in Kerala.

The few and fragmentary records of the early Christian centuries point out that Persian (Syrian) Bishops had some contact with the Indian Christians in this period.²⁵ A rather detailed reference is available about a Persian immigration in the 4th C. A.D. under the leadership of Thomas of Cana which we have already mentioned in Chapter I. The role of Thomas of Cana in the organization of the Christian community is worth examining as his seems to be the first recorded intervention of foreign leadership in the community.

By the 6th C. A. D. the Indian Christians became juridically subject to the Persian church and Persian bishops and clergy came over here to govern them. During the later centuries the real authority in the community was vested in a local priest called Archdeacon. According to the evidences available from the Portuguese period the main offices of authority in the Christian community in Kerala in the pre Portuguese period were those of bishop, archdeacon, Yogam and priests. Archdeacon was the chief assistant to bishop in the administration of the diocese. In the Syro-Malabar church, the archdeacon probably enjoyed greater authority in both spiritual and temporal matter because the bishops were foreigners who were not familiar with the language, customs, culture and socio-religious set up of the land. 'Yogam' is the Malayalam word for assembly. It was the most important administrative body among the Syro Malabar Christians.

²⁵ Jose Kuriedath. *op. cit.*, p. 80.

Yogam as an administrative body in the parishes exists even now among the Syro Malabar Christians, though it had undergone considerable changes.²⁶

A Separate Hierarchy for SMC in 1923

The spectacular progress made by the Syrian Catholic community under indigenous bishops and their sincere devotion to the Holy see were highly appreciated by Rome and as a result on 21st Dec. 1923, the Syro Malabar hierarchy was established by Pope Pius XI.²⁷

When local Bishops were appointed the western church and foreign rulers were forced to give up power and concede the rights of the community. But the structure within the church remained highly centralised and rigidly bureaucratic in the early decades of this century. The common people had no voice in the administration of the parish and were generally uninterested in the matter. Though there was a parish council (yogam) it was purely an advisory body.²⁸

Various changes took place in the structure and leadership pattern of Syro Malabar Catholic Church after the historic Vatican council 11 of 1962. The council promulgated 16 documents that were expected to reform and update all area of the life of the Catholics. Two documents, 'Constitution on the Church' and 'constitution on the church in the modern world' were concerned with the structure and functioning of the church with regard to the structure of the catholic church, the most important change during our time is the shift from the papal, monarchic and pyramidal model to the collegial and communion model.

²⁶ Jose Kuriedath, *op. cit.*, p.93.

²⁷ Philip Palmer. ed., *The Catholic Directory of Malabar*, Ernakulam. 1934. p. 193.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

According to the doctrine of collegiality as taught by Vatican 11, the Bishops are not the executives or delegates of the Pope but the successors of the apostles and they form a college or permanent body to which is given the highest authority in the church. It means that the papal primacy has to function in a new way, in a collegial way that the pope has to function as the head of the Episcopal college. The body and head must function together in collaboration with each other. More reforms were introduced at the international, national, regional, diocesans and parish levels.²⁹

The catholic Church, long the model of hierarchical organization at present consists of His Holiness Pope, assisted by the sacred college of cardinals and by several sacred congregations of permanent ecclesiastical committees by the patriarchs, archbishops and bishops by the apostolic nuncios and delegates, vicars and perfects and by certain specified Abbots and prelates. By virtue of the concordat signed of Feb. 11, 1929, the complete and independent authority of pope to rule his own possessions, was recognised by the Italian state. The territorial possessions of the Pope is called Vatican city. The sovereign of the small state is the Pope. The government presently is administered by a pontifical commission.

The Pope deals with the local churches through various sections of the Roman Curia consisting of congregations, tribunals, secretariats and offices. The relations of the holy see with the oriental churches are maintained mainly through the congregation for the oriental churches. The competency of certain other congregations are also valid for them with regard to certain matters. The apostolic Nuncio represents the Pope before the civil government and the hierarchy of the country.

²⁹ Jose Kuriedath, *op. cit.*, p. 144

India was divided into 114 ecclesiastical territories (dioceses) each entrusted to a bishop to be governed by him and his councils.³⁰ A diocese may comprise one or more districts of the state. A diocese is divided into parishes. For the convenience of administration the bishop may divide the diocese into several Foranes. Each forane consists of a group of neighboring parishes. Parish is the lowest administrative unit in the catholic church and a parish priest is appointed to a parish for a number of years to attend to the spiritual care of the Catholics of the parish. In bigger parishes, additional priests may be appointed as assistants to the parish priest. Each parish has either church yogam or parish council to take care of the administration as well as the activities of the parish. In Kerala, at present flourish three different rites or three individual churches, with their own independent hierarchies, but united in the Catholic Bishops conference of India. They are the Syro Malabar rite, the Syro Malankara rite and the Latin rite. These three rites are the expressions of the same catholic faith using diverse forms of worship and language. The word, 'rite' means more than liturgical customs. It may be called the style of Christian life of a community which is to be found in the particularities of worship, canon law of asceticism and monasticism and also in the peculiar theological system.

Catholics of the Syro Malabar rite are the most numerous group in Kerala now. They claim as their first missionary St. Thomas, the apostle. At one time under the administration of Latin Bishops they have had their own hierarchy since 1923. This rite preserves many ancient customs and a liturgy in Syriac. Today it has two ecclesiastical provinces (archdioceses) Ernakulam and Changanchery and 12 dioceses in Kerala.³¹

³⁰ George Appassery and Thomas J. Arukalil, *Catholic Directory of Kerala*, Angamaly, 1986, p. 506

³¹ Thomas J. Arukalil, ed., *The Catholic Church of Kerala*, Kottayam, 1996, p.9.

Catholics of the Syro Malankara rite in Kerala are recent converts from the Jacobite churches that went into schism from Rome in the 17th C. A.D. This small group of Jacobites were united with Rome in 1930. Pope Pius XI in 1932 erected a new hierarchy under the name Syro Malankara Church for the reunited group. This rite uses Malayalam, the local language, along with Syriac in its liturgy. Today the Syro Malankara church in Kerala considered of a single ecclesiastical province, Trivandrum, 2 suffragan dioceses and one titular see of Chayal.³²

The Latin Church of Kerala originated from the successful missionary work of the Portuguese. The Latin rite, so called because of its language and its liturgy also in the Latin language. In 1886 the Latin hierarchy was established in India and archdiocese of Veropoly was its headquarters in Kerala. Today the Latin ecclesiastical province of Kerala consists of one Archdiocese, Veropoly and 9 suffragan dioceses.³³

From 1966 onwards the vernacular languages were followed by the Catholics of all rites in Kerala for a large part of their liturgical services.

C. The bishop conferences: CBCI, KCBC, SMBC

The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) was constituted at the metropolitans conference held in Madras in September 1994. It plays an important role in the churches' development. The objects of CBCI are to facilitate co-ordinated study and discussion of questions affecting the church, adoption of a common policy and effective action in all matters concerning the interests of the church in India. By means of representations and collective statements the CBCI has endeavoured for the last sixteen years to uphold and

³² Thomas J. Arukalil, ed. *op. cit.*, p.10.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

defend the rights of the church to educate public opinion and to imbue Catholics with a true Christian spirit.

KCBC, (Kerala Catholic Bishops Council) is an association of the catholic bishops of the three rites of Kerala established as the regional council for the state of Kerala under the CBCI. They meet several times a year to discuss and decide on matters that concern the church in Kerala.

SMBC (Syro Malabar Bishops Conference) is the association of the Syro Malabar Bishops in Kerala. They meet several times a year and whenever there is any particular question to be discussed in order to learn and discuss and decide on matters that concern the whole rite or other problems of common interest.

Classes of Malabar Christians

Christians of Malabar	{	Europeans	{	Portuguese
		Topasses		English
				Dutch
	{	Native Christians	{	New Christians
				Old or St. Thomas Christians
(1) Protestants	{	(a) Anglican Communion		
		(b) Baptist		
		(c) Congregationalist		
		(d) Lutheran and other denominations		
		(e) Presbyterian		
		(f) Minor denominations		
(2) Roman Catholics	{	(a) Of the Latin rite		
		(b) Of the Syrian rite.		
		(c) Of the Syro-Malankara rite.		
(3) Chaldean Syrians			{	
(4) Protestant Syrians				Syrians
(5) Jacobite Syrians				
	{	(a) Jacobite Syrians properly so called.		
		(b) Reformed or St. Thomas Syrians.		

Source: Edgar Thurston. *Castes and Tribes of South India*, 1975

CHAPTER V

THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISES OF ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS

Christ said to his disciples, "go throughout the world and preach the gospel to all mankind¹. To proclaim and propagate the teachings of Christ in the different corners of the world is the mission of the Christians or what is meant by evangelization.²

As we discussed earlier in the proceeding chapters one of the disciples of Christ St. Thomas came to India converted a few peoples to Christianity and founded small Christian communities in seven places in Kerala.

India even from the ancient period was a land of religious toleration. The confluence of religions in India is an exhilarating subject for study. Even in the ancient period India became the meeting ground of all religions and philosophical systems as well as the most important world religions. In addition to the native religions like Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism, foreign religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam also found here a congenial soil.

Though the historicity of the missionary work of St. Thomas in India is supported by a strong and unbroken tradition and a good number of valuable references in the writings of early church fathers, only a few details are available regarding the life and activities of early St. Thomas Christian community. The existence of Christian communities outside Malabar area and other neighboring countries like China, Ceylon and Maldives are some of the evidences for the missionary enterprises of St. Thomas Christians of India.

¹ The Bible: *New Testament* Mark: 16/15

² Evangelisation is the proclamation of the evangel. The word evangel derived from the Greek word evangelion, which simply means 'good news' or 'gospel'. And the good news or gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ'. Thus it is a call for a personal commitment to Christ.

Very valuable and authentic source of information about the state of Christianity in India and some neighboring countries of India towards the middle of the 6th century could be found in the famous work of Cosmas Indicopleustes known as *Topographia Christiana*. Cosmas was an Alexandrian merchant who came to India between 520 and 525 A.D. Sometime later he embraced monastic life. He narrates in his book his experiences during the travels and he has been called Indicopleustes³ meaning Indian voyager. He writes: "even in the island of Taprobane (Ceylon) in inner India where the Indian sea is, there is a Church of Christians with clergy and a congregation of believers.... And such also is the case in the land called Male [Malabar] where the pepper grows. And in the place called Kalliana there is a bishop appointed from Persia, as well as in the island of Dioscoris (Socotra), in the same India Sea. . .And so likewise, among the Bactrians and Huns and Persians, and the rest of Indians, and among the Persarmenians and Greeks and Elamites, and throughout the whole land of Persia, there is an infinite number of churches with bishops, and a vast multitude of Christian people, and they have many martyrs and recluses leading a monastic life".⁴

Writing about Ceylon he adds; ". this is the great island in the ocean, lying in the Indian sea. By the Indians it is called Sielandiba but by Greeks Taprobane. In it is found the hyacinth stone. It lies on the other side of the pepper country".⁵

³ Cited in Abraham Mattam, *St. Thomas Christians and her missionary Enterprises*, Kottayam, 1985, p.8.

⁴ Cosmos Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*, Book III, cited in A. Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in India*, The Bulletin of the John Ryland Library, Vol. 10, No. 2, July, 1926, Manchester, pp. 29-30.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.30.

Cosmas, therefore, attests that there were Christians and their Churches in Ceylon, Malabar, Kalliana and Socotra in the Sixth century. Kalliana is considered to be Kalyan near Bombay. According to him in Kalyan there was a bishop, who was appointed from Persia.⁶

Fr. Hosten, in his book *Antiquities from San Thome and Mylapore* elaborated on what Cosmas wrote: "There appears to have existed in pre-Portuguese India an almost unbroken line of Christian settlements from Sind down to Cape Comorin and Mylapore....We should think there were Christians in each of the place of trade mentioned by Cosmas between Sind and the Fishery Coast: Sindhu, Orrhotha, Kalliana, Sibor, and the five marts of Male or the pepper country: Parti, Mangaruth, Salopathana, Nalopatana, Pudopatana; also away from Sioldiba (Ceylon), at Marollo and Kaber (Kaveripatanam)"⁷. Sindhu is to be identified with Sind; Orrhotha with Sorath or Surath, Mangaruth is Mangalore.⁸

It was in the year 1321 A.D that Jordanus of Severac of the Order of Friars Preachers (Dominicans) arrived at Thanan, near Bombay, along with four Franciscan Friars bound for China. Before coming to India Jordanus had worked for several years in the Middle East Missions and had the opportunity to learn the Persian language. When Jordanus reached India he found Christian communities living in Thanan and Sopara and Paroco in Gujarat. His Franciscan companions were martyred at Thanan soon after their arrival. At Sopara there was an ancient church said to have been built by St. Thomas himself, which was destroyed by the pagans. The Christians had re-built it and it was in this church that Jordanus buried the Franciscan martyrs.⁹

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.31.

⁷ Fr. H. Hosten, *Antiquities from San Thome and Mylapore*, Calcutta, 1936, p.402.

⁸ Abrahm Mattam, *Inculturation of Liturgy in the Indian context*, Kottayam, 1985, p.17.

⁹ George Mark Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India*, Bombay 1964, p.89

Jordanus spent about seven years in missionary activity on the Malabar Konkan Coast and went back to Europe in 1328. There he was nominated Bishop of Columbum (Quilon), the first Latin Rite Prelate in India. He wrote his renowned work *Mirabilia Descripta* in which he gives a description of India and the Middle East. He returned to India, but according to all indications, he was stoned to death at Thana, before he could take possession of his see of Quilon.¹⁰

Another home of St. Thomas Christians long before the coming of the Portuguese was Goa. Crosses with equalize arms, sometimes called the Persian cross, which are found there bear witness to the early existence of Christianity on the island. Rev. Dr. Hubert Mascarenhas, a well known philologist and scholar, a Goan by birth, narrates a story about the fate of these crosses of which he had heard as a child from his grandmother. He says: "One of the many stories I heard from my grandmother was the popular one about the stone carved equal arm cross near our house on the hill without any image on it which the local villagers used to hide away when the Portuguese soldiers came looking for "heretics". I used to ask: why did we hide that cross? And she used to tell me: These equal – arm crosses were sacred to the Nazarenes; but the Portuguese used to look upon them as Nestorian symbols. She told me that the many Nazareth surnames in Nasranavilla (today: Nachnola near Aldona) were named after our Lord Jesus of Nazareth. This was a deeper nail for my little head. The Portuguese of Latin cross with its longer vertical bar was considered in our churches and chapels as the only orthodox symbol"¹¹.

¹⁰ Abraham Mattom *op.cit.*, p.18; According to K.J. John Jordanus took possession of the Quilon diocese and built St. George Cathedral, which later came to be known as "Jordan palli" See K.J. John, *The Road to Diamper*, Cochin, 1999, p.44.

¹¹ Fr. H.O. Mascarenhas, "St. Thomas Christians", in *New Leader*, June 20, 1970, p 5.

Ibn Battuta, an Arab traveler and African globe trotter (1342 – 47 A.D) who visited India not less than six times had left us interesting accounts of Indian ports and its people.¹² He, who visited Goa in 1342 A.D speaks of a Christian settlement near Goa.¹³

St. Francis Xavier, known as the second Apostle to India, from Spain who was a Jesuit Priest came to India in 1541. He reached Goa after 13 months of journey on 6th May, 1542. About four months after that in September, he wrote to his confreres in Rome his impressions of Christianity in Goa. He wrote "It is four months and more since we arrived in India, at Goa, which is a city totally of Christians a sight to be seen".¹⁴

In another letter to St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, written on the same date Francis Xavier speaks about the great devotion of the Christians of Goa to St. Thomas and requests him to obtain from the Holy Father the grant of plenary indulgence for the faithful on the occasion of the feast of the Apostle St. Thomas. He wrote "The first thing that I beg for in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ is on the ground that the people of this land are greatly devoted to the glorious Apostle St. Thomas, who is the patron of the whole of India; for the increase of the devotion of all these devotees that his Holiness the Pope should grant a plenary indulgence, on the feast day of St. Thomas and its octaves."¹⁵

These letters are very revealing. As Fr. H. O.. Mascarenhas argues, it was not yet 45 year since the Portuguese had conquered Goa Francis Xavier was there for less than five months. Could it be possible that the entire

¹² A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, Madras 1995, p.29.

¹³ Moraes, *op.cit.*, pp.154-155.

¹⁴ H.O. Mascarenhas, *op.cit.*, Schurhammer translates the sentence as follows: "Goa is a city pleasant to see, entirely inhabited by Christians". George Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier*, Vol. II, Rome, 1977, p. 271.

¹⁵ H.O.Mascarenhas, *op.cit.*, p.271.

population of the city became Christians in so short a time? How is it that they were so devoted to St. Thomas? They could not have inherited this devotion from the Portuguese, for they were not specially devoted St. Thomas. To quote Fr. Mascarenhas: “St. Francis could not leave Goa by sea or land till the monsoon storms had stopped. For him, “Goa” was indeed India. How could he urgently and unequivocally describe all these as devotees of St. Thomas, if it was he who had baptized them all – and remember he speaks of the city being “totally of Christians”– and remember how could they all be devoted to St. Thomas, if they were not already St. Thomas Christians in the most literal sense? This kind of devotion to St. Thomas existed and exists nowhere in Spain or Portugal or in any part of the world, except in India”.¹⁶

Further Fr. Mascarenhas speaks about a community living in Goa known by the name Thomas. They are Hindus. They celebrate their biggest religious festival of the year which they call Dhukrana around July 3rd. It sounds like Dhukrana in Syriac which signifies the feast of the remembrance of the martyrdom of St. Thomas.

A colony of these Thomse people found close to Kalyanapuram near Mangalore. Among them there are both Hindus and Christians. The Thomas Hindus go on a pilgrimage every year to Kalapura (Kalyanapuram) in Goa around July 3rd, according to the full moon of the lunar calendar.

Fr. Mascarenhas is of the opinion that the Thomse people were all Thomas Christians or followers of St. Thomas and that they fled from Goa or gradually drifted to Hinduism being subjected to harassment and persecution by the Portuguese as heretics.¹⁷ Ancient granite crosses have been discovered

¹⁶ H.O.Mascarenhas. *op.cit.*,p.271.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.271.

at Anekal and nearby places and they prove that there were Christian communities in olden days, in the interior of Mysore.¹⁸

Vijayanagar was powerful kingdom in the South, comprising most of the Decan and Dravidic South. Abdur Razzak who visited India in 1442 as an ambassador of Persia says that the Vizier (Prime Minister) of Vijayanagar at that time was a Christian named Nimeh – Pezir.¹⁹

A notable work which furnishes some historical information is the *Historia De Malabar* (History of Malabar) written by Diogo Gonsalves of the society of Jesus who worked as a missionary in Kerala coast and was at Arathungal in 1610. In his work written in 1615 the auther throws light on the political and social conditions of the age.²⁰ The history of Vijayanagr is the story of its long struggle against the neighboring Muslim state, the Bhaman Kingdom to preserve Hindu Dharma from the onslaughts of Islam for a few centuries. Diogo de Couto, the Portuguese historian tells us that Crisna Rao of Narsinga (Vijayanagar) who reigned for thirty years and fought against Sultao Hemed of Delhi had a great number of Christians in his army.

From ancient times Cape Comorin, an extreme south border district of India near present Kerala was an important trading centre frequented by Romans and Greek merchants. Near the cape, at Kumari Muttam, there was a church called Thomaypally, a church dedicated to Thomas. The Portuguese historian Duarte Barosa, who stayed in Malabar for about 16 years gives us some information about this church. Around 1514 A.D. he wrote: "Near this cape comorain is an old church of Christians which was founded by Armenians (Arameans or Syrians), who still have it and celebrate Christian

¹⁸ Fr. Hosten, *op.cit.*, pp 430ff.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 462- 63; K.M. Panikar, *A survey of Indian History*, Bombay, 1947, p.153.

²⁰ A.Sreedhara, Menon *op.cit.*, p.32

Masses within it and have crosses on the altars. All voyagers pay tribute to it, and the Portuguese offer Mass in it when they pass through there".²¹

At Mylapore and all along the Coromandal Coast there were Christian communities from very early times. According to Fr. Hosten: "Christian communities existed in the first centuries, not only at Mylapore, but further South down to cape comorin and in Malabar".²²

Kaveripattanam, Vaipur, Vembar etc. were inhabited by St. Thomas Christians. As late as 1348 A.D. the steelyard for pepper and spices in Mylapore were in the hands of the Thomas Christians.²³

Nicolo de Conti was an Italian merchant who visited India several times between 1415 and 1438. He says there were about one thousand Christians then living in Mylapore, though he calls them Nestorian heretics. According to him: "the body of Saint Thomas lies here honorably buried in a large and beautiful church, it is venerated by heretics, who are called Nestorians, and inhabit this city to the number of a thousand".²⁴

We possess several reference to the church in Sind in the early centuries. Probably the Church had flourished there until the Muslim occupation of the region. Of the Church in Sind, Zalaeski writes: "The fruit of St. Thomas' preaching were those great Christian communities of Sind, mentioned by St. John Damascene, who says that 'at the time when the disciples of St. Paul and St. Antony flourished in the desert of Thebaida, a great number of Indian anchorites imitated their example, and in a desert not far from the Indus led lives of astonishing sanctity and austerity'. He mentions amongst them St. Barlaam whose feast the Church celebrates on the

²¹ Schurhammer, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, pp.330-31.

²² Hosten. *op.cit.*, p. 573.

²³ *Ibid.*,

²⁴ Nicolo de Conti's report to Poggio, Secretary of Pope Eugene IV. cited in A.E Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, London, 1905, p. 95.

27th November. Monastic life was also developed and several bishops governed that faithful flock”.²⁵

An Arab traveler makes mention of the Christians in Sind in the thirteenth century. He speaks of a town Caimur near Sindia (Sind), whose inhabitants are noted for perfect beauty, being descended from Indians and Turks. There are Muslims, Christians, Jews and Magi (Parsis). In the town there are Muhammedic temples, churches and synagogues; there is also a temple of fire- worshippers.²⁶

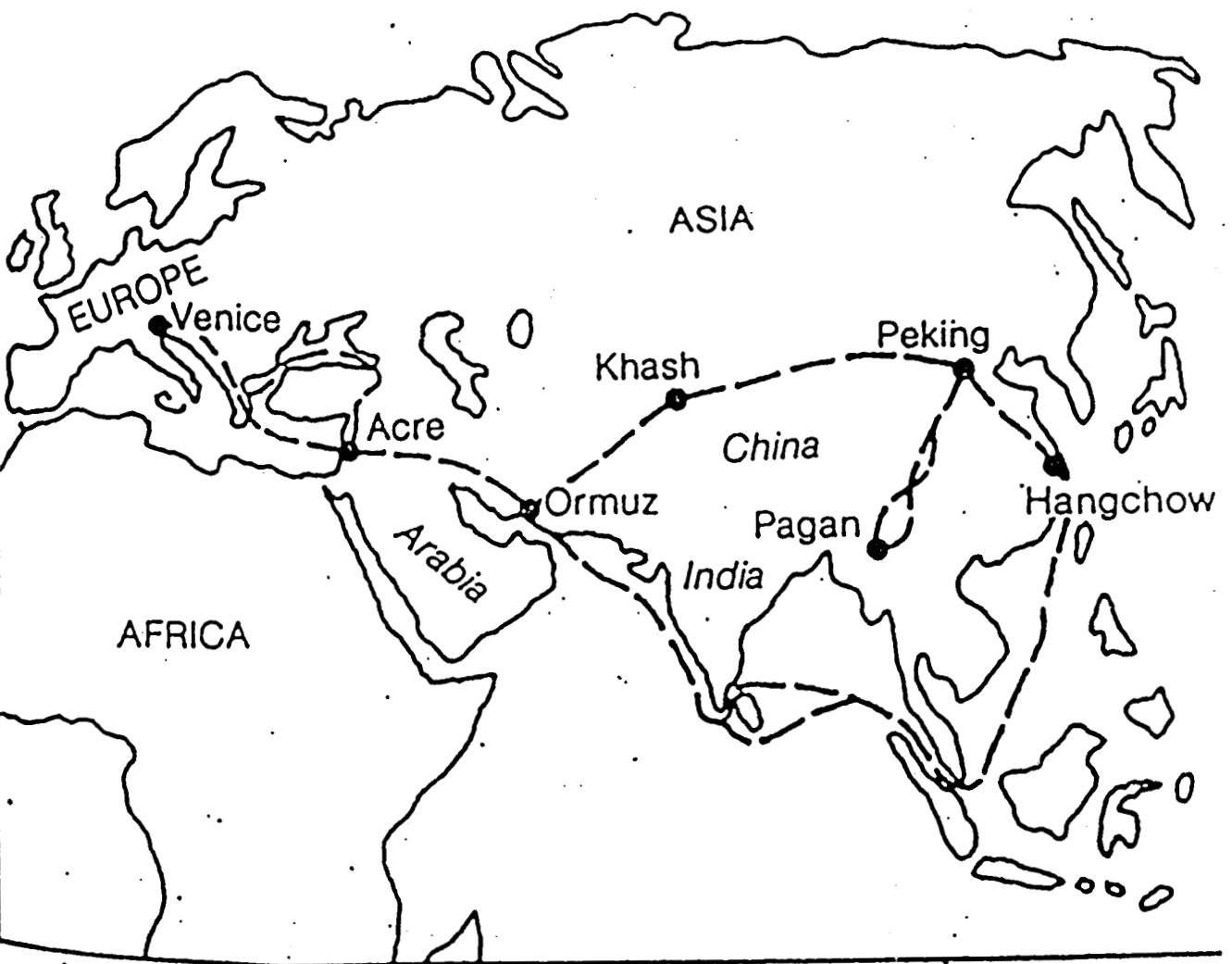
In 1940 Rev. R.D Trotter, a Protestant missionary came across a Fakir community at Tatta in Sind, who call themselves Barthomai, i.e. sons or followers of Thomas. They claim that they are descendents of Christians baptised by St. Thomas. This is what Trotter writes; “To support the contention that the apostle St. Thomas came to Sind, there is a Fakir community living in Tatta, which has occasionally revealed itself. This Fakir group, to all appearances Hindu, calls its small community by an Aramic name, something like Barthomai, the sons of Thomas, and claims that it is descended from Christians baptised by St. Thomas himself and that in their secret society they own books and relics to support their position, Unfortunately no outsider, either Indian or European, has had access to the archives of this society, and individual members are as hard as the Indian Lion”.²⁷

²⁵ Msgr. Zaleski, *The Apostle St. Thomas in India*, Mangalore, 1912, p. 59.

²⁶ cited in Hosten, *op.cit.*, p. 406

²⁷ cited in, Moraes, *op.cit.*, p. 33

MARCO POLO'S VOYAGES AND VISITS TO INDIAN COASTS



In Witsch's Geography and statistics of the Church, Patna is mentioned as the seat of a metropolitan in 1222 A.D.²⁸ Some maps are also found where Patna is marked as a metropolitan See.²⁹

This assertion should be weighed in the light of the unique position Patna or Pataliputra held from ancient times. Among the Greek and Latin writers the city was known as Palibothra or Palimbothra. It was the capital of the Mauriyan Empire, which during the reign of Asoka, (273- 236 B.C) comprised the whole or North India and a major part of the South. At the time of Chandragupta Maurya, Seleucus who founded his dynasty in Persia sent to Pataliputra Megasthenes as his ambassador. Bindusara the son and successor of Chandragupta had friendly relations with Syria. Asoka, his son, extended his diplomatic relations to Egypt, Macedonia, Cyrene etc.³⁰ There was a Royal High- way connecting Pataliputra and Taxila. The internationally known Nalanda University, which attracted students and scholars from all over the Buddhist world was situated near Patna. In the seventh century A.D., during the reign of Harsha, the University had more than ten thousand students and it continued to flourish until the 12th century. Pataliputra maintained its prominence for several centuries.³¹ Viewed against this background of the close contact between Pataliputra, Syria and Persia, it is clear that Christians from Persia and various parts of India must have settled down in this capital city. The Patriarch of Babylon could easily establish an archbishopric and send a bishop there

Marco Polo, the great Venetian traveller, who visited India about 1293 A.D. says that there were at that time in Middle or Central India six

²⁸ John Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: The Story of a Church in Fire*, Edinburg, 1928, p. 93.

²⁹ Vivante Afrique, "Revue de laxative missionarie en Afrique et dans le monde," No. 253, Nov 253, Nov. – Dec. 1967, Namur (Belgium).

³⁰ K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, Delhi, 1967, pp. 258ff

³¹ Radha Kamud Mukerji, *Glimses of Ancient India*, Bombay, 1970, p.82

Kingdoms, out of which three were ruled by Christian kings and moreover, the greatest of the six was a Christian king. In his own words "Abash is a very great Province, and you must know that it constitutes the Middle India; and it is on the main – land. There are in it six great kings with six great kingdoms and of these six kings there are three that are Christians and three that are Saracens but the greatest off all the six is a Christian and all the others are subject to him. Marco Polo goes on to mention that St. Thomas preached in this region and then went to Maabr (Coromandal Coast) where he died. St. Thomas, the apostle preached in this region and after he had converted the people he went away to the Province of Malabar, where he died, and there his body lies.³²

Marco Polo distinguishes India the Greater, India the Lesser and Middle India. Some authors think Middle India is not India proper, but the region comprising Arabia, Abyssinia etc. and so they translate Abash as Abyssinia. But other authors are of the opinion that Middle India refers to Central India proper. We can not therefore, rule out the possibility of these kingdoms being in the central region of the Indian subcontinent.³³

Chronicon, seu Liber Historia Plurimae, attributed to the Franciscan John Elemosina (1336) also mentions the Christians of Middle India and their Nestorian monarch.³⁴

Church of Udaipur in Malwa Kingdom

At the XXII International Congress of Orientalists held in Rome in 1899, Baron Textor de Ravisi, member of the Asiatic society of Paris and a former Governor of Karikal read a paper dealing with a mural inscription

³² See Leonarod Olaschi, *More Polo's Asia*, Berkeley, 1960, pp. 37ff.

³³ John Stewart, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

³⁴ Cardinal Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India* (authorized adaptation by Fr. E.R. Hambye), Calcutta, 1957.

found on a temple in Udaipur, near Sagar, in East Malwa.. Fr. Burtthey S.J. of the Madurai Mission had earlier deciphered the inscription, which was in some form of Pali language. But a certain Hindu, Kamalakantha by name, had made a different version, adapted to his views, without any reference to Christian religion. Baron Textor in his discourse challenged the version of Kamalakantha and endeavored to show the Christian origin of the writings. His discourse at the congress was published in Catholic Register of Madras, in its issue dated October 1, 1915 and in 'The Examiner' of November 27 and December 4, 1915.³⁵

According to the translation of Fr. Burtthey, the present temple was once a church of the ancient community of St. Thomas Christians. For more than four centuries, Christianity was in a state of decline in the region and the church was in ruins, before it was rebuilt by King Sangai vardaha in the year 1110 of Vikrama era, which corresponds to 1060 A.D. The church was dedicated to Blessed Virgin Mary. The following paragraphs are quoted from the introductory part of the inscription: "As this temple was one of the first to be erected and has been restored with the greatest care, involving immense labor and has been built according to the rules of a most beautiful architecture and becomes the joy of the countries of the Sabeans, and that the favours received through the Mother of God have made it from ancient times a place of exceptional celebrity, here is what remains to us to relates:

"Nine centuries had rolled by since they glory and mercy of the Uncreated, the Divine Orient, the Man God, Christ, descended on the earth and also that, after having laid down the weight of His mortality. He entered upon the possession of His glory and after His Holy apostle (St. Thomas, Nadattigam Buddha) arrived among us, we should say, according to the era of

³⁵ *Catholic register of Madras*, 1915.

Emperor Vikrama 1116 years (A. D. 1060), the new era, which ought to be given here together with the one which marks the nine centuries.

But after this time He who carried upon His shoulders the cross- the conqueror of His enemies became our peace, one records 981 years (A.D 1080). It was during this time that, all darkness being dispelled, and the sovereign power of the Divine conqueror making art and virtue flourish. The Divine orient (ondayadittyā) was recognised as the master of all the sciences and the king of kings.

“But in course of time the souls began to incline towards the earth and this so great splendor of science and virtue disappeared. Heresies sprang up and men given up to the use of the Kanja (Kanja or Kanya is the opium and chamra which one chews and smokes in order to get inebriated) having prevailed the whole empire was filled with trouble. A period of 446 years has elapsed since the commencement (A.D 814) of these evils”.³⁶

The inscription gives a short account of the consecration of the church and a summary of the prayers. The names of the reigning kings of the period in the neighboring kingdoms are also given.

About the communion service at the end of the sacrifice of Holy mass it is recorded: “The celebrant being unable to distribute sufficiently quickly the particles of Divine Fire to the disciples, twenty other priests joined him and the distribution was quickly done to those who had been able to enter the Holy place.”

“But no one could count the number of those to whom was granted the favour of hospitality, nor the good works of all sorts that were done.”

³⁶ *Catholic register of Madras*, 1915, p.6; *The Examiner*, Bombay Nov. 27, 1915, p. 478.

In 1981, the present writer made an on spot visit to Udaipur and other surrounding areas. There is a magnificent temple, apparently of the 10th or 11th century. Nearby there are some partly ruined edifices. Several inscriptions are found on the walls of the temple. A long slab of stone with inscriptions, broken and much damaged, was left in the courtyard. Whether this is the temple referred to by Baron Texton and Fr. Burtney is not certain. At first sight there is nothing visible to suggest that it was a church. Some writings on the wall appeared to be in Syriac. We did not have the opportunity for a close examination. A Pujari who is looking after the temple objected to my examining the interior of the temple and some ruined portions collected outside.

We were told there are a few tombstones with crosses marked on them in a cemetery at Seronj about fifty five km away from Udaipur. So we proceeded to Seronj. There is an old cemetery covering several acres. Now it is being used as a burial ground by the Muslims. Seronj comes under the Diocese of Sagar. The C.M.I. Fathers have purchased some land adjacent to the cemetery and opened a mission station there. On three grave stones there are clear signs of crosses engraved, with some writings. The characters looked like Armenian.

Indian Missionaries in China

There is a strong tradition in the East Syrian and the Indian Church that St. Thomas himself preached in China and founded churches there. This is confirmed by the prayers of the Divine office of the Church.

In the Night prayer (Lelia) of the feast of St. Thomas we find the following hymn: "The error of idolatry was banished from India by St. Thomas. The Chinese and Ethiopians were converted to the truth by St. Thomas. Through St. Thomas the splendor of a life-giving faith flourished

through all India. Through St. Thomas the kingdom of Heaven took wings and sped its flight to the Chinese.”³⁷ There is also this antiphone: "The people of India, of China, of Persia and others on the islands together with those of Syria, Armenia, Greece and Roumania, venerate thy holy name in memory of St. Thomas."

Arnobius who lived towards the end of the third century, in his apologetically work, 'Disputationum Adversus gentes', gives a list of countries that had turned to Christ: "For the evangelizing of India must be counted, and the purposes of reckoning we must include the work done among the Seres (Chinese) the Persians, and Medes, in Arabia and Egypt, in Asia.....”³⁸

We do not intend to discuss whether St. Thomas himself went to China or not but only want to make one observation. Taking into account the entire circumstances it was not unlikely that St. Thomas went as far as China. According to tradition St. Thomas arrived in South India in 52 A.D. and died in 72. Between these long years there were ample opportunities to visit China and then return to Mylapore. Whether St. Thomas visited China or not, it is quite reasonable to surmise that his disciples in India went to China during his lifetime and thereafter carrying the Christian message.

Assemani makes the observation that the prayers of the Divine Office of the East Syrian Church relatives to St. Thomas could be justified even if the Apostle had only sent his disciples or if after his death his Indian converts had gone to China to preach there.

Therefore, Assemani supports the view that the disciples of St. Thomas from India, during his lifetime, or more probably sometime after his death carried the Christian faith to China.

³⁷ Columba Cary - Elwes, *China and the Cross*, New York, 1957, p.12 .

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13

Dr. J. E Edkins, writing about the religions of the Chinese people, states that there was a tradition among them that an Indian missionary was the first to preach the Christian faith in their country. According to him , “some of the Roman missionaries have claimed that Christianity had been introduced in China by the Apostle Thomas. The proof of this assertion, they said, was found in the tradition of the Chinese. The Buddhists speak of a certain ascetic by the name of Thamo, who might have come by Sea from India, at the beginning of the 6th Century. In Sanskrit his name was Bodhidharma. There is no need of minute information about his religious opinions and his biography. In this era, there were in China three thousand Hindus filled with the hope of spreading the Buddhist faith. The first Roman missionaries insufficiently informed about the history and religions of China mistook the name Thamo for a Chinese form of the name Thomas. Since he was described as a rigorous ascetic and great miracle – worker they concluded his identity with the Christian Apostle.”³⁹

Discarding the details as the name etc., the tradition in effect, says that an Indian missionary, at an early period, was an important factor in the spread of Christianity in China. It may be , that after the first two or three centuries Christianity disappeared from China and was then reintroduced in the 6th or 7th century.

During the reign of Harsha in the 7th C (606- 647) the relations between India and China appear to have been very close. It was at this time that the Chinese scholar Buddhist monk Hiuen- Tsang came to India and stayed at the court of Harsha. He spent about 14 years in India and practically traveled all over the country. The account he gives about India

³⁹. J. E Edkins, "La Religion on Chine," in *Annales du Musee Guimet*, Lyon, 1882, p. 80

is most informative.⁴⁰ Alopen had arrived in China during this period and was followed by other Christian missionaries. Harsha's time was specially propitious also for Christian missionaries in China.

Theophilus the Indian from Maldives

The Greek historian Philostorgius, writing around 423 A.D. speaks of Theophilus the Indian. Theophilus was from an Indian island and was sent as hostage to the Romans during the reign of Constantine (A.D.300-37). Theophilus was baptized at Constantinople and became a monk. He was consecrated an Arian bishop in A.D 350 and was sent to his native island and to the main land to spread Christianity (Arian doctrines) by Constantius.⁴¹ The island of his birth is named Divu – in a Latin text. Another contemporary historian Ammianus Marcellinus about 362 A.D makes mention of similar islands while writing about legations at the occasion of Julian the Apostate, the new emperor, "..... inde nationibus indicis certain cum donis optimates mittentibus ante tempus ab us que Divis et Serendivis". Yonge translates it as follows: Legations were coming in from everywhere the Indian tribes vied with each other, sending nobles loaded with gifts even from the Maldaive Islands and Ceylon."⁴² Perhaps from the time of Theophilus or even earlier there were Christians in Maldives.

The Maldivian Laccadive islands and Christian communities for many centuries, it seems, from several documents. Elias Metropolitan of Damascus, c. 893, gives a list of Bishops subject to the Patriarch of Babylon among which we find. The Bishop of Siran, the Bishop of Marmadit and the Bishop of Scocotra. Siran, some authors identify with Ceiling and Marmadit with Maldives⁴³.

⁴⁰ L. P. Sharma, *Ancient History of India*, Sahibabad, 1981. p.228

⁴¹ Medlycot, *op.cit* pp. 188-202; Hosten, *op.cit.*, pp. 496- 509.

⁴² Medlycot, p..190.

⁴³ Hosten, *op.cit.*, pp..498-99

Scope and Need of Missionary Work in the Modern Period

India is perhaps the seventh largest country in the world today, with a total population of 546,955,945. This figure is of the census report of 1971, and today it has already crossed the 600-million mark. According to a recent report: "with 2.4 p.c of the world's land area, India has about 15 p.c. of the world's people. It is estimated that our population by the end of 70's has crossed the 600- million mark, and is now rising at the rate of well over one million per month. If the present increase continues unchecked, our population at the turn of the century may well reach the staggering figure of one billion."⁴⁴ As of the 1991 census, the Hindu population constitutes the majority (83.4%). the Muslims are next largest (11%) followed by the Christians (2.6%). The Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and others make up the rest of the population (3%).⁴⁵

A comparative study of the statistics of Christians over against that of the non- Christians indicates a tremendous scope for evangelisation in India. The challenge is great even today as it was in the past. This is no mean task and it demands the concerted efforts of a united Indian Church that is fully committed to its Lord. to support this statement an extended extract is reproduced here from Status of Christianity Country Profile: India, prepared for the International congress on world evangelization, lausanne, July 1974. "With a reported Christian community of only 2-3% of the total population of the country, India could be considered an unreached country. Of Kerala, in southwest India has 4% of the total population. Thus most of India is without any adequate Christian followers.

"The people of India represent a complex mixture of distinct groups, identified by language, culture, social status, religious affiliation, education,

⁴⁴ *Deccan Herald Daily*, Sat. April, 17. 1976.

⁴⁵ *Census Report*, India, 1991.

place of residence and so forth. The result of this mixture is the presence of thousands of unreached homogeneous units, each of which must be identified and uniquely considered for evangelistic strategies.

Christian population by states

State	% Population	% Christian
Nagaland	0.095	66.76
Meghalaya	0.2	46.98
Manipur	0.2	26.03
Kerala	3.9	21.05
Union Territories	0.97	6.7
Tamil Nadu	7.5	5.75
Assam	2.8	4.46
Andhra Pradesh	7.9	4.2
Karnataka	5.3	2.1
Orissa	4.0	1.73
Maharashtra	9.3	1.42
Punjab	2.5	1.2
Bihai	10.3	1.17
Tripura	0.28	1.01
Madhya Pradesh	7.6	0.69
West Bengal	8.1	0.57
Gujarat	4.9	0.41
Jammu & Kashmir	0.85	0.16
Uttar Pradesh	16.1	0.15
Rajasthan	4.7	0.12
Haryana	1.92	0.10
Himachal Pradesh	0.63	0.10



There are still vast unevangelized areas in India. Most of these are in the north in the Himalayan regions and in the Ganges valley. Of the 37

million tribal people of India, there are still many who do not have the Scriptures in their dialect and others who have never heard the Gospel. Some of these dialects have no script. There are two groups of Islands that form a part of the Indian republic. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands on the east have about 115 thousand people. About 80% of the Nicobarese are nominally Christian, belonging to the Church of North India. But in the Andamans, there is no witness, particularly in the north and in the middle. On the west, there are the Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands with a population of about 31,000 people of Moslem faith. There is no Christian witness here.

Foreign missionaries are not allowed in certain areas like the Himalayan regions, Assam, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Laccadive group of Islands. Even Indian missionaries are not allowed in some areas.

The Successes of Missions and Evangelisation

The three major ecclesiastical traditions found established in India over the centuries, beginning from the first to the twentieth, are Syrian Church (approximately 1.5 million), Roman Catholic Church (7.5 million), and various Protestant Churches (5.5 million). And in reference to evangelisation of India through the centuries. Ben Wati writes in his recent book 'Whither Evangelicals': "It is generally recognized that evangelism came to India in three waves: Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant. During the first century apostolic evangelism through St. Thomas resulted in many high caste conversions, mainly in Kerala. The Catholic wave of evangelism resulted in the conversion of the many castes, especially of the lower ones. In the Protestant wave of evangelism, especially during the colonial days, most of the converts came from the lowest classes like the harijans and from the tribals of North – East India."⁴⁶

⁴⁶ C.B.Firth, *An introduction to Indian Church History*, Madras, 1968, p.50.

Tradition has it that Christianity was introduced into India by one of the disciples of Jesus, namely Thomas, in the very first century A.D. India had the rare privilege of having been evangelised by one of the apostles thus placing Indian Christianity (namely the Syrian Church) on the map of ancient Christendom. Even the secular historians in India acknowledge that Christianity is one of the ancient religions of India. So an Indian Church, even though it was not an autonomous one- as it received its bishops from the Church of the East and used Syriac as its ecclesiastical language, had been in existence since the earliest days of Christianity when most of the European countries were still pagan. Though the early Indian Church was rather inactive in its evangelistic efforts to measure by today's standards, no doubt, it had made a good impact upon the non- Christian environment because the Indian Christians of those days were accepted by the Hindus as equivalent to one of their higher castes.⁴⁷ The early Indian Christians had started a theological expression of Indianization even at this earliest stages of Christianity. That Christian community could make a sense of Christ's presence felt in a predominately non-Christian world, so much so that this small Christian community could survive through the centuries till the arrival of western Christianity towards the close of the fifteenth century. It is only deplorable that the records of Indian Christianity from the sub- apostolic age to 1500 A. D are not available. Because of this Ken Newton attributes this period as "The Silent Centuries" in his recent publication, 'Glimpses of Indian Church History'. But it was not entirely silent because this early Christianity could survive through the centuries and now that the largest concentration of Christians are found in Kerala who are the descendants of those early Christians. Echoes of this period may crop up one day and more records may be discovered.

⁴⁷ C.B.Firth, *op. cit.*, p.36.

The arrival of the Portuguese and their missionaries followed by other Roman Catholic missionaries opened a new chapter in the evangelisation of India. Many Portuguese priests, chaplains and missionaries tried to evangelize, or strictly speaking to christianize India under the aegis of their kings. Firth says. "Though it was the hopes of gain that brought the Portuguese India, it was also the purpose of their kings to promote the spread of Christianity among those who came under their rule"⁴⁸ The Portuguese had recognized the presence of the Syrian Christians as 'co- religionists' and so they had friendly relations with them.

The evangelistic work of the earlier Roman Catholic missionaries was reinforced by the arrival of a zealous priest of the " Society of Jesus", namely Francis Xavier, in 1542. Immediately upon his arrival in India he started his evangelistic work with the Portuguese settlers and the Indians who were with them; but after five months, he went to the tip of southern Indian to work with the illiterate Parava community who were mostly converts but there was no proper instruction. He taught them the fundamentals of Christian faith. Later he also baptized nearly 10,000 converts in Travancore. So slowly evangelisation made a headway with new vigour in the life and work of Francis Xavier.

Until the time of Francis Xavier, the converts were mostly drawn from the lower castes who, more or less, sought the protection of the Portuguese and they had adopted their way of life.

Thus Christianity appeared to the high caste Hindus, who formed the majority of non- Christian population, as a kind of degraded religion of the foreigners. In such a time Fr. Robert de Nobili, a young Italian Jesuit, arrived in India in the year 1605. Having seen this state of affairs in Indias evangelisation, de Nobili devised a new and revolutionary approach with a

⁴⁸ C.B.Firth, *op. cit.*, p.50.

view to winning the cream of Indian society to the saving knowledge of God. He was convinced that this could be possible only when evangelisation must be done from within the core of Indian life and thinking and not from outside. He decided to Indianize himself. He was a man of his words, he carried it out literally and, within a few years, he won nearly 63 souls to Christ all from the upper class Hindus. There might be pros and cons on de Nobilis theology of evangelisation, but in his revolutionary methods the present – day Indian Christian theologians find the germinal thinking of indigenization.

The eighteenth century ushered in a new era of evangelisation with the coming of Protestant missions in the India sub-continent. Henry Plustchau and Bartholomew Ziegenbalg of Germany were the first two protestant missionaries, under the auspices of King Frederick IV of Denmark who commissioned them, to arrive, at Transquebar in 1706. They soon learned the local language, Tamil and started their work of evangelisation. Within a few years several hundred converts were made and baptised. Their primary concern was evangelization of India as they themselves wrote: “The ultimate object of the work is this, that a living knowledge of Jesus Christ be set forth in dark places, that the hearts of the heathen who may hear the word of God be led to a true exercise of Christianity, redeemed and saved.”

The arrival of William Carey, a self-educated Baptist minister in Calcutta (Serampore) in the year 1793 was, again, a step forward in the evangelisation of India. Carey was joined by the fellow- missionaries and they evangelised the north eastern part of India. Carey and his colleagues are best remembered for their work of Bible translations into many language of India; the spreading of Christian education through the founding of the Serampore College which became the only degree-granting theological university in the country; founding of printing and journalism, and social reforms.

The pioneering works of the Danish Mission at Tranquebar and the Baptist Mission at Serampore were now followed by the great century of Christian Missions in the nineteenth century when so many missionary societies and churches began to send their missionaries to evangelise India. This was especially because of a new policy of the East India Company. The year 1813 was a memorable year in the history of Christian missions before that time. Tranquebar and Serampore were exceptions, because they were not British settlements. But, in 1813, the charter of the Company was revised and the restriction was relaxed and thus opportunities of evangelisation of India were open to all. This freedom ushered in the beginning of a wider expansion of Protestant churches in India.

Many missions were established; local churches were founded; and church councils were created for wider fellowship and witness in different parts of India. And now out of these missionary churches have emerged indigenous churches as new shoots well rooted in native soil which will again grow and bear fruits in abundance, “and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”⁴⁹

Now the nineteen hundred years of evangelisation in India have produced the following: (1) Syrian (Eastern Rite): Chaldaean Syrian Church, Jacobite Church, Malabar Independent Syrian Church, Mar Thomas Syrian Church and St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India; (2) Roman Catholic Church: Roman Catholic (Latin Rite), Syro Malabar Catholic, and Syro-Malankara; and (3) more than 80 Protestant Churches. All these churches have their own evangelistic programmes and missionary projects which it is needles to mention here. But there are some important common fronts of missionary project and evangelistic programmes which need the attention of the readers, and these are given below:

⁴⁹ *The Bible*, Mark. 4:8.

1. Indigenous Missionary Societies:

- (1) The National Missionary Society of India, headquarters Madras.
- (2) The Indian Evangelical Mission (EFI,) New Delhi.
- (3) The Indian Missionary Society, Tirunelveli.
- (4) Tent India Mission of Evangelisation, Bhubaneswar,
- (5) Ao Mungdang Tirap Mission, Impur.

2. Bible and Literature Evangelism:

- (1) The Bible Society of India, Bangalore.
- (2) Scripture Gift Mission, Bangalore.
- (3) The Christian Literature Society, Madras.
- (4) Evangelical Literature Service, Bombay, etc.
- (5) Gospel Literature Service, Bombay, etc.

3. Radio and Audio- visual, Etc:

- (1) Far East Broadcasting Associate of India, Bangalore,
- (2) CARAVs, Jabalpur.
- (3) Radio Voice of the Gospel.
- (4) Christian Arts & Communications Service, Madras.

4. Research Institutes:

- (1) Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and society, Bangalore.
- (2) The Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies, Hyderabad.
- (3) Christian Retreat and Study Centre, Nasik.
- (4) The Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore.
- (5) Christian Retreat and Study Centre, Rajpur, Dehra Dun.

5. Youth Evangelism and Christian Education:

- (1) Student Christian Movement of India, Bangalore.

- (2) Union of Evangelical Students of India.
- (3) The National Y.M. C.As of India, New Delhi.
- (4) India Youth for Christ, Madras.
- (5) India Youth for Christ, Madras.
- (6) India Sunday School Union, Nilgris.
- (7) Education Council of India, Nagpur.
- (8) Christian Education Evangelical Fellowship of India.

The Missionary Enterprises: Failures and Hindrances

The previous section has dealt with nineteen hundred years of evangelisation: a brief historical survey of both Catholic and Protestant missions and the different evangelistic agencies, both national and foreign, that are operating in India today. But in spite of the co-operative efforts of all Christian churches and agencies, the evangelistic task remains the same and it is more challenging today.

A quick glance at the statistics of the Christian population is indicative of this fact. It is quite obvious that the concerted efforts of all Christian resources have not add much impact on the mainstream of Indian life. After having done more than three hundred years of intensive evangelisation, India has just 2.6% Christians, and the rest 97.4% are all non- Christians! So evangelisation in India is almost a failure. Christian misionaries and evangelizers have preached a great deal about Christ and Christianity but they have failed to present Jesus Christ, as Lord and Saviour, to Indians in a meaningful way that they can understand. Through the work of the Christian missions many Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, have come to know about Christ and Christianity but they do not know him as their personal Saviour and Lord. They know about him as a great Guru, but they cannot acknowledge him as their only Master, the son of god and the unique avatara. Many non – Christians know a great deal about Christ perhaps about

churchinanity, but they do not know the mystery of the Christian Church, the Body of Christ, which is sometimes understood as an extension of Christ's which is sometimes understood as an extension of Christ's Incarnation. the message of salvation in Jesus Christ, the Good News, has not gone deep into the Indian mind because it is not appropriately explained to them in terms of Indian setting: and they cannot understand the mystery of the Church because it has not become a truly Local Church and it has not become Indian.

Foreignness of the Indian Church may be considered as another failure. Indian Christians still look up to the West for spiritual inspiration and Christianity has not fully adapted itself to its native soil; all this appears to non-Christians as too out-landish and irrelevant. If Christ has become man in order to save the whole humanity, if the Christian Church in India is an extension of the Incarnation, the Body of Christ, it must become Indian; it means, the Indian Church must make the Good News alive – re-incarnate in India. As Father D.S Amalorpavadas very aptly points out in his, 'Evangelisation of the Modern World' thus: "the Church which is the subject of evangelisation should become a Local Church at various levels, and become incarnated in a particular place, time, people and culture".⁵⁰ But the Indian has failed to do so that means the failure of its mission and evangelisation amongst its people.

Another important aspect of evangelisation is again one's living by the message of the Gospel which one preaches. As it has been pointed out in the beginning the evangelizer must be a door of the Gospel. But unfortunately many missionaries and evangelizers in India live by a double standard: they preach about the love of God and of Christians, but they do not practise the Gospel of love; they preach one thing, and they act contrary to their word. This is a serious thing. If preachers of the gospel and all Christians as well do

⁵⁰ D.S. Amalorpavadas, *Evangelisation of the Modern World*, Bangalore, 1960, p.33.

not live by the message of the gospel in which they believe, and present to others, how can the hearers respond to a kind of message which does not come alive in their own lives.

From the beginning of Christian missions in India the evangelizers could not have much access to the intelligentsia, the cream of Indian society, so much so that Christianity is looked upon as a religion of lower caste people. It is unfortunate that the majority of the missionary converts were drawn from the fringes of Indian society, such as low caste people, harijans and tribals. In some areas high caste people were also converted, but later this created casteism in the Christian community. On the other hand, the Christians themselves try to live as another 'liberated upper class' in a country where there is already communal consciousness. All this becomes a stumbling block in evangelisation.

There must certainly be quite number of factors for this failure of evangelisation in India. It is difficult to enumerate all of them here/. But to sum up this section, here are a few more reason reproduced from the writer's article that appeared in the National Council Review just a year ago. First, Christianity came to India with all the denominational overtones of a divisive western Christianity and each mission preached its own religion; secondly, Christianity was more or less associated with a foreign culture and it was often branded as a colonial religion; thirdly, it came to India in an attitude of condemnation that all non – Christians were heathens doomed for punishment in eternal fire: fourthly, it came in a warring, rather crusading, attitude and not as Gospel of love and peace: fifthly, it came as a civilizing culture, a kind of political christianization and colonialization, and not as means of salvation for all mankind; and sixthly, it came as another superior religion when there were already many religions in India.

The failures of evangelisation are again due to some practical hindrances from within, first the Hindu concept of sanatana dharma and their view of an equality of all religions do not require them to become Christians – because Hinduism is as good as Christianity itself Secondly, for Hindus conversion is regarded as a social and civil event. They understand religion in terms of samaja dharma and so by the time a convert takes baptism he ceases to be a member of the Hindu community and becomes a member of the Christian community.⁵¹ So baptism is a social hindrance. Thirdly, there are a few legal hindrances too, such as that the Hindu legal privileges will be applicable to converts to other religions; the Hindu Laws concerning caste system, joint family, inheritance make the converts to other religions as outcaste people. Fourthly, Mrs. Annie Thayil mentions another example, a political obstacle. In a democratic country number does matter a lot. A Hindu who is converted to another religion may weaken the Hindu strength in the realm of politics.

Fifthly, the Hindus very often understand conversion in terms of conversion by coercion and proselytization. So conversion is legal forbidden in at least two of the Indian states. And sixthly, a few hindrances with special reference to evangelistic work amongst the Islamic faith may be mentioned here, for example, a common Judaeo- Christian heritage, the Trinitarian concept of Christian theology, the age-old conflicts of crusades.

The Indian Church has grown numerically and spiritually in spite of many adverse forces such as historical circumstances, hindrances and inactivity. This growth is made possible by the selfless and dedicated sacrifices of many missionaries, both foreign and national, and by the favourable attitude that was shown by the erstwhile British Government and

⁵¹ H. Staffner, *Conversion to Christianity Seen from The Hindu point*, Bangalore, 1963, p.487.

the native rulers. The percentage of the Christian population is in fact low, but it does not mean the growth was slow. The 1971 census shows an increase of the Christian population by 32.6% compared with the 1961 census. At any rate it is not the numerical strength that counts but it is as Fr. Amalorpavadass

says. "..... the ideological impact it has on the people of the country and the influence it is wielding in shaping the ideals and attitudes of a nation." And he continues to say, " In this respect the Christian Church in India is, as a matter of fact exercising a much deeper influence than its numerical strength would warrant by highlighting and defending the eternal and fundamental values of life."

The non- Christian society looks upon the Indian Church as a family that is divided against itself, which is indeed a heritage of the divisive western Christianity, but it has got to be brought together under one "Household of God."⁵² A united Indian Church must now emerge out of all the existing churches of India irrespective of ecclesiastical affiliation. The Body of Christ is never divided⁵³ and how can Christ's people, the Christian Church, be divided. The Indian Church must also get rid of casteism, tribalism and communalism from the social life a Christianity, the doors of the Church must be wide open for wider fellowship, and let the people of India see that here is one family, the family of God. A united front for evangelisation is the need of the hour. The Indian Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may realise its past mistakes, shortcomings and failures and it may go forward with new vision of an ecumenical venture in the evangelisation of India and of the whole world.

⁵² *The Bible*, Ephesians. 2:19.

⁵³ *The Bible*, 1 cor. 1:2-13.

CHAPTER VI
THE ROLE OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH
IN THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC
LIFE OF KERALA

The church, the family of the Christians has been constituted and organized as a society in the present world by the followers of Christ and the church is here in this world to continue the work of Christ. The church believes that Christ lived, died and was raised for the sake of all men. Thus the mission of the church is to serve not only Christians but all men; her mission is not only spiritual but also human¹. Recognizing this the church looks more and more towards the well being of all men.

The attitude of the church as expressed by Pope Pius XII is that God is never neutral towards human affairs in their historical setting; and of that reason, no more can his church be neutral². If the direct objective of the church by divine command is love and service of men it should help individuals for their prosperity. It knows that it cannot defend religion without engaging in the struggle for man, for that depends directly on its mission.

It does not consider temporal prosperity and social well being to be without value in themselves. It proclaims the legitimacy of a search for happiness in this world, seeing that the desire for such happiness has been placed in man by God, who created everything. Thus church intervenes in social and economic matters not for the defence of religion. Its intervention is not merely on pragmatic manner, not to clear obstacles out of the way of

¹ Conrad De Vito, *The Second Vatican council at a Glance*, Allahabad, 1966, p. 149 – 50.
² Jean – Yues Calvez and Jacquee Perrin , *The Church and Social Justice*, London, 1961 p.118.

religions or to attract or to convert others to Christianity, as some believe. But because of the fact that it cannot rest indifferent in face of economic and social conditions. It knows that normal growth and strengthening of religious life suppose the existence, to a certain degree, of sound economic and social conditions.³

But the church unlike other associations, has a unique concept of man, Its essential contribution to the solution of social problem is to set forth that concept. It is in the name of this view of man that the church speaks and acts. It believes that religious forces and Christian principles count more than any other means in relieving social distress and removing social wrongs. It considers that purely economic remedies are particularly ill suited for the solution of social problems. The granting of material advantages will not resolve deep-seated disorders. Purely human means, techniques of a completely economic provenance, are too weak of themselves to remove social antagonisms and to clear injustices out of social and economic life. A healthy social life rests on sound morality and morality rests on religion .

The church can help and wishes to help the world by the application of her ethical principles. It not only teaches men what to do to alleviate the ills of society, but also sets out to educate them in all that concerns their life in society. Pope Leo XIII, brought the church in the role of a doctor who takes action against the diseased condition of the economic society. It had a remedy to social disorders and the misery of a whole social class, problems which had reduced civil rulers to impotence. The role of the physician which the church plays in the presence of social ills is sited within the wider educational role which bears upon the whole social life⁴.

³ Jean – Yves Calvez and Jacquee Perrin , *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.14.

Since the church has to fulfill her mandate received from Christ, she must have her share in teaching and imparting education. The church too, in a singular manner, has the right to impart education since Christ's mission to take care of the whole man extends to all his needs. It recognizes the importance and greatness of teaching vocation.

In short, the interventions of the church in those social and political spheres have reached proportions which cannot be explained in terms of the two traditional reasons: the church's authority in the moral order over the personal acts of Christians and its obligation to defend the rights of the believers of religion against his enemies or against the encroachment of the civil power. Nowadays, the church claims to have a true competence in the building of human society. It believes that its role goes beyond telling its children what to do or what not to do, it believes that it has part to play in the rapid and profound changes taking place among mankind over the whole world, that it can become a force for wisdom, for moderation and for harmony. It is certain that the church possesses an ability to draw out from the natural law and law of nations, principles and rules of conduct for all peoples which can assure for men the reign of security of harmony, of peace. Thus the joys and hopes, the grieves and anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted are the joys and hopes, the grieves and anxieties of the followers of Christ. The church travels the same journey as all mankind and shares the earthly lot with the world. Christ did not bequeath to the church a mission in the political, economic and social order⁵. The purpose he assigned to it was a religious one. But this religious mission can be the source of commitment, direction and vigour to establish and consolidate the community of men according to the law of God. In fact, the

⁵ Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Councilor and Post CouncilorDdocuments*, Bombay, 1975 p.845.

church is able, indeed it is obliged if times and circumstances require it, to initiate action for the benefit of all men.

SMC being an integral part of the universal church has a bearing of all these dimensions of the role of the church. By and large the presence of SMC is known and felt by people because of its substantial contributions in several ways, to the society as a whole. The church's influence on thousands of non-Catholic is mainly due to two causes; (1) The admirable educational system of the church in the state and (2) Its charitable and social welfare work for all and sundry, without distinction of caste, creed or religion⁶. Not confining its work to the traditional pastoral field the SMC has extended its activities in the educational, social, political and cultural fields.

Although the SMC is as old as Christianity itself, until a separate administration was started for the Syro-Malabar Christians in 1887 and indigenous Bishops were appointed for them in the first decades of 20th C the SMC did not show much signs of development. It is in this background the role of SMC in the social, political and economic life of Kerala is going to be analyzed in this chapter through three respective sections.

⁶ Thomas Pothancamury, *The Church in Independent India*, Bombay, 1961.p.103.

Section A : The Role of St. Thomas Christians in the Social Life of Kerala

(1) Educational activities

The educational system constitutes a unique feature of the apostolate activity of the church. The church is committed to the service of the people. She believes that she has a definite role to play in the creation of a new society where the values of god are more fully realized. Through her educational services she tries to fulfill this task.

The indigenous system

At the beginning of the 19th C AD there were two types of education in India. Education for learning and elementary education. The schools of learning i.e *Pathashalas* and *Madarsahs* were run on religious basis by the Hindus and the Muslims respectively⁷. These schools were assisted by the rulers, chieftans and religious citizens. Learned and reputed teachers taught in these schools at a very low remuneration. *Dakshinas* were the normal practice of payment of fees by the pupils, and the teachers were remunerated by grants of lands made by the respective rulers, *Dakshinas* by pupils and people, alms by rich and payment in the form of food, clothes and other articles. The pupils were also provided food and lodging in these Pathashalas and Madarasahs. These schools with few exceptions were run in temples, mosques or in the house of some local magnates or patrons or the teachers. The state did not interfere in these schools and the learning was imparted more for religious than for pecuniary considerations. These were the features of both schools.

Education in Pathashalas in almost all the cases was, however, imparted by the Brahmins only to the Brahmin pupils. It was, and remained so, one of the basic forces in in modernising the Indian society. Sanskrit was the medium of this type of religious instructions. The madarsahs where the

⁷ S.C. Raychudhary, *Social, Cultural and Economic History of India*. Delhi, 1984, p.182.

education was imparted in Persian and Arabic were thought to be the preserve of Muslim teachers. But appointment of a Hindu teacher knowing Persian was not a taboo. Besides Hindu pupils also attended the Madarasais to learn Persian generally to get government service. In short on the eve of the establishment of British rule in India, the education was imparted in Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic languages.

The elementary schools consisted of Persian schools and schools of modern Indian languages. These schools corresponded with the modern colleges. These schools were doing yeomen service to the cause of mass education. They imparted mass education to man, the staff requirement of petty zamindars, the bania, the wealthy farmers and others. These schools did not receive any state assistance. Therefore the teachers were not paid better than the teachers of the schools of learning.⁸ These schools also had girl students. They had no building. The house of the patron or the house of the teacher himself or the space under a tree was the school building. The teachers did not use any printed material. Locally produced slates and pencils were used by the pupils, sometimes palm leaves were given for writing.

As the British administration expanded the Indian industrial activities declined and the economic activities were monopolized by the British. The elementary education was the first to bear the burnt of decadance. The death-knell of the elementary education was finally rung by the policy of Cornwallis⁹ who deprived the Indians of any entry into state administration. With no future for education, the elementary schools could not attract the students.

⁸ S.C. Raychudhary, *op. cit.*, p.184.

⁹ T.K. Ravindran, *Cornwallis System in Malabar*, Calicut, 1969, p.114.

Policy of English East India Company

Before assuming political power, the East India Company had made some arrangement for education of the factory workers.. But this step was more for the conversion of Indians – mostly their employees – to Christianity and for this reason they had established some charity schools run by subscriptions and donations. But the pupils got the opportunity to learn English language. The knowledge of English Language created a better prospects for them. When the company assumed political power these trained people were recruited in the British administrative machinery.

It was politically desirable for the East India Company to conciliate the influential people by continuing welfare projects. At the same time the company needed the assistance of people knowing the Hindu and Muslim jurisprudence to assist the European judges. They could make sure of the assistance from them only if the state assisted in continuing the indigenous education. Therefore the company administration not only allowed the continuance of *Pathasalas* and *Madarsas* with their earlier syllabus and medium of instruction, but also provided material assistance to them. In tune with this policy, a madarsa in Calcutta and a Sanskrit college in Baneres were founded. This inaugurated an era of as they named the orientalist school of educational policy.¹⁰ It proved very successful and the company government sanctioned an annual grant of Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 20,000 to the above schools respectively 'Nasrullah and Naik' are right in opining that this educational policy was purely out of political considerations.¹¹

¹⁰ Nasrullah and Naik, *History of education in India*, New Delhi, 1964, p.59.

¹¹ *Ibid.*,

The efforts of the foreign missionaries in India

Historically, the involvement in the educational activities was begun by the foreign missionaries in India from 16th century onwards as a part of their missionary apostolate. The English East India Company was susceptible of the missionary education. The company administration in India feared, first reappraisal from the religious leaders against the missionary activities, and secondly, of the converted Indians. At the same time an equal treatment to them would have been costly to the political interest in Britain. Therefore, the company was not only against missionary education but also worked against them. Instead they extended the assistance to the oriental education through Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and also other vernacular languages and was the basis of religion in India as well. The missionaries were very critical of the company's education policy. They had already started a trade against the company government for extending assistance to the oriental education and working against the missionary activities.

The pressure brought about by the missionaries strained their relations with the company and the latter even expelled several missionaries who tried to convert Indians to Christianity pleading their action politically unwise.¹² The missionaries fought their battle and came out victorious. The fight between the company government and the missionaries became a burden to the ruling party in Britain. The ruling party, therefore, tried to avert this situation by provisioning in the Charter Act of 1813 that “ a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India”.¹³ This was

¹² Julius Richter, . *A History of Missions in India*, Edinburg & London, 1908, p.183.

¹³ A.P.Howell, *Education in British India*, Bangalore, 1955, p.18.

the first landmark in the evolution of modern educational structure in India it and facilitated the growth of English education.

In the next four decades after 1813 the company was more concerned with the conquest and consolidation of British rule in India. The charter Act of 1813 had also not clarified the objects, medium, agencies and methods for the "revival and improvement of literature". The controversy over the medium of instruction was more serious. There were few learned Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar whose voice carried weight in policy decisions of the company. There were two opinions in the administration - one who stood for Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit and the other who argued for adopting modern Indian languages. The missionaries were all for English medium. Raja Ram Mohan Roy vainly urged for education in European literature and sciences and protested to "the retention of oriental learning to the exclusion of European learning"¹⁴. The problem was finally decided when Lord Macaulay became the Chairman of the General Committee of Public Instruction. Macaulay argued, in imperial fashion, that it was the duty of the British to teach Indians what was good for their health, and not what was palatable to their taste. He further argued that the urge of Indians was sufficient evidence for their love of English. The matter was referred to the then Governor General William Bentick. He accepted the view point of Macaulay. Accordingly a resolution was passed in 1835 declaring that "the great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India". However the decision could not satisfy the orientalist who advocated Indian languages through vernaculars. Many Indian parents were also suspicious of English education and feared that English education made young men lose faith in the religious beliefs and practices of their forefathers. But there were Indians who

¹⁴ A.P. Howell, *op. cit.*, p.18.

had taken advantage of the English education. Firstly, they could qualify for government jobs. Moreover, English became the lingua franca of the educated Indians and enabled them to understand each other and western literature and ideas of nationalism.

This encouragement of English education by the British government had allowed the Christian missionaries to continue their activities unhindered. Missionary societies established a number of missions in India which contributed to the growth of education. The General British Missionary Society (1832), The London Missionary Society (1822), The Church Missionary Society (1813), The Wesleyan Mission (1818), The Scotch Mission Society (1822), The Basel Mission Society (1834), The Protestant Lutheran Missionary Society (1822), Women's Association of Education of Females in the orient (1842), were some of them. Though main objective of these missions was spreading of Christianity, education was the major curriculum for protostentization work. Since they are concerned with the social requirement, preaching through the mother tongue was essential. But teaching English was as much an essential requirement, for their Christian formation. In this background Christia missions helped the growth of vernacular languages as well as English. Besides, the female missionaries played an important role in educating the women. Rather they were pioneer in the advancement of female education. Though the Governor Generals like Ellenborough saw "the political ruin of English power as the inevitable consequence of the mission education"¹⁵ the company administration was obliged to bear with it, They became the spokesmen of European liberal age. Secondly, the favourable response to the reforms introduced by Lord Bentick had discarded the fear involved in the official interference in the religious affairs. These factors helped the missionaries to expand their activities in "the

¹⁵ Juliu Richter, *op.cit.*, pp. 183-184.

age of mission school". The figures of the mission education in 1834 are self indicative.

1. Anglo – Vernacular Schools and Colleges for men – 91 with 18401 students.
2. Vernacular Schools for boys – 1099 with 38661 students.
3. Boarding Schools for boys – 67 Schools with 1788 students.
4. Day Schools for girls – 285 with 8919 students.

In comparison to 67,569 pupils in 1,474 institutions run or aided by the Company Administration, the Protestant missions were running only 3,495 institutions (1,628 schools for boys and 1867 for girls¹⁶). The total missionary activities were more extensive. Therefore, it can easily be said that education to the Indians are provided largely, not by the Company Administration, but by the mission. Therefore the cause of the English was also served more by them than others.

However, the Mission Schools insisted on Bible – Teaching to have “ a reliable counterpoise, a protecting break – water against the threatened deluge of missionary enterprise”.¹⁷ Taken together the efforts of the indigenous schools, we can establish why the communal approach entrenched in the Indian society instead of a “ secular approach” expounded by the Education Department. The influence of missionaries increased abnormally both in England and India and their “moral right” to have monopoly over the educational enterprise was accepted in 1854.

The Christian missionaries started English schools in different parts of Kerala in the first decades of 19th century. The Basel Missionaries were the pioneers. In December 1845, Mrs. Fritz of Basel Mission stationed at Calicut started a female boarding school with twelve girls and was increased to 27 in

¹⁶ Ray Choudhary, *op.cit.*, p.192.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.193.

1846. During 1845-46, there were four Basel Mission primary schools at Calicut. But within three years it rose to eight with a total strength of 220 pupils. The Basel Evangelical Mission opened an English school at Kallayi (Calicut) in 1848 and it developed into the Malabar Christian College of later days. The Mission opened at Tellicherry on March 14th May, 1839, the first English School in North Malabar. Dr. Gundert, the founder of the Basel Mission in Malabar, was also the first Government Inspector of Schools in Malabar and South Canara.

Thus the British rule in India and the services of the Christian missionaries had contributed very much to the growth of English education in our country. No doubt India possessed a long tradition of learning and education and there were large number of schools belonging to both Hindus and Muslims in the country. But these schools were mainly in private hands and were run by the priestly classes according to their religious traditions. The education system was not progressive at all. The English schools started by the missionaries emerged as institution of high learning and scientific outlook. The modern education system was firmly established in India under the British rule in 1857 with the starting of three universities – Madras , Calcutta and Bombay.

The women education was degraded in India before the British rule. The modern education stressed upon by the Indian reformers that “ the woman’s cause is man’s : they rise or sink together, dwarfed or godlike, bound or free” Education was also denied to the backward classes and lower castes. They suffered injustice at the hands of then governments and the caste Hindus. The efforts of the missionaries to claim liberty and toleration to the lower classes were opposed by the orthodox and tradition – based caste Hindus. The missionaries became the champions of the oppressed classes. The missionaries turned against the disabilities of the Christian converts, evils

in the administration, widespread bribery and corruption, forced labour and monopolies etc. and gave emphasis to the welfare of the people¹⁸. The task of popularising education among the females, the lower classes and lower castes were carried out by the missionaries. Eventhough their intention was conversion, the activities of the missionaries in the long run generated nationalism, ideas of democratic form of government, human rights, and other progressive thoughts among the minds of Indians.

Education under Syro-Malabar Church

The Syro-Malabar Church has progressed much since 1887 with the erection of two Apostolic Vicariates of Trichur and Kottayam¹⁹ for the Syro-Malabar community. This was a ritual separation of the Syro-Malabar Christians from the Latin Catholics of Kerala.

In 1887 Bishop A.E. Medlycoft, the first Vicar Apostolic of Trichur laid the foundation of Trichur Diocese. He was an English man born in India (Chittagong) He had distinguished educational career in India and in the Propaganda College, Rome, from their he secured Ph.D and consecrated at Oottacamon and took charge in Trichur one of the two Apostolic Vicariates newly created for the Syrian Catholic of Malabar. Literally a pioneer, he had before him the stupendous task of providing every thing new, for the newly created ecclesiastical See. He made out a plan for an all round development of the Diocese, with remarkable foresight and a clear vision of possibilities of the future. Dr. Medlycoft paid much attention to the progress of education in Trichur area. It was he who started the first Catholic High school in Trichur, in 1889, the St. Thomas high school²⁰. It was recognized as a fully developed

¹⁸ The petition of the London Missionary Society to the governor in council. Fort St. George, Archieve Collections, Madras. dated 26 July 1855. Nos. 276 - 84

¹⁹ Phillip Palmpier, ed., *The Catholic Directory of Malabar*, Ernakulam, 1934.p.192.

²⁰ *Directory*, Trichur Diocese, 1950. p.28.

High school in 1904 by the then Government and the first batch of students for the Matriculation examination was sent up in 1904. Since the High School has made rapid progress in all aspects. It has won the reputation for its high standard of efficiency in teaching and of discipline and has achieved glorious records in games and sports. The school offered the students a good intellectual formation and had contributed much to the eradication of illiteracy in the district. The St. Thomas High School was raised to a college in 1919 affiliated to the University of Madras.

Arrangements were also made by Dr. Medlycott for the opening of primary schools in every parish and for the efficient imparting of moral and religious instruction in these schools. For nearly a century, it was the practice of the SMC that whenever a new parish was established, a new school would be opened with it, if at all possible. By 1923 lower primary schools were established almost in every parish close to parish churches²¹.

The role of the indigenous religious congregations

In the first half of the twentieth century, the period of independence struggle, the educational policy of the British government affected the educational policy of the church too. The government refused to give sanction to private educational institutions on administrative and financial considerations. Between the years 1900 and 1947, as a part of the struggle for independence, limited efforts were made to create a network of schools and colleges outside the government controlled formal system. It was during this period SMC authority has taken initiatives and efforts to establish various religious congregations in different parts of Kerala both for men and women. Those who wished to dedicate their life for prayer and service to God and his people, joined the congregations. The members of these congregations entered upon various apostolic activities like starting educational institutions,

²¹ *Trichur Diocesan Ecclesiastical Calendar*, 1934, p.35.

hospitals, orphanages , social service centres etc. The devoted services of the priests and nuns of these congregations were highly appreciated and supported by the people and government. And with the co-operation and financial assistance of the generous people of both Indian and foreign countries, they could establish various institutions. Thus the immense and selfless services of members of the religious congregations were highly respected and supported by the people and it resulted in the remarkable growth of educational institutions in Kerala. The following are the main indigenous religious congregations in India engaged in various kinds of educational activities which started before independence.

The first indigenous religious congregation for men, Carmelite of Mary Immaculate (CMI) in India had its beginning in 1831 at Mannanam in Kottayam district, Kerala under the leadership of Fr.Chavara Kuriakose Elias²². It was on December 8, 1855, this congregation was canonically erected.²³ From its very inception the congregation engaged itself in such activities as the church in Kerala was in need of at particular times. It started with preaching the gospels, establishing seminaries and training of priests, meeting the challenge of educating the youth and disseminating Christian literature; laboured for the conversion of non-Christians and for the reunion of the separated members of the Catholic church and undertook works of mercy, and organising educational and charitable institutions. A statistical abstract of CMI congregation in the year 2000 is given below²⁴.

Members	2544	Communication Centers	4
Parishes	56	Periodicals	13
Hospital/Dispensaries	48	Printing houses	11

²² K.C. Chacko, *Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Ernakulam, 1958, p.36.

²³ Chronicles kept in Chavara Archives, Mananam.

²⁴ *The Directory, Congregation of Mary Immaculate*, Mannanam, 2000.

Social Service Center	99	Publishing house	6
Educational Institutions	289	Book houses	19
Hostels/Boarding houses	35	Women welfare Centres	53
Cultural Centers	15	Rural development centers	10
		Missions stations	136

It was in 1866 the first indigenous congregation for women in India, the Congregation of the Mother Carmel (CMC) founded by Fr. Chavara Kuriakose Elias and Rev. Leopold Beccaro in Koonamavu.²⁵ Started with four women in it has now 6300 members dedicated their lives for the service of God and people mainly through education, health care and social work especially for women and children.

C.M.C.²⁶ in the year 2000

Member	6300	Orphanages	45
Colleges	4	Home for the Aged	12
Training College	1	Boarding Houses and Hostels	130
Higher Secondary Schools	10	Press	8
High Schools	61		
Schools for Handicapped	18		
Hospitals	19		

Another congregation, the Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC) for women was started in 1888 by Rev.Dr.Charles Lavinge, the Apostolic Vicar of Kottayam and Chenganacherry with eight women. The congregation grew

²⁵ The Chronicles kept in Koonammau Convent Archives.

²⁶ *Directory*, CMC Congregation, Alwaye, 2000.

fast attracting many young women who wished to lead a dedicated life. The members are now rendering valuable services both in India and various other parts of the world by maintaining colleges, schools, orphanages, social service activities, industrial houses and hospitals.

F.C.C.²⁷ in the year 2000

Members	6368	Job Training Centres	56
Hospitals	44	High Schools	55
Orphanages	43	Colleges	2
Home for the Aged	26		
Home for mentally retarded	15		
Home for handicapped	13		
Board Home (Tribals)	7		

In 1914 the Holy Family Congregation (CHF) for women came into existence in Puthenchira, Trichur District. The foundress was Mother Mariam Teresa and co-founder Fr. Joseph Vithayathil. The congregation grew steadily in strength under the able and energetic leadership of indigenous Bishops. The special charism of this congregation is family apostolate. The birth of the congregation was coincident with the beginning of World War I. Famine, contagious diseases and loss of fathers, husbands and brothers in war, affected the village of Mother Mariam Teresa too. Hers was the soft tread and voice that showered hope and comfort into the sorrowing hearts and families. The members of this congregation are now engaging in various activities like educational, health care, social services, family counseling etc.

²⁷ *The Directory*, Franciscan Clarist Congregation, Alwaye, 2000.

C.H.F.²⁸ in the year 2000

Members	1590	Home for the mentally retarded	2
High Schools	27	LP Schools	22
Colleges	2		
Orphanages	8		
Home for the aged	3		
Home for the handicapped	4		

The congregations started their apostolic work, first in the field of religious instructions only. Subsequently as desired by its august patrons, secular education was taken up as their primary activity. Various steps were taken by them for the proper running of these educational institutions and as a result a good number of schools arose in different parts of Kerala. In this connection the services of Bishops and Vicar generals of the dioceses were memorable. Special noteworthy was the part played by Fr. Mathew Edakolathoor, the Vicar general of Trichur Diocese, as secretary of the private school manager's association in successfully safeguarding the educational rights of the parents and private agencies against the encroachments of the government.

Educational progress since independence

Since independence many attempts were made at different levels to improve the quality of education and make it more relevant to the needs of the society. The church also tried to enunciate a new orientation to the educational apostolate of the church, which offers all citizens equal access to education. The prevailing educational system tend to favour those children

²⁸ *The Directory, Congregation of Holy Family, Trichur, 2000.*

whose parents are educated and whose family background has rich cultural environment. Although Catholic educational institutions never limited their services to any particular class or group and social considerations had no place in admitting students, it could not reach out to all sections of the society. Various attempts were made by the church to maintain a cosmopolitan outlook. An organization called Xavier Board of Higher education, established in 1951, and other Catholic School and College Managers association, parents and teachers association, old students association, etc. are trying to co-ordinate the activities of the colleges and schools to bring about great effectiveness.²⁹

From 1950 onwards the catholic church progressed in leaps and bound in education. With the progress in science and technology the need for a reorientation in education became imperative. By this time eminent catholic educationalist had started organized attempts to give a scientific bent to education. If Kerala stands today in the forefront of literacy in India, it is mainly due to the efforts initiated by Christian agencies. It was during 1945-60 majority of the educational institutions of Syro-Malabar church was started because it was a period of the administration of indigenous Bishops in Kerala and also the period of the proper establishment of the religious congregations and the liberal aeducational policy of the Government towards private agencies. It is however regrettable that, the government has not come forward to help private enterprise adequately, especially in the field of collegiate education, even though the Catholic schools and colleges maintain good reputation and get the best results in all government examinations.³⁰ The staff salary is paid by the government, but the whole maintenance is done by the

²⁹ Thomas Pothacamury, *The Church in Independent India*, Bombay, 1961, p.113.

³⁰ *Annual Report*, Catholic School and College Manager's Association, Trichur, 1999.

church. Only small sums were received by the catholic educational institutions as grants in their whole life of long years from the government³¹.

The education of catholic boys and girls in a catholic atmosphere was naturally the first and foremost object of the catholic institutions. But for obvious reasons the object has not been realized to the fullest extent. In a state like Kerala, where catholics are a minority, approximately 17 %, the church has to face many difficulties. The pre-pondering number of non-catholic pupils, the government system and regulations which control education from the elementary school to the university has hampered the freedom of the church. Certain subjects have to be taught in a specified manner at a specified time. The exacting syllabus and the pressure of examinations have tended to impair the cultural, moral and religious values of education. When the Communist government in Kerala tried overtly and covertly to nationalize the schools, they were driven out of power through the famous "Liberation Struggle" in 1956³². The first pebble in the calm political lake was thrown by the Catholics of the Trichur Diocese, situated in the geographical centre of Kerala. Though at times the church has to battle vigorously for her constitutional rights, the protection guaranteed by the constitution in the name of minority right has enabled the church to build up in the field of education.

Numerous educational institutions were started by the religious congregations during 1960's especially for girls. The life and example of the Catholic priests and nuns, their devotion to duty, the interest they evince in every one of their charge, their sympathy and kindness have won for them the esteem and admiration of all classes of persons.

³¹ *Annual Report, op. cit.*, p.11.

³² Circular dated 22.8.1956, Bishop G.C.Alappatt. Thrissur Diocesan Archives.

The role of Catholic Action Council

Catholic Action Council is an organization of the laity, the members of the catholic community who do not belong to the clergy. This organization was formed in 1937 in different dioceses of Kerala. “ Faith, Prayer and Action” were adopted as watchwords of the organization. The council took up activities, suited to the needs of the time and circumstances of the society. It was not a political organization. But often occasions may arise when it becomes necessary to defend the rights of church against the encroachments of the state, inspite of the safeguards guaranteed by the Indian constitution. The council had a few such occasions and it has done its best on these occasions. Some such instances are noted below.

1. Travancore Primary education Bill of 1945³³.
2. Vardhaman (Bihar) Religious outrages – 1956.
3. The Indian Converts, Regulation and Registration Bill – 1956.
4. ‘Orphanages and Widows’ house Bill- 1956.
5. Kerala Education Bill – 1957 and the subsequent heroic struggle against communist Government.

Education in post-Vatican Council period: 1965

The second Vatican council was convoked in December 1962³⁴. It was an ecclesiastical meeting of the Pope and other representatives of the church held at Vatican, Rome between 1962-65 for deciding matters of doctrine or discipline. The Second Vatican Council re-affirmed the obligation of the church to introduce the spirit of religion in all spheres of human life including politics and economics. The Post Vatican Council period was a landmark in the history of Catholic church directing her activities in such a way so as to

³³ *Trichur Diocese Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, 1962.

³⁴ Jessie Corrigan Pegis, *Kerala Directory*, 1965, New York, p.67

permeate the different spheres of human life other than education. The church opened a new policy viz. the involvement in social problems than indifference. The church realized that it is necessary for all kinds of education to include the development of social values along with personal values, so that educated Christian shall not abstain himself from the very society, which he has to enlighten. The church took up a total commitment to social justice. It was during this period technical institutes, industrial schools and schools for deaf and dumb were started by the church in large scale. The handicapped children were given special attention in each dioceses. A sincere attempt was made by the church during this period through her educational apostolate to render genuine service to the economically backward group hitherto incurred for. Thus enormous work has been done by the Catholics in the field of education in shaping the mental and moral outlook of the younger generation.

The value of education are both quantitative and qualitative and it may be stated that Catholic education has kept pace with the rapid extension of education in recent years. There are at present in Kerala under SMC management 38 Government aided colleges, 388 high schools, 372 upper primary schools, 660 lower primary schools, 222 technical and industrial schools, besides 95 teacher training institutions³⁵. For a minority community hardly 17% of the total population of the state, this is an impressive record. Their moral tone together with their academic efficiency have won the catholic institutions a reputation throughout the length and breath of the land where they clearly stand out among the other institutions, where the consequent student indiscipline are causing serious anxiety to the parents. Among the colleges of the Kerala state the catholic colleges are always top in university results. The catholic schools also occupy the same position.

³⁵ *Kerala Catholic Directory*, 1986.

The quality of catholic education has attracted and is still attracting, an increasing number of students to catholic teaching establishments. One important fact regarding educational institutions in Kerala and for that matter of all catholic institutions all over India, is that enlightened Hindus and even those who condemn the place of religion and morality in the code of education prefer to send their children to these institutions knowing fully well that in their institution ethics is a topic of instruction³⁶. Those who studied in Catholic institutions have generally displayed quality of leadership, team spirit and have distinguished themselves in social service activities. Thus the stupendous task of the state eliminating illiteracy was taken over by the church in the spirit of an apostolate.

Table³⁷

Institutions	SMCC		CATHOLICS		STATE TOTAL
	Number	% to the total	Number	% to the total	Number
Colleges	38	18.45	55	26.70	206
High Schools	388	16.19	540	22.53	2397
U.P. Schools	372	13.03	532	18.63	2856
L.P. Schools	660	9.64	1,015	14.82	6849
Total	1458	11.84	2,142	17.40	12,308

Syro-Malabar Catholics formed 10.60% and the Catholic on the whole constituted 16.78% of the total population of the State. The above table shows

³⁶ T.P.Mathew "Progress of Education in Kerala", in *Trichur Diocesan Jubilee souvenir*, 1962, p.69.

³⁷ *Catholic directory of Kerala*, 1986, p.506 - 7.

that, except for L.P. Schools, the Syro-Malabar Catholics and the Catholics as a whole possess more educational institutions than the share proportionate to each group's population. The position of SMCC is much better than the Catholics in the cases of higher educational institutions. According to one estimate, there were about 570, 370 Syro – Malabar Catholic students in schools in 1985 – 86, compared to 5,606,642 students in the State. This means that the students from the community constituted about 10.17% of the total.

Malayalam Literature and Thomas Christians

Among the thirty million people living in Kerala today, Christians constitute one fifth. The mother tongue of these Christians is, naturally, Malayalam. They have rendered at least as much, if not more pronounced services to the language of the region, as any other section of the population. There is no branch of contemporary Malayalam literature that has not been distinctly and decisively influenced by the Christian contribution. The best intellects and the creative writers of that community are committed to the growth and future greatness of Malayalam language and literature.

In this connection, it would be entirely relevant and absolutely appropriate, to cast a backward glance at the bygone stages in the evolution of the Malayalam language. Of all the Indian languages (leaving aside Sanskrit, the most ' Universal' of the languages of the sub-continent), the two with the most ancient literary heritage are South India's Tamil and North India's Urdu.. With the exception of Urdu and Tamil, the language of India had all their beginnings and had displayed their early development between the 9th and the 13th centuries after Christ. As far as Malayalam language is concerned it has been definitely established that it was by the beginning of the 9th century that it began its existence as an ' independent' language of the

Dravidian family.³⁸ Hence we need concern ourselves with this history for the last twelve centuries only.

Of the mellifluous folk songs which took their birth in the first phase of the growth of Malayalam language and literature, the best surviving representatives and the following few poems of adoration, addressed to Bhadrakali, Ayyappan, Sastha and other gods; inspiring lyric narratives that recount the heroic achievements of dauntless men; and merry, tilting lyrics intended for festive occasions.³⁹ Together they comprise a vast and varied literature. For centuries the people have been learning them by heart and reciting them. Inevitably, these songs have changed very considerably as far as their diction is concerned. A similar change can be discerned in the hundreds and hundreds of proverbs that are at least as old as the Malayalam language itself its first flowering in song patterns, owed most of its vitality and exuberance to the influence and inspiration of religion. In the literature of every this civilization this is exactly what we find. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha* and the works of similar kind, that fully reveal the uniqueness of ancient Indian culture, have an unmistakable religious colouring. The evolution of Malayalam literature repeats the same pattern. *Ramacharitha* (the story of Rama) the epical poem that stands out as one of the high peaks of early Malayalam literature, (Probable date, 12th century) the works of the group of three poets known as the Kannassans and several other poems of a similar kind, all had their genesis and growth under the soothing shade of religious faith.

Not merely Malayalam poems which bear the imprint of Tamil influence, but even the worst compositions which too shape after Malayalam became an absolutely independent language are seen to be shaped by religion.

³⁸ K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, Madras, 1955, p.147,

³⁹ Kavalam Narayana Panikar, *Folklore of Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1965, p.66.

The earliest Mahakavya (epic) in Malayalam literature, the famous *Krishna Gadha* (song of Krishna) by Cherusseri Nambudiri (early 18th C.) deserves special mention in this connection. So do the *Kilippattu* (literally, songs sung by a parrot)- the translation of Adhyatma Ramayana and the condensation of Vyasa's *Maha Bharatha* by Thunchatthu Ezhuthachan, generally considered the Father of Malayalm literature.⁴⁰ It is obvious that the authors of *Krishna Gadha* and the *Kilippattus* had one main aim – to enable their readers to ecstatically immerse themselves in the thrills of poetry and devotion, and thereby to make them theistic and refined. Other noted poets of the time had an identical objective.

While the Hindu society thus set itself to the creation of literary works strongly rooted in its religious doctrine, Kerala's Christians too were engaged in parallel activities. They composed *carols songs*, *marriage songs*, *Kali Pattu*, *Rampan Pattu* and many other types of songs all of which had their origin during the period indicated in the previous paragraph or at a slightly later period. Many of them had come into being long before Portuguese missionaries came.

Missionaries from Portugal and other European Countries made their first visits to Kerala in the early years of the 16th century. Whatever may be the political and social complications the coming of the foreigners had, it had a purely beneficial effect on the growth of the Malayalam language. For this reason, the literary and linguistic efforts of these foreign missionaries deserve to be mentioned along with those of the Christians of Kerala. These missionaries visited Kerala with the sole purpose of propagating Christianity. Nonetheless they felt, as soon as they arrived here, that it was part of their duty to do all they could towards effecting a reform in the educational and cultural conditions obtaining in the region at the time. In order that they could

⁴⁰ Nilakanta Sastri, *op. cit.*, p.418.

engage in evangelical work it was essential of their part to master the spoken language of the people. Educating the people was another basic requirement. Relevant books had to be written. These books had to be printed and distributed. Realising the importance of this task for the attainment of their noble aim, the missionaries did many commendable things. The first thing they achieved was the founding of schools and seminaries as adjuncts to churches and chapels. Seminaries and schools at place like Cochin, Vaippicotta, Cranganore and Ambazhakkadu⁴¹ had their start in these circumstances. In these places of study, Malayalam, Tamil, Sanskrit, Syriac, Latin, Portuguese and some other language were taught. Soon there were many native theological students pursuing their studies in the seminaries. It was some of these native scholars that later revealed themselves capable of issuing books (original ones as well as translations) which had a great impact on the growth of Malayalm literature. Those foreign missionaries who taught in the seminaries were deeply versed in European languages; they learned Malayalam, Tamil, Sanskrit and other oriental languages and commenced the composition of religious and linguistic works in the newly mastered tongues.

The worst hurdle, as far as the foreigner who wanted to study Malayalam in those days concerned was the complete absence of dictionaries and works of grammar. No effort in this direction had ever been made before. The missionaries resolved to remedy this situation. Fully grounded as they were in their own mother tongues they were quick in grasping the position of Malayalm. They promptly turned to the creation of grammatical works and dictionaries. Thus the earliest grammaarians of the Malayalam language are seen to be westerners like Angelo Francis, Guntert,⁴² Garthwright, Caldwell, Pitt and Drummond. The very first malayalam grammarian seems to have

⁴¹ Records. Ambhazhakad C.M.I. Monastery.

⁴² Herman Gundert, *Keralapazhama*, Trivandrum 1961 (reprint).

been, according to available information, the Archbishop of Verapoly, round about 1700 A.D. – Dr. Angelo Francis. “Arnos Padri”, another well known foreign missionary was contemporary of Angelo Francis. The Padri made Ambhazhakkadu in Kerala his home, and completed the first dictionary in the Malayalam language. The labours of these two great scholars paved the way for the linguistic achievements of later missionaries.

It is not that the writer has forgotten the most famous grammatical work of the time *Leelathilakam*, by an anonymous author. Its value is the light it throws on the diction and special beauties of the manipravala poems of the period. It is an invaluable work of grammar with regard to the poetry of its age, but with regard to the prose language of the time, it makes the scantiest references and its references are of the most limited kind. Kovunni Netungadi and other eminent Kerala scholars of the last hundred years, have based their grammatical works not on *Leelathilakam* but on the books written by the missionaries. Even Kerala Panineeya, that standard treatise on grammar by Kerala Panini was written after a thorough examination of the various grammar books by missionaries. This fact has been openly acknowledged by Kerala Panini (Prof. Raja Raja Varma). In the making of dictionaries, too, these Eruopean missionaries were the pioneers, the trail openers. Following the example of Arnos Padri, several other missionaries at Verapuzha turned to the compilation of dictionaries. However, the most distinguished works in this category are: (1) the Malayalam- English dictionary prepared and issued by Benjamin Bailey, from the C.M.S. press, Kottayam;⁴³ (2) The English Malayalm dictionary by Bailey himself issued from the same press. (Bailey, and no other, had the first Malayalm book printed in a press in Kerala). The dictionary published by Richard Collins is equally noteworthy. The unique

⁴³ Chavara Cultural Museum, Mannanam.

feature of this book is that in it Malayalam words are first defined in Malayalam and then only in English.

In spite of the varied merits of the works listed above, it remains very much a fact that Gundert's *Malayalam – English dictionary* is the first lexicon in Malayalam, planned and prepared strictly according to scientific methods. It is very important to bear this in mind. Gundert's lexicon, published in 1872 from the Basel Mission Press, Mangalore, gives the meanings and definitions of Malayalam words in simple English. Anyone who is eager to form a clear idea of unfiled Malayalam words, and to grasp the difference in meaning between two apparently similar- looking words in the language can come across no other work of comparable authority.

Following the example of the dedicated services of these foreign missionaries a number of Malayalee Christians also set themselves to the making of works of grammar and rhetoric. The foremost among them was Rev. George Mathan (more widely known as Gheevarghese Kathanar). He published *Malayanmayute Vyakaranam*, Malayalam grammatical work, in the Malayalam year 1027- eleven years before professor Raja Raja Varma was even born. The first reference to punctuation marks in any Malayalam grammatical work occurs in this work. Furthermore this is the first grammar of the Malayalam language written in Malayalam by a Malayalee. It would be in the fitness of things to refer straightaway to a much later work – I.C. Chacko's *Panineeya Pradyotham*. This volume is a lucid elucidation of Sage Panini's *Ashtadhyai*, a collection of the so-called *prathyaharasutras* by the greatest of Sanskrit grammarians.

Several Kerala Christians emulated the example of Gundert and gave shape to dictionaries of some importance. One of these, the Udaya Malayalam- English dictionary, has proved considerably helpful to people who strive to translate from Malayalam to English. This book is the product

of the combined efforts of E. Ellias and E. Issac. Only one dictionary of this kind, that of Benjamin Bailey published in 1848, was in existence when 'Udaya' came out. Another notable achievement in this category is the Syriac Malayalam dictionary prepared by Kalappurakkal Anthrayose Malpan, who was professor of Syriac at the Pulpalli seminary.⁴⁴

The first dictionary of mythological stories in Malayalam (*Puranakatha Nikandu* or known as *Sahithya Nikandu*) was published in 1899. Its author was Pailo Paul, a Malayalee Christian scholar. Even now this book proves vastly helpful in the clearing of slips of memory on the reader's part regarding Hindu mythological incidents and personalities. The most massive work of this kind is Vettom Mani's 'Purana Nikandu', where as Pailo Paul's volume is quite small, Mani's runs into many huge volumes. There is no book of reference in Malayalam, nor perhaps in any other Indian language, which deals with puranic themes so comprehensively as Mani's book. Koshi.⁴⁵ P. John's *Hindi-Hindi Malayalm* dictionary also deserves mention in this context.

It will be seen that the endeavours of Christians in the production of books dealing with literary theory, figures of speech, and criticism have been remarkable (Ornamentation in oriental poetry more or less corresponds with the figures of speech). A successful poetic ornament or decoration is one that brings delight to the reader by its perfect harmony of sense and sound. In Sanskrit literature there are very many books on this subject. In Malayalam *Leelathilakam* is the first work of this kind. There after quite a few translations from Sanskrit and some imitations have come out in this field of writing. Yet there had been no Malayalam book, discussing and illustrating the use of Alankaras in prose. It was a Malayalee priest, Grerard, who first

⁴⁴ T.M. Chummar, *op.cit.* p. 164.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*,

made the very first effort to make good this crying deficiency. Only after his book had come out from the Varapuzha Press in 1881 did any other Malayalam book enunciating western literary theories come to be written. Among the large number of books now available, Professor M.P. Paul's *Saundaryanireekshanam* and Professor Joseph Mundasseri's *Kavya Peedika* are extremely valuable. The latter work incorporates the best of western and eastern poetic doctrines.⁴⁶

Another Eighteenth Century Malayalm prose work of importance ought to be mentioned in this context. This is Paramakkal Thoma Kathanar's *Varthamana Pusthakam*. As its sub-title indicates, it is a description of 'Kariattil Malpan's Roman Journey'.

It is said to be in two parts but only the first part has survived, to the best of this writer's knowledge. This book is the first travelogue in any Indian language.

Printing and Printing Presses

Printing Presses which came to be established in different parts of Kerala round about this time were a major factor in the development of early Malayalm prose. Needless to say, these presses were started by the European missionaries. The earliest of these seems to have had its site in Quilon. It was founded in 1578. The first book to be printed there (in 1578) was a Tamil translation of the catechism namely *Doctrina Christam* or *Tampuran Vanakkam*.⁴⁷ This appears to be the first ever published book in any regional language of India. Printing presses were established at Cochin, Vypikota, and Ampazhakkad. These were the earliest publishing houses in this part of the country.

⁴⁶ Joseph Mundasseri. *Kavya Peethika*, Trichur, 1950, p. 30.

⁴⁷ CMI, Monastery Ampazhakkad Archives, also see John Ochanthuruth, *Adiverukal*, Kottayam, 1991, pp. 175-188.

Curiously enough no book in Malayalm was printed in any of these presses. As a matter of fact, the first – ever book, using Malayalm type, was *Hortus Malabaricus*, (It deals with the plants and medicinal herbs of Kerala) a Latin work published in Holland by H.A. Van Rheedee somewhere between 1678 and 1703. In this work Malayalam, Sanskrit, Arabic and Portuguese names of the plants and herbs are included. The Malayalam names are given in Malayalam Script. The book includes a ‘ statement’ by an Itti Achutan, an Ezhava physian from (Kadakkappalli) near Alappuzha. His statement is printed in *Vattezhuthu* script and in old Malayalam language.⁴⁸

It was in Rome that the first book in Malayalam (consisting entirely of Malayalam types) was printed. Its full title was *Nasranikal Okkeyum Ariyentunna Samkshepa Vedartham* (The Essence of the Bible for the edification of all Christians). Its author, Clement Pianius was an Italian missionary settled at Varapuzha. He prepared and took the manuscript to Rome, made the necessary types all by himself, and had it printed in 1772. Thus we have the interesting fact that the earliest printed book in Malayalam was born in Rome. The types are square in shape of fairly big size. The text is in the form of a dialogue between teacher as disciple. This form widely known as ‘Gurusishya samvada’ is a fairly common characteristic of Indian religious literature.

The Modern Era

Up to this point we have emphasised the contribution of Keralite Christians to the native literature, especially to its prose wing. Ever since foreign missionaries arrived here far reaching change began to happen in Malayalam prose literature. Besides religious books the missionaries composed philological works, dictionaries and works of systematic literary scholarship. Malayalee Christians tremendously influenced by the glorious

⁴⁸ See K.J. John, ed., *Christian Heritage of Kerala*, Cochin, 1981, pp. 154-160.

work of the European priests also rendered valuable services in this field. However, the native contribution assumes its full glory and power, only from the Nineteenth century onwards.

Although printing presses were started in places like Quilon Fort Cochin and – some books were published during the days of the ascendancy of the Jesuit priests, pioneering activities of this kind did not then gain any widespread effects. These efforts began to make solid progress only after the British rule and when English education became a reality in the country. Thenceforward, printing presses came to be established in various parts of the region in fairly rapid succession.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, during the years Rani Lakshmibai ruled Travancore State, several Anglican missionaries arrived in Kerala. Through the good offices of Colonel Monroe who was Resident (the representative of the British Governor) then, the London Mission Society founded a centre for their evangelical activities in Nagercoil (which was then a part of Travancore) in 1815. In the same year, the Church Mission Society opened a seminary and a school at the Instance of Rev. Benjamin Bailey. At more or less this time, a school (imparting western education) was also started at Nagercoil.

A printing press was attached to the CMS school of Kottaym on the 18th of October 1821 by Rev. Benjamin Bailey. Bailey who had landed at Alleppy in 1816 had settled down at Kottayam in 1817. He started the translation of the Bible into Malayalam. The printing press referred to which was equipped with English types, arrived at Kottayam from England. His next look out was for a fount of Malayalam types. The Bible Society of Calcutta seems to have sent a printing press with Malayalam types to the Church Mission Society of Kottayam in 1820 and the Gospel of Luke was printed by Bailey in the same year. However, the Serampore missionaries

and College of Fort St. George, Madras, soon supplied Bailey's press with a fount of Malayalam types. He also supervised the making of two beautiful founts of Malayalam type in England and brought them to Kottayam. The next publication of CMS press with the Malayalam founts seems to be a Pastoral letter (600 copies) in Malayalam addressed by the Metropolitan of the Syrian Church to his clergy and the Sermon on the Mount (400 copies) in the year 1823. Next year the press brought out a book containing 8 moral stories for children. The New Testament in Malayalam was printed in 1829 and 13 years after, the complete Bible was brought out from the CMS press, Kottayam.⁴⁹

During Colonel Monroe's residency of Travancore State Dr. Claudius, an enthusiastic foreign priest came here. He translated the Syriac Bible into Malayalam, took it to Bombay and had it printed at the Courier Press with types he specially made for the purpose. This was in 1811. It is therefore evident that Malayalm printing was initiated in Bomaby.

Swathi Thirunal, the Maharajah of Travancore, deeply impressed and fascinated by the progress of the Western type of education introduced by the missionaries at Kottayam and Nagercoil, as well as by their printing presses, opened a modern type of school at Trivandrum in 1834 with the active assistance and co-operation of the Christian priests. Before long a Government Press started working in Trivandrum. The very next year a school for the teaching of English was started at Ernakulam. Within a few years of the founding of the western type of education in these two important places, it had made rapid strides.

In the new English schools, the students had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the English classics with the majestic essays of Addison, Godsmith, Carlyle, Macaulay and Burke, and the novel of Sri

⁴⁹ K.J. John (ed.), *op. cit.*, 165-166.

Walter Scott. The deeper their intimacy with English literary works grew, the more did the perceptive among them become aware of the poverty of the prose literature of their own language. This realisation made them resolve to do something in the matter. George Mathan, more generally known as Geevarghese Kathanar was one of those dedicated persons.

Earlier reference has been made to George Mathan's *Malayalm Grammar*, His many faceted contributions towards the development of prose literature in the language can only be briefly mentioned here. He concentrated his attention on translating important foreign books into Malayalam. (In every Literature the earliest prose works are, generally speaking, translations or adaptations from other literatures. Malayalam is no exception in this regard.) Among his noted works, the best-known are: *Satyavada khetakam* (a collection of essays concerning the nature of truth), *Sanyukthi* (a translation of Joseph Butler's *Anatomy of Religion*, *Samvadam* (Dialogue) and *Balabhyasm* (Instruction of Children). Most of these books were written about 1865. His prose retains its charm and vitality. The passing of a hundred years has not made it less attractive. It remains a live model of highly individualised prose. The main source of its strength is its unashamed contact with languages as it is used by the common people in their daily intercourse. Certainly, it is one of the best varieties of the Malayalam prose of the last century. It would not be wide off the truth to consider George Mathan the father of modern literary Malayalam prose.⁵⁰

Another very important prose writer of the period Archdeacon Koshi (he was a contemporary of Geeverghese Kathanar) made contributions of lasting value to Malayalam literature. The Archdeacon was born at Thrivalla, which is not far way from Chengannur, George Mathan's birth place. Koshi wrote nearly a dozen books. He translated two of the most famous allegorical

⁵⁰ M.O. Joseph, *Kerala Christianiyeal*. Cochin, 1972.

works of John Bunyan, the great English religious writer and master of fictional narratives. *The pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War* are the allegories the Archdeacon rendered into Malayalam. *Para desomiksha* and *Thiruporattam* are the Malayalam titles. However the Archdeacon's most significant work is *Pulleli Kunchu* a religious tract presented in fictional narrative form. This book was published in 1882. Its value as a social tract is no less than its literary importance.

Two other distinguished Christian prose-writers of the period Kallor Umman Philipose and Aimanam P. John are entitled to special mention. Umman Philipose adopted Shakespeare's farcical comedy *A comedy of Errors* as a prose narrative in Malayalam. Aimanam P. John's *India Charithram* (History of India) issued for the first time in 1860 from the C.M.S Press, Kottayam,⁵¹ is the first work of its kind in the language. It is an approximate translation of a book by Morris, an English writer, Aimanam P. John also made Malayalam renderings of the Indian Penal Code (Number 45) and civil code. These translations were published within a brief while of the appearance of the originals. Praise is also due to Archdeacon Umman, who in 1882, published his Malayalam version of the *Proverbs of Solomon*. Kotayyathu Pukatiyil Ittoop writer who completed 'A history of the Suriani Christian Church' and published it from the Western Star Press, Cochin also must be mentioned here. Three other Nineteenth Century Malayalam prose writers ought to be referred to in this context. They are Chavara Kuriakose Eliasachan,⁵² Vaippisseri Louisachan and Dr. Marcelinose Methran, the Bishop. Father Chavara Kuriakose Elias, the founder of the National Carmelite Order and its first prior wrote works in prose as well as verse. *Autapam* (Lament of self) is perhaps the best of his verse works. *Nalagamam*

⁵¹ Museum and Archives, Chavara Centre, Mannanam.

⁵² *Ibid.*,

is a prose work of considerable interest as it is a 'contemporary' history of the Malankara (Kerala) Church. The first part of the history traces the period from 1829 to 1885 and the second part that between 1855 and 1870. This book has all the fascination of an authentic autobiography. Father Elias's other works are *Dhyanasankalpangal* (Meditative chit – Chats) *Sneha samkalapangal* (Affectionate chit – chats) and the *Biography of Rokose Sleeha*.

Father Vaippiesseri Louis of Manjummel Hermitage, a disciple of Father Kuriakose Elias was another top-ranking prose-writer of the time. Father Louis, whose nom-de-plume was Father Aloysius was the founding editor of *Satyanadakahalam. Vedaprasangatharani* (Scriptural lectures) 1886, is a collection of biblical commentaries immensely useful to the priest who is learning to become a preacher. Father Aloysius is also the first translator of the Catholic Bible.

Bishop Marcellinose was an Italian by birth (his native city was Genoa). Although a foreigner by birth, he became a true son of Kerala. He was a scholar in many languages and a writer of real ability. He arrived in the Apostolic Seminary in 1854 and commenced a comprehensive study of eastern languages. He finished the composition of many books on a variety of subjects in the course of the next twenty –eight years.⁵³ He was the (first) rector of Varapuhza Puthanpalli Seminary from 1866 to 1877, and later Bishop. *Malayalam's Lamp of Illumination* is a work of historical value the Bishop published from Koonammaavu in 1870. *The History of the Gospel* (1872) is an authoritative book of his authorship. *Yogasaramasam Sanmargasastram*" (the Science of Morality) and a Biography of Saint Teresa are famous works by him. This is by no means a complete list. Saint Teresa's life is a book of 700 pages, and is in two parts. It was published in 1886 from

⁵³ C.M. Agur, *The Church History of Travancore*, Madras, 1990, pp.1053-57.

the Mannanam Press. The first ever biography in Malayalam, it was freely adopted, in abridged form, from the books about St. Teresa (of Avila) in the Italian language.

Dr. Guntert, whose grammatical work and dictionaries have a definite place in the evolution of Malayalam, is also the author of many learned books. the *History of Christian Church*, *The Progress of the Pilgrims*, *the British of Kerala*. *The Story of Mohammad*, *A Scrutiny of the Meaning of the Nala Story* and *The Hoariness of Kerala* are notable works from his pen.

Here we discuss the contribution of Christian poets in Malayalam. Here too the first Ernestus (to Malayal^es Arnose Pathiri) who come to Kerala in 1699, was a brilliant linguist, a master of many languages. The Malayalam language and the people of Kerala are eternally indebted to this most learned man. As has already been mentioned, the Pathiri prepared the first lexicon in Malayalam. At the appropriate hour, his attention turned to Malayalam poetry as well. Having decided that Malayalee Christians should have devotional works in their own language, in the same way, Malayalee Hindus have *Ramayanam Kilipattu* and *Mahabaratham Kilipattu*, he set himself to the composition of such works. *Chaturanthyam* a long poem in four parts – the Death Parva, the Fate Parva, the Hell Parva and the Salvation Parva- was the product of this commendable effort. All works of the Pathiri are of a high level of excellance. The best are *Missihacharithram Puthan Pana* (The story of the Missiiiah) and *Umma Parvam* or the story of The Holy Mother. The verse is marked by purity of diction and oppositeness of imagery. The few lapses and incongruities in the texture of the verse (especially in the *Puthan Pana*) are no serious matter, considering that the another way of forcing or who arrived in Kerala after he had passed the middle of life. The very fact that he was able to master Sanskrit, Malayalam and some other Indian languages and to compose verses in them is definitely astounding.

Mallusseri Chandi Pillai, a contemporary of Arnos Pathiri was born at Kottayam. He composed a number of fine hymns. Kuruvila Kathanar wrote a few poems of considerable merit, including a Malayalam adaptation of the *Story of Job*. More significant than any poet discussed so far is Chacko Pillai born in Middle Kerala. His best works are *Allesu Pana* and *Allesu Natakam* (A drama based on the life of Allesu). *The wonderful Marriage* and *The Story of the Children of Syria* are really good poems by Kottayathu Thakadiyel Mathan, a Nineteenth century poet. Konnalil Kochukunhu writer began the composition of a Manipravala poem with the title *Christavedacharitan Muppathinaluvritham* an imitation of the *Irupathinaluvritham* and *Muppathinaluvritham* (Hindu devotional poems of great Charm and musical quality). The poet's ambitious aim was to narrate the entire story of the Bible in thirtyfour (Mupathnalu is Malayalam for 34) sections. The poem was left unfinished at the time of his death.

Kandathil Varughese Mappilai was a close associate of Kerala Varma Valiyakoil Thampuran, the pioneer and guide of modern Malayalam literature.⁵⁴ It is often forgotten that Varughese Mappilai was a poet of rare ability. Writers especially forget this fact. The reason for this is that Varughese Mappilai was one of the foremost patrons of literature Malayalam has ever seen. His encouragement of writing and writers outshone his literary endeavours. But he did do great things for the literature he strove to serve. The most satisfying of his literary creations are the following. *Darpa wihedam* or *Yadukula raghavan* (a Kathakally) *Atbhutajananam* (The wonderful Birth) is a lyrical narrative in ten movements, a collection of a Hundred Biographies, and an Anthology of Hymans. Each of these works is marked by literary excellence and unflinching taste. Nidheerikkal Mani Kathanar 'was constant Associate of Varughese Mappilai. Mani Kathanar is

⁵⁴ *Malayaa Manorama Diamond Jubilee Souvenir*, 1960, p.40.

important in a number of ways: the founder of Nasrani Deepika, a prominent figure at the poets' conference held at Kottayam in 1892, a highly influential social worker, a multi-linguist. As an author his main contributions are two plays (*Sobharajavijayam and Kripavathi*), two poems (*Simsona Charitam and Oregole Charitam*) and many hymns and independent slokas. This poet's works are deservedly popular.

Edamarathu Victor was another brilliant Christian poet contemporaneous with Kandathil Varughese Mappilai. He was born in 1859 at Edamarathu Mana (mana is a Malayalam word meaning a Nambodir Household). His original name was Jayenthan Victor was the name he accepted when he became a Christian. Years before his conversion, he had written a fairly long poem, *Ashtampirabandham* (Partly satire, partly the description of a journey). The back ground of this poem is the Ashtami Festival of Vaikkam. It is modelled on Venmani Mahan Namboodri's *Pooraprabandham*. After his conversion the poet confined his attention to purely religious themes. The best among them are marthoma Parvam (about St. Thomas), *Old Pana*, and his versions of *Marana Parvam*, (about death) *Vidhi Parvam* (about fate) *Naraka Parvam* (about sin) and *Salvation* (about Mokasha), a collection of hymns in fourteen different metres, a poetic biography of Jesus Christ in twenty four different metres, a prayer to the Messiah (Misiah Stuthi), a devotional poem in eight Stanzas addressed to the Lord of All.⁵⁵ Although the *Parvam* poems are imitations of Arnos Pathiri's works, Victor's special distinction is visible in them all. This is the flawless perfection, grace and beauty of his diction. In his quality, Victor's poems stand far above those of any other Christian poet of his age. The finest of Victor's poems seems to be *Stuthi ratnamala* a collection of religious hymns that are comparable in excellence to the best hymns in present – day use.

⁵⁵ T.M. Chummar, *op. cit.*, p.164.

Some of the Christian poets of the time wrote epic works (Maha kaviyas) in the manner of the Sanskrit *Raghuvamsa Magha* etc. For a long Period, Malayalam poets were drawn to this, and Christian poet have probably made a greater contribution in this field than poets of other religious groups. The chief among the Christian Mahakaviyas is *Sree Yesu Vijayam* (The Victory of Jesus) by Mahakavi Kattakkayathil Cheriyan Mappila.⁵⁶ This very long poem has a highly honoured place among Mahakaviyas in Malayalam. It consists of three thousand and seven hundred stanzas and provides a panoramic view of the vast Biblical story-cycle. Many other Christian poets followed the trail set by Cheriyan Mappila. The best known among them are: K.V. Simon the author of *Veda Viharam*, Paravithanam P.K. Devasia the author of the *Tribe of Israel*, Puthankavil Mathan Tharakan whose *Viswa deepam* (The Light of the world) is one of the masterpieces of modern Malayalm poetry, Daniel Kanjankate who wrote *Ganova Charitam* (also called *Charithra Charitam*), Itayavanmula K.M. Varghese the author of *Christhu Chartia* and Sister Mary Benija, the author of *Marthoma Vijayam* (Victory of Saint Thomas) and several other poems, Mahakavi. S. Thermadom, the author of nine biographies, five dramas, and several poems,⁵⁷ Sara Joseph, the author of many novels, stories and poems⁵⁸ etc. are other famous writers of the period , Dr. John Ochanthurouth who made an exhaustive study of the Roman Catholic^h in Kerala^h as published *The Road to Diamper* which was well received in India and abroad: In appreciation of this work Rev. Dr. George Nedungatt S.J. has republished a chapter from this book in his *The Synod of Diamper Revisited*, publihsed from Pontificio Institute Orientale, Rome. Dr. Ochanthurouth's another book *Christian Heritage of Kerala* (1981) is a well known publication whioch deals ith

⁵⁶ T.M. Chummar, *op. cit.*, p.164.

⁵⁷ John Kachinattom, *Kerala Sabharatnangal*, (Mal), Kottayam, 2001, p.790, p.1059.

⁵⁸ Sara Joseph, *Alahayude Penmakkal* (Mal.), Trichur, 1999, p.2.

Christian legacy in Kerala. *Adiverukal* (Mal.) by the same author provides a mine of information about the culture and contributions of Roman Catholics in Kerala.

Newspapers, Journals and Literary Organisations

Newspapers and magazines have played a prominent role in the quick, all round development of Malayalam literature. So have literary organisations. Kerala's Christians commonly have been in the forefront in such activities as well.

It has already been pointed out that Christians started the first printing presses in Kerala. Magazine and Journals came to be published by Dr. Guntert from Illikkunnu. *Rajyasamacharam*. (News of the Country) was the first of these journals. Its first issue was dated June 1847 *Paschimodayam* appeared in the following October. These were the earliest periodicals to be published in Kerala. They were both monthlies. *Rajyasamacharam* had the spreading of the Christian religion as its main aim and *Paschimodayam* the diffusion of knowledge and information. *Jnana nikshepam* was a magazine that began to be published at the C.M.S. Press Kottayam from November 1848.

As to which was the first newspaper, to be published in Kerala, we know nothing at all. No definite information is available on this point. All we can say with definiteness is that from the Western Star Press Cochin an English Newspaper of the same name was published by an Englishman named Walker. In August 1864, a Malayalam supplement of the newspaper commenced publication. It was titled *Paschima Tharaka* (Western Star). To the best of our knowledge, this was the beginning of newspaper publication in Malayalam. The editors of the Malayalam section were Pukatiyal Ithooppuwriter and T. J. Paili. In 1870 another newspaper, *Kerala Pathaka* under the editor ship of Mangalath Kunhunni Asan, started publication at

Cochin. In 1876, *Satyanadakahalam* a fortnightly journal, whose editors were Father Louis and T.J. Paili, commenced publication from Koonamamavu. Later it dropped the Kahalam or trumpet part. It continues to be published as a fortnightly as plain *Sathiyadam*.

Nazaranideepika was a new journal that began to be published from Mannanam Press in April 15, 1887⁵⁹ (Mannanam is near Kottayam). Its inception was mainly owing to the literary enthusiasm of Nidhirkkal Mani Kathanar⁶⁰ and a few others. Its first editor was T.J. Paili. The early contributors to *Nasranideepika* included Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, Malloor Govinda Pillai and many other eminent men. Today it is plain *Deepika* and has become a daily newspaper and enjoys a fairly high circulation.

The *Malayala Manorama* now one of the highest circulated newspapers in the language started publication at Kottayam as a weekly on March 22, 1890,⁶¹ under the editorship of Kandathil Varghese Mappila. In his monumental *History of Malayalam Literature*, Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer has paid glorious tribute to *Manorama's* invaluable services to Malayalam language and literature. "It is difficult to determine which of *Manorma's* contributions – services to country and service to literature is greater". Ulloor lays special emphasis on *Manorama's* encouragement of writers and the refinement of reader's minds. The poets' Column in the *manorama* and the great things *Manorama's* daughter, *Bhashaposhini Sabha* (a literary association) did for writers and writing, are unforgettable. Eminent writers like K.C. Kesava Pillai and Murkothu Kumaran often acknowledged their innumerable debts to *Manorama* and its great editor. The *Bhasaposhini Monthly Magazine*, the official organ of the *Sabha* that made valuable

⁵⁹ Thomas A. Aykara, *Indian Christian Directory*, Madras, 2000, p. 90.

⁶⁰ John Kachimattom, *op. cit.*, pp.133-139.

⁶¹ Varghese Kalathil, *Malayala Manorama Diamond Jubilee Souvenir*, Kottayam, 1960, p.40.

contribution to Malayalam literature was another brain child of Varghese Mappila.

Assuredly, modern education is mainly responsible for the growth of contemporary Malayalam literature. (This is true of the literatures of all Indian languages). A growing awareness of the Western Literary tradition led to the introduction and growth of western literary modes and forms in Malayalam. The novel, the short story, the humorous tale, the prose play, biography, pen- portrait, autobiography, the essay, criticism, literary history, social history, political history, popular science are the prose forms that have made rapid progress in recent times. In poetry, romantic poems (Lyrical as well as Narrative) elegies, sonnets, and many other forms have become popular. But for western education, these types of expression would not have began enriching the Malayalam language as early as hundred years ago. In all these branches of prose as well as verse literature, the Christians of Kerala have laudable achievements to their credit.

“Literary organisations have had no less significant a role in the growth of Malayalam language and literature. Such associations and organisations have not been scarce in Kerala. The foremost among them was the Bhashaposhini Sabha, that had its origin in 1891”. These are Ulloor’s words in his History of Malayalam literature. Every word of this quotation is true. Ulloor adds: “ before the emergence of Bhashaposhini Sabha, no associations of writers are known to have existed”. This fraternity of writers effectively functioned for nearly twenty years and brought together writers who would not otherwise even have come to know of each other’s existence. The Sabha roused the latent energies of these writers, and they composed some of their best works under its direct influence.

To reflect that a Malayalee Christian, Kandathil Varghese Mappilai, was the Creator of the Sabha is to have an approxiamte idea of the magnitude

of Keralite Christian's contribution to the growth of Malayalam language and literature.⁶²

Many other literary association have had their birth, after Bhashaposhini came into being. Malayalee Christians have fruitfully functioned in them all. Their enthusiasm and love of literature have not in the least waned.

In the cultural scene of today, newspapers and broadcasting are the determining factors. The social, intellectual; and artistic progress of the people are mainly based on the successes and failures of these and similar mass media. Many important works, before attaining book publication, either appear in periodicals or are broadcast on the radio. The people of Kerala are engaged in a co-operative endeavour in the writing as well as the publishing of books. The Christians of Kerala play conspicuous role in all such endeavors. It is hardly necessary in such a context to make specific, and pointed references to the precise achievements of Malayalee Christians in modern Malayalam literature.

Thomas Christians and Journalism

1972, the International Book Year and the Jubilee year of Thomas the Apostle is especially significant in the history of Malayalm publications. It is the 200th year after the publication of the first printed book in Malayalm, *Samksepa Vedartum* and 100th year after the publication of the great dictionary of Dr. Gundert. Now it is a century and a quarter since the first Malayalam newspaper *Rajyasamacharam* was first published. In three years the first Catholic paper in Malayalm *Sathyadam* will be a century old and Deepika the oldest daily newspaper in Malayalam will be ninety years old in four year's time. The eighty year old Malayal Manorama celebrated its Silver

⁶² Varghese Kalathil. *op.cit.* p. 42.

Jubilee this year after the renewal of its publication. Christians were the pioneers in the fields of printing, publication of books and the publication of journals in Malayalam. As education and know-how spread due to the Christians many developments took place in these fields in the secular and non-Christian areas, many of which were powerful enough to diminish the importance of Christian influence in these fields. Often it was necessary for the survival and popularity of these publications to maintain a secular attitude even in the case of many Christian journals. However, the story of some Christian journals which tried to maintain the solidarity of the Christian community of Kerala in the past century has become part of the history of Kerala.

Journalism in Malayalam was the direct result of the development in the area of Malayalam printing. The illustrated descriptions of plants and shrubs in four languages published in twelve volumes entitled 'Hortus Malabaricus' was one of the first attempts at Malayalam printing. But this work was printed in Holland. Malayalam was printed for the first time in India at the courier Press, Bombay in 1811. The effort was made by Claudius Buchanan with the assistance of one Kochitty from Kandanad. The establishment of the C.M.S. Press at Kottayam in the year 1821 under the patronage of Resident Col. Monroe was systematic attempt to start printing in Kerala. In 1829 Rev. Bailey made types in Malayalam and printed his Bible which was followed by the printing of dictionaries and books of general knowledge. A government Press was established in Trivandrum in 1834⁶³. It was in 1851 that Eshwara Pillai started his Keralavilasam Press in Trivandrum under the patronage of Maharajah Avittam Thirunal. The Vidyavilasam Press at Calicut was

⁶³ K. C' Chacko, *op. cit.*, p.100.

established in 1859, followed by the establishment of St. Thomas Press in Cochin in 1863.⁶⁴

Maliammavu Kunjuvareed and S. T. Reddiar introduced new methods in Malayalam printing. The Kerala Kalapadhrumam Press of Trichur of the former converted the publication of books into an industry. Afterwards this press was purchased by Yogakshemam Company and became the Mangalodayam Press. The Bharathavilasam Press founded by Maliammavu Kunjuvareed in 1903 also is worthy of mention. The Malayal Manorama Press established by Kandathil Varghese Mapillai in 1888 marked the beginning of a new era in the history of publication and journalism in Malayalm. as the history of journalism is closely linked with the history of the printing presses in Kerala, and since Christians dominated the latter field, they also were the pioneers in the former. In June 1847 the first issue of the monthly 'Rajyasamacharm' the first Malayalam newspaper, containing 16 pages in the demi octavo size was published from Illikunnu near Tellichery. The paper was devoted to religious advice. The editor and publisher and price were not mentioned. It was Dr. Miller who edited the paper under the Basel Mission chief Dr. Gundert. The same team started the publication of 'Paschimodhayam', another Malayalam monthly, identical with the first in every thing but contents in the October of 1847. It carried secular articles, short stories, scientific and historical notes and general information. A copy was priced at two paise. Both these papers were mimeographed from handwriting using a Kallachu. Dr. Gundert showed great religious toleration, broad-mindedness and remarkable scholarship through the papers. This father of Malayalam journalism gave a healthy outlook by combining from the beginning scholarship with Christian ideals. The next paper in Malayalm, also

⁶⁴ John Pallisery, "Thomas Christian and Journalism" in St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedia, *op.cit.*, p.167.

a monthly, published from the C.M.S Press Kottayam in demi octavo size using fourteen point type face was the *Jnana Nikshepam* which appeared for the first time in Nov. 1848. The first issues of *Jnana Nikshepam* were discovered only very recently. These beautifully printed rare issues are today kept at the Malayalam months of Virschikam. the co-table of contents given in the first page are as follow.;

Preface, News Items, Man, Language, Script, The Shape of Earth, Planets, Azhcha Vattomgal. (All from the Malayalm language.)

In giving the date, the Christian year is combined with the malayalam month. Issues are to be seen today upto the Meenam of 1856. On the first page of every issue there was also a sloka or four lines of poetry ending with the idea that education is the greatest wealth of all. The preface to the first issue promises in the issues to follow information, both useful first issue promises in the issues to follow information, both useful and interesting and foreign news, news about the life style of different people,⁶⁵ items on birds, animals, plants, the Travancore State, the Government Regulations etc. The publication of a monthly Calendar and the proper numbering of the pages and the items of the contents were remarkable features of this third Malayalam paper⁶⁶.

The fourth Malayalam newspaper *The Vidyasangraham* monthly published by the C.M.S. College Kottayam began in 1864. It contained many weighty articles by Rev. George Matheus. The *Paschima Tharaka* began in 1865 from Cochin also had an English Edition entitled *The Western Star Keralam* began its publication from Cochin in 1866. *Sandistavadi* began by W.H. Moor, published from the C.M.S. Press had to be discontinued because of the opposition of the Government. *Kerala Pathaka* (From 1870, Cochin).

⁶⁶ .John Pallissery, *op. cit.*, p.168.

Keralopakari (From 1874) and other papers began in this era were all organs of some religious group or other and were generally highly critical of other faiths and beliefs. Although the language of all these papers was simple Malayalam the articles generally contained many religious and technical words from many foreign languages. Hence it was often necessary to know Latin, Syriac and other languages in addition to the peculiar jargon of each particular religious group.

While all the above papers were sponsored by Protestant group. *Sathyanada Kahalam*, 1875, was a Catholic paper⁶⁷. This fortnightly was printed at the Archbishop's Press, koonammavu. After three years its publication was shifted to Verapoly from where it was again shifted to the I. S. Press, Ernakulam when its name was shortened to *Sathya Nadam* and it was converted into a weekly. It was edited by Fr. Louis of Manjuammal Monastery, although the name that appeared on the paper was that of Kandidus. In the beginning T.J. Pylee and afterwards T.C. Varkey directed the fortunes of the paper. The role that has been played by this periodical in the service of the Catholic community of Kerala is unrivalled. The first issue contained articles entitled *To the Readers, Editor, Sathyanada Kahalam, Rome, Wonder of the age, Foreign News, Internal News*, and puzzles. *Sathya Nadam* is probably the only early paper that continues to this day without many changes. Today *Sathya Nadam* is being published as the Sunday edition of the Catholic daily *Kerala Times* begun in 1957. A few more papers appeared in Malayalam before the advent of the oldest Malayalmdaily on the 15th of April 1887. Some of these paper were Malayala Mitram (Kottayam 1878), Kerala Deepam (Cochin 1878), Kerala Chandrika (Trivandrum 1879), Vidhiyavilasini (Trivandrum 1881). Kandathil Varghese Mapila was the editor of Kerala Mitram which was owned by a Gujarati

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.8.

Merchant Devaji Bhomaji and was the first Malayalam periodical not to be specifically interested in any religious group. Kerala Patrika (Calicut 1884), Malayali (Trivandrum 1887) Kathavahini (Trivandrum 1887), and Kerala Sanjari (Calicut 1887) followed. Among the important Christian papers of today the most ancient is *Deepika* which was begun as *Nazrani Deepika*. It was begun due to the efforts of Nidirikal Mani Kathanar,⁶⁸ Among its great editors were the great journalists T.J. Pylce, Fr. Simon, C.T. Bernard, Kummanam Govinda Pillai, Thengummuttil Verghese Mappilai, V. A. Pascal, L.C. Issac, Fr. Anthony, and K.M Joseph.

The aims of *Deepika*, as mentioned in its publication notice, were to publish from time to time methods which will lead to the increase of education, culture, physical welfare and to the acquisition of wealth and fame. It also aimed to make all interested in these values and to remove all obstacles and inform about all future dangers and remedies for the same. It especially wanted to cure the defects in the Nazrani (Christian) community, by discussing these in the paper and by attracting this community to the high standards of the people of other lands, communities and religions and to teach the Christians their own history. The *Deepika*, in addition to its children's weekly publishes many books of Christian importance.

The story of *Deepika* is a story of courageous and unselfish service to the Christian Community which has often necessitated the neglect of popularity, circulation, and material advantages. At its beginning in 1887 *Deepika* was a fortnight. It became a weekly in 1899, a biweekly in 1912, a triweekly in 1922 and a daily in 1927. In 1939 its publication was shifted from the St. Joseph's Press, Mannanam to Kottayam. *Deepika* played an important role in the agitations connected with Malyalali, Equal Citizenship Claim, Nivarthana Prasthanam, Struggle for representative Government,

⁶⁸ John Kachimattom, *op.cit.*, p.133.

Struggle for Independence, Liberation Struggle, Education Struggle and the struggle for Land for the Landless. Deepika believes in journalism with – conscience and in fighting against violence and injustice, in order to bring about the welfare of the citizens of India.⁶⁹

Malayalm Manorama, the 25th paper in Malayalam had created history in the field of Indian journalism ever since its appearance in 1890. Four more papers had appeared between the publication of Deepika in 1887 and the *Malayala Manorama* in 1890 including *Vidhya Vinodhini* (Trichur 1889), *Kerala Nandini* (Trichur 1889), *Almopakari* (Mangalore 1889). Manorama has history of independent and risky journalism in the economic, political, social and cultural fields.⁷⁰

Kandathil Varghese Mapila, Mamen Mapila, and K.M. Cherian are the three representatives of the first generations which kept the torch of Manorama burning. The paper was founded by Varghese Mapila, made popular among the people of Kerala by Mamen Mapila and made an all India National Institution by his sons, K.M Cherian, and K.M Mathew. The Malayala Manorama company was established on 18th February 1889 and the first issue came out on the 22nd of March 1890. In 1901 it became a biweekly, in 1918 a triweekly and in 1928 a daily. The publication of the paper was forbidden by the Government on the 9th of September 1938 and publication started again only after India attained independence in 1947.⁷¹ Another edition of the paper began to appear from Calicut on the 1st of December 1996. The newspaper also publishes many books in addition to a weekly, a children's paper and a year book. Although being published from the small state of Kerala the Malayala Manorama has become India's foremost house of language publications.

⁶⁹ Thomas Ayakara, *Indian Christian Directory*, Kottayam, 2000, p.91.

⁷⁰ Varghese Kalathil, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

In addition to these two great Christian dailies there are a few more Christian dailies like the Malabar Mail (1836) The Thozilali (1954) and the Kerala Times (which has already been mentioned). There are scores of Malyalam periodicals, representing the different communities, among which the Satiyadeepam (weekly) of Ernakulam is worthy of a special mention.

There is a great future for Christian Journalism and Journalists if the vast resources in men and materials at the disposal of the Malabar Christian community are judiciously utilized taking into consideration the changed situation in the country today.

(2) The Health and Social Welfare Activities of SMC

According to World Health Organization "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity". The attitude and work of Christ towards those who ever suffer are of extraordinary clarity. Christ demonstrated his utmost expression of the realization of the perfect love by his service to those who suffer in body and in spirit. Accordingly Jesus went about the whole of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the God, and curing every kind of disease and infirmity..., and they brought him all those who were in affliction, distressed with pain and sickness of every sort... and he healed them.⁷² "Large crowds came to him bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the dumb, and many other sick people, whom they place at Jesus' feet, and he healed them"⁷³. Christ, the healer of both body and soul entrusted his church the same task, and he called the twelve apostles to him, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases, sending them out to proclaim the kingdom of God; and to heal the sick⁷⁴.

For centuries in different parts of the world the church has performed and performs a supportive role in the health and social service field and now she is more aware of this role than ever before. In our times social and health services have witnessed an increasing development and various health policies are now amongst the pre-eminent concerns of those responsible for the public good.

Health Service

An active contribution to the betterment of health in the society is one of the important social necessities. With regard to the presence of the church

⁷² *The Holy Bible*, Mathew 4/23-24.

⁷³ *The Holy Bible*, Mathew 15/30

⁷⁴ *The Holy Bible*, Luke 9/1-2; Mark -16/15-18

in the work of health policy and care one can, in general, make reference to the apologetic value of the charitable activity of the church, the historical fact of the church's solicitude for the suffering and the attitude of the church in our times. A great deal of service has been accomplished by the church in her medical mission. The centuries old caring activity of the church and the decisive contribution made to the progress and development of health care by various churches is well known.

Until a few decades ago, the Syro-Malabar church limited its efforts to collaborate with governmental health and community developmental services and the rural community of the area was greatly benefited by that. But in the last fifty years or so modernization has crept in and the society faced with one aspect of village change and upheaval, namely migration and urbanization, overcrowding in the cities has caused serious health hazards. The ever-increasing number of the sick requiring attention and the widening variety of service which they need make it necessary for the church to examine her role in this field and to determine whether she can take concrete initiatives to care for the sick.

Though the SMC made progress in many direction since 1887, a mission hospital remained a dream. In Trichur Diocese Bishop Dr.Vazhappilly seriously pondered over this question. But the idea could not materialize till the establishment of a Jubilee Mission Hospital in 1952.⁷⁵ With the increase in the number of patient's new constructions were soon undertaken for the hospital. During the last 50 years of its existence every year new extensions and equipments have been added. At present it is a general hospital with 600 beds, well equipped with an up-to-date X-ray plant and a laboratory rendering sufficient facilities for all ordinary diagnostic work. In the hospital nearly 1.65 lakhs babies were born till 2002. A school of

⁷⁵ *Ecclesiastical Calender*, Thrissur Diocese, 1960, P.30.

Nursing is also attached to the hospital and the students have brought laurels by their outstanding performance in the Nursing examinations conducted by the State Board and they work as nurses in different parts of the world. They play a much wider and comprehensive role towards the maintenance and promotion of health. Jubilee Mission Hospital started as a dispensary in 1951, progressed by leaps and bounds to the standard of a highly beneficial hospital which serves thousands of people of the district⁷⁶. A lot of poor patients were given free treatment here. The people feel deeply grateful to the church for having created a splendid hospital in the Trichur and thus having expanded the facilities of sound medical aid.

The Damien leprosy hospital at Mulayam in Trichur was started in 1953. It was established as an asylum which later developed into a hospital and rehabilitation center for the leprosy patients. Msgr. Paul Chittilappilly, the Vicar general of the Trichur diocese, was deeply moved by the deplorable conditions of the lepers and he took interest and initiative in establishing the Damien Institute for neglected lepers. Nearly 50 years ago when Msgr. Chittilappilly entered the field of leprosy relief work the aversion towards the disease and the fear of its contagious nature were high among the people. The social stigma were so acute that the patients were not even looked upon as human beings. Trichur town wanted to get rid of these patients in order to save the healthy from this dreaded contagion. The patients were resented such methods. They thought in more human terms. Msgr. Paul Chittilappilly readily took the leadership of this group and the Damien Institute came into existence⁷⁷. Kindness to all, charity to the needy, a sympathizing hand to the suffering and the dying⁷⁸ – these words embody the working principles of the

⁷⁶ Joseph Pettah, ed., *Thrissur Diocese Jubilee Souvenir*, 1963, p.82.

⁷⁷ Jose Manchery 'Reflection on the founder' in *Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, Mannuthy, Thrissur, 1986.

⁷⁸ Joseph Pettah, *op.cit.*, p.85.

Damien institute. Msgr. Paul, who can be rightly called 'Kerala Damien' lived and worked with the lepers and attended to their comforts.

The services of the Damien institute are rendered under the following departments. (a) The in-patient department has 195 beds sanctioned by the state Government with a small grant-in-all. Free food and treatment are given to all and free medicines to the poor patients. Physiotherapy and plastic surgery and occupational therapy play an important role. Mental and moral uplift of the patients are also attended to. (b) Out patient department is intended for ordinary types of leprosy in the initial stage. Many are there taking advantage of the institute, coming from the different districts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu states. On the average, the number of leprosy outpatients attending the institute once a month, comes to more or less one thousand. (c) Extension service, people of these parts, suspecting of leprosy, are too shy to appear in public. Rather than letting them develop the disease, they are searched for, and given timely help to control and to get rid of the disease. A systematic and extensive programme is conducted, it consists of "Survey, education and treatment". This programme was started in 1961. Health visitors – mostly sisters – are sent out in batches of two each with medicines, vitamins and nutritious food. The bulk of the expenditure of this scheme is met by the Central Government. There are now 18 subsidiary clinics managed by the institute⁷⁹. The Damien Institute is thus serving the suffering humanity and rendering itself a source of solace and comfort to the forsaken and forlorn.

The Amala Cancer Hospital Research Center started in 1978 by CMI Fathers in Amalanagar, Trichur is a specialized Medical center to the service of the sick, especially the unfortunate cancer patients in Kerala⁸⁰, Amala has

⁷⁹ *Annual Report*, Trichur Diocese, 1989.

⁸⁰ *Amala Cancer Hospital, Magazine*, Trichur, 1983, p.1.

gained with a short period the position of a household name in Trichur district. It has already acquired the position of premier institution of the southern most state of this vast country. Patients from the neighboring states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have also come here for treatment to this institution which is slowly becoming a beacon of hope and solace of hundreds of cancer victims. In a state like Kerala where, according to the latest statistics, one out of every five hundred of the population suffers from cancer. Every efforts to educate the public on cancer and its curability, periodical screening of the people for detection, training of medical and paramedical personnel in the discipline, epidemiological surveys, cancer registry, basic cancer research in relation to peculiar problems in Kerala and neighboring states are carried out by this institution⁸¹. Ever since the inauguration of the hospital the management has at present a bed strength of 250. The hospital is thus now offering to cancer patients all the different types of medical treatment that are available in many standard cancer center viz. cancer surgery, chemotherapy, Brach therapy and radiation therapy. The diagnostic and research laboratories provide prompt and accurate reports. An Ayurvedic hospital and research unit was started from early 1982 attached to the Amala Hospital⁸².

Besides the above mentioned famous hospitals, there are so many other hospitals in different parts of Kearala under the church management now. In Trichur itself there are 27 hospital and 41 dispensaries making a total of 68 Medical institutions under Syro-Malabar catholic management and various health care schemes were attached to these institutions⁸³. Among these about 40% are owned and managed by the diocese and about 60%, by the religious congregations of men and women. The extension services of these medical

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.8.

Thrissur Diocesan Directory, 1990; *Irinjalakuda Diocesan Directory*, 1991.

institutions include medical camps, health education, diseases control programme, mobile clinics etc.

The health care societies were founded at the diocesan levels with the purpose of caring for the poor and neglected patients – especially those in the civil hospitals – irrespective of cast and creed. One priest, two sisters and two laymen are fully engaged in this apostolate in each center. They help the patients by rendering financial, spiritual and physical care, whatever necessary. The society also has blood donors forum and promotes eye-donations. The civil authorities ask the help of the society when accidents and calamities occur⁸⁴.

The investment of the church in the medical sector is a recent phenomenon. Care for the sick is an integral part of the mission of the church. A great attempt at co-ordination of the field of health care and health involving the universal church is also in progress. In 1941, there were in kerala only four catholic hospitals and 15 dispensaries, and in Thrissur nil⁸⁵. Among the various communities in Kerala the Christians were the first to enter the field with the mission of nursing and healing the sick and relieving human suffering. The hospitals run by the Government can not be themselves cope with the task of giving medical aid to thousands who are in need of it.

The Medical institutions owned by the Catholics compare favorably with those run by the Government in regard to equipment, efficiency and quantum and quality of service. But these catholic institutions are to be judged not so much by the number and variety of cases treated but by the spirit of charity, dedication and self sacrifice that inspire them.

⁸⁴ *Annual report*, Thrissur Diocese, 1989.

⁸⁵ *Ecclesiastical calender*, Thrissur Diocese, 1945, p.4.

Institution	1887	1896	1923	1944	1970	1987	1987	2003
	Bishop Medlycott (Erection of	Bishop Menachery (Division of Vicariate)	Bishop Vazhapilly (Elevation of Diocese)	Bishop Alapat	Bishop Kundukkulam	Trichur and Irinjalakuda Dioceses	District Total	Trichur and Irinjalakuda Diocese
Hospitals	-	-	-	-	5	26	90	27
Dispensaries	-	-	-	-	10	41	103	42

The Role of St.Thomas Christians in the Social Service

Christ, according to Bible was born in a cattle – shed and the Gospel was preached first among the poor. Paradoxically gospel was accepted in Kerla by the high caste Hindus who converted to Christianity in 1st C.A.D. and thus SMC was born in the upper strata of Kerala society. Thus from the very beginning St:Thomas Christians began to enjoy the status of high caste Hindus. Through a process of Sanskritization⁸⁶ i.e., by adopting and adapting the customs and practices ~~one~~ of the twice born (*dvija*), they acquired the social status of high castet Hindus. Through out its history many of their customs connected with baptism, marriage and death, were similar to those of the Hindus.⁸⁷ Their high social position were reinforced with the granting of privileges by the local kings. The Christian community in Kerala attained a position of importance at an early period is clear from the previlages specified in the copper plate grants given to them by Kings Vira Raghava Chakravarti and Sthanu Ravi Gupta.⁸⁸ The spontaneous adaptation of the St.Thomas

⁸⁶ M.N. Srinivas, *Social Changes in Modern India*, Berkeley, 1969, pp. 40ff.

⁸⁷ Jose Kuriedath, *op.cit.*,p.5.

⁸⁸ C. Achyuta Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, Trivandrum, 1995, p.281.

Christians community to its cultural environment is evident in its socio-political life.⁸⁹

Even when several castes who were at the apex of the social ladder fell down, consequent upon the disintegration of the caste system, St.Thomas Christians still enjoy the same status in the modern society, mainly through their educational and economic superiority.⁹⁰

It is not correct to think that St.Thomas Christian were sitting lazy at the apex of the social system enjoying the privileges and positions. On the other hand they have been actively engaging in the social reformation and social service for centuries.

Social Reformation

Earlier times, the Malabar society was not based on principles of social justice and equality. The high castes enjoyed several immunities and privileges. Each main caste has a more or less well defined status in caste hierarchy system, though among some of the sub-castes the question of precedence is often in dispute.⁹¹ Inter marriage, inter-messing and pollution by touch or approach are the tests by which caste status is determined. The backward communities were subjected to several social reform movements like Sree Narayana Movement by Sree Narayana Guru, Chattambi Swamikal, the movement by Ayyankali, Yogakshema Sabha, Nair Service Society, western education etc. which aimed at the modernization of Kerala. These

⁸⁹ Andrews Thazhath, *op.cit.*, p.23.

According to authors like Paul Thenayam, and Church Fathers like cardinal Parekkattil this adaptation was only partial. According to them St.Thomas Christians did not blindly followed Hindu practices. On the contrary they followed these by adapting and giving a Christian meaning. See: Paul Thenayan, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

⁹⁰ In educational and economic position, the St.Thomas Christians are much better off than most other socio-religions groups, Jose Kuriendath , *op.cit.*, p. 96. St.Thomas Christians economic position is explained in the next chapter.

⁹¹ Achuta Menon. *op.cit.*, p.250.

movements played an important part in ushering a new social order in Kerala. The obsolete customs prevailing among various castes and communities were steadily given up and the people developed a modern and progressive social set up. The joint family, the system of inheritance, the institution of marriage, the observance of child marriage, polygamy and polyandry, the status of women – all these were affected by the social change. The underprivileged sections of society who had been subjected to social disabilities over the centuries became increasingly conscious of their rights as well as their strength in society⁹².

SMC was also influenced by the winds of change blowing across the social scene in Kerala. On the pattern of the community organizations of the Hindus, Christian organizations too sprang up. In 1905 St. Thomas Christians formed the Catholic Mahajana Sabha and in 1911 the Christian Mahajana Sabha⁹³. These organizations took up with the Governments in Travancore and Cochin such issues of concern to the community as child marriage, dowry and the lack of a clearly defined law of inheritance etc. The Christian succession Act 11, of 1916 was passed in Travancore to codify and amend the laws relating to the law of inheritance among Christians. An Act on similar lines was passed in Cochin too in 1921⁹⁴.

Again, it is an irrefutable fact that it was the western education introduced by the Christian missionaries that gave an incentive to the launching of movements for social reformation in the Hindu fold.⁹⁵ The educated Indians of all communities are keen to eradicate social evils. The

⁹² Achuta Menon. *op.cit.*, p.250.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁹⁵ George Menacherry ed, *op.cit.*, p.170.

church co-ordinated and organized these group under their leadership for the social transformation as a part of their christinizing the society.

In the political as well as in the religious sphere an awareness of the obligation to serve society, particularly those sections of society that are victims of ignorance, ill health, poverty and social injustices, became the motive force behind all social action of the church. The church realized that as an institution existing in the world can not live isolated from or in opposition of the society in which social service is a permanent necessity, for the Christians, social service is not a matter of policy but a moral obligation arising from their faith. It is the dynamic expression of charity which is love of one's neighbor as a brother. Viewed in that light, service rendered to those who are burdened with miseries and hardships becomes the touch stone of Christian faith.

As regards Christians in Kerala, charity in one form or another, however feeble in its expression, has always been a distinguishing characteristic of their faith. In the early stages it was conceived solely as alms giving to the poor and the needy⁹⁶. This practice continues even today. It is interesting to note that in most parts of Kerala a day of the week, usually Saturday is set apart as the day for almsgiving. Domestic event like wedding, funerals and religious feasts like Christmas, Good Friday and Easter have been and still are occasions for giving alms and food to the poor on a liberal scale. This was social service in its very pristine and elementary forms⁹⁷.

This simple form of self-expression in charity was of an individual nature, marking an urge for service on person to person level. There was in it very little of a conscious commitment to social service as we understand it today. The very term social service implies service rendered to our fellow

⁹⁶ George Menacherry (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.170.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.170

beings, taken in groups big or small, or to society as a whole. It also implies an awareness of some evil injustice or disability affecting society and an organized attempt to remedy it. Now, the most common evils that afflict the lower grades of society are illiteracy, ill-health, poverty exploitation of the upper class and social backwardness. The concept of social service as awareness for remedying these ills dawned upon Kerala Christians only as late as the sixteenth century.⁹⁸ It was the result of the impact of western ideas and the example of European missionaries. Substantial and enduring gains in the field of the uplift of the depressed classes were achieved by the missionaries who came to Kerala. Under the impetus of their influences the church in Kerala turned its attention first to the eradication of illiteracy and social backwardness.

The establishment of education in 20th Century among all section of people paved the way for the awakening of a deeper social consciousness among the poor sections Christians of Kerala. The church also realized that social amelioration could not be effectively carried out through stray act of charity alone. The rapid increase of population, the impact of industrialization and the influx of village folk to urban area in search of jobs, the growth of slums in cities etc. brought to the forefront several new social problems which had to be tackled in an organized manner⁹⁹.

In the last hundred years the church has grown ever more conscious of her social responsibilities. But in Kerala church, the signs of social development can be seen only during the recent decades when it became free from the ecclesial colonialism. To begin with, the churches in Kerala turned their attention to the task of bringing up orphans and succoring sick, aged and destitute men and women. Orphanages and aged homes have been steadily growing during this period. For example when we take a diocese, Trichur, in

⁹⁸ George Menacherry (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.170.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.170.

1944 there were only three orphanages and two aged homes and the number was raised to 21 and 27 in 1961. At present there are 52 orphanages and 15 aged homes¹⁰⁰. The orphans are not merely sheltered and fed but are given general education and training in some handicrafts or trade which would help them earn an honest livelihood. Most of the orphans, thus brought up, are helped to find jobs, to enter wedlock and lead happy married lives.

St.Mary's Orphanage, in Trichur started on March 19, 1911 as a small home for 5 destitute orphans, was the first institution of its kind in the diocese of Trichur. What was once started with only 5 boys, has increased to more than a hundred and twenty seven, in the course of these years.¹⁰¹

The living standard of the boys has risen for higher than it was at the start; more modern amenities of life are provided for secondary education for all, collegiate course according to individual merit, technical and professional studies to those who prefer them; and at the same time, ample opportunities are offered to those who can cultivate aesthetic and artistic tastes.

St. Ann's charitable institution which started in 1920 in Trichur for the orphan girls was the second venture of the Church in the field of social service.¹⁰² Started with a few orphan girls, it has grown to be a superb institution with several sections like home for the aged, home for the handicapped, rescue home for the women between 18 to 50 with children born outside wedlock, home consists of children studying in schools, home consists of girls studying in colleges and polytechnics and those who are receiving training in teaching, nursing, co-operation, type writing, agriculture etc. The various buildings of this institute now provide refuge and shelter to

¹⁰⁰ *Trichur Diocesan Directory*, 1990, P.157; *Irinjalakuda Diocesan Directory*, 1991, p.141.

¹⁰¹ Joseph Pettah, *op.cit.*, p.83.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p.81.

about 300 inmates¹⁰³. The number of destitute, orphans and elders who seek the protection of the institute goes on increasing day by day.

Till lately church was directing its efforts mainly towards the rehabilitation of the victims of social ills and the mitigation of human suffering. But in the decades immediately following the second world war it has realized that social problem demanded a more positive approach. It dawned upon political as well as religious leaders that the clue to stable social well-being lay in socio-economic development. Unemployment and poverty were the breeding ground for most of the social evils and it became clear that if schemes could be implemented to provide work for idle hands and to open a source of income for the poor families, it would usher in a phase of steady social progress. In the celebrated encyclical 'Mater et Magistrate' issued on May 15, 1961 Pope John called the attention of the world to the depressed condition of the agricultural population and the imbalance between the various economic sections and emphasized the urgency of affecting a gradual and harmonious development of the economic system, through social security programmes and other suitable steps.¹⁰⁴ Pope Paul followed up the declaration that 'development is another name for peace'. In Kerala the upsurge of communist forces drove home to the leaders of the church the fact that mere relieving of human misery was not enough, but a constructive orientation must be given to social service programmes so as to afford the means of economic development to the poorer section of society. So the church came forward with variety of programmes for helping the poor. In this matter, the emergence of communism and its activities in Kerala are an eye opener to the church. Since the communists championed cause of the poor, the poor sections of Christians began to accept the communist leadership.

¹⁰³ *Trichur Diocesan Directory*, 1990, p.116.

¹⁰⁴ Conrad De Vito. *The Second Vatican Council at a Glance*, Allahabad, 1966, p.162.

Following their examples the church started programmes for championing the cause of the poor. All parishes and religious houses are exhorted to set aside a good percentage of their annual income for helping the poor. It was in November 25, 1957 the Catholic Labour Association was formed in Trichur Diocese by the church in order to organize the labour. The new trend of the churches in social action attracted the attention of foreign charitable agencies like Caritas, CRS, Missio, Misserior, government and also the local people. They were prepared to finance the socio-economic development scheme with liberal loans, grants and donations. Social Service Societies which were set up in large numbers to initiate and implement development projects, were registered under the Societies Act. The beneficiaries of the church include individuals of all castes and creeds.¹⁰⁵

In order to co-ordinate and function the social activities a 'Social Welfare Board' and 'social action forum' is constituted in all the dioceses of Kerala. Aiming at the total development of the people, especially the downtrodden, it works in three main realms uplifting the villages, conscientising the literate and illiterate on social justice and helping the poor with shelter.¹⁰⁶

The problem of housing the poor in Kerala poses a serious challenge to Christian Charity. The church is well aware of this pressing need and have given priority to it. So the main objective of the social action was providing a small house for those poor homeless brethren in a phased manner. In the last decade hundreds of families are helped for repair and construction of houses¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁵ *Annual Report of Catholic Labour Association, Trichur, 2002.*

¹⁰⁶ *Annual Report of Irinjalakuda Diocese, Social Action Forum, Irinjalakuda, 1984.*

¹⁰⁷ *Annual Report, Trichur Diocese, 1989.*

There are at present 90 social centers in Trichur where the church is engaged in various social service activities. The social activities of the church include various projects and programmes like community health project, development motivation leadership training programme, Home mission in hill areas, housing scheme, emergency relief, children's welfare scheme, employment and government assistance information bureau, slum service, sanitation programme, job oriented formation career guidance centres etc.¹⁰⁸.

Community health projects aimed at the development of the people of canal base where people live in an unhygienic condition. House visit, free distribution of necessary medicines, health talks especially on preventive methods, monthly clinic etc. changed the living situation to a certain extent. Through development motivation and leadership training programme more people were given encouragement to participate in voluntary social works. Special training has been imparted so as to involve them in the voluntary social activities. Since a small eastern part of the Irinjalakuda diocese is in hilly area new programmes were started for the development of the people here¹⁰⁹.

Under the 'save a family plan' founded in 1965 in Kerala by the church thousands of poor families are given monthly financial assistance. The slum service society is doing wonderful services among the slum dwellers. Training in handicrafts, scholarships for education of the poor and clever students, training for physically handicapped are given. Catholic relief services (CRS) are vigorous in the mother and child welfare. Industrial schools and industrial training centers prepare the children for trades. The church in Trichur Diocese runs 42 technical institutes in order to help the youth. For the mentally retarded children and defectives there are 8 homes in

¹⁰⁸ *Annual report of Thrissur and Irinjalakuda Dioceses, Social Action Forum, 1984-1992.*

¹⁰⁹ *Annual Report Irinjalakuda Social Action Forum, Irinjalakuda, 1984.p.4.*

Thrissur. The Thrissur diocese has one separate school for deaf and dumb and another for blind¹¹⁰.

The society of St. Vincent de Paul, an international lay catholic organization dedicated to the practice of Christian charity in the social milieu has units almost in every parishes of the church. The first unit of the society founded in Thrissur Diocese was in the parish of Velloor in 1903¹¹¹. The members engage themselves in various charitable activities like visiting the poor and the sick in their homes every week, visiting prisons, adopting whole families for weekly relief, setting disputes through mediation, teaching in Sunday schools, thatching huts, building and donating houses to the homeless etc. Their services are not only confined to the Christians, but to all the poor sections of the society.

The labour problems are so acute in Kerala. Strikes in the labour field is a common phenomenon. The trade union leaders often exploit the workers. The Catholic Labour Association (CLA) founded in 1957 in Kerala is aiming at the material and moral betterment of the workers. The various parish units of CLA are very active now in working for the material and spiritual propross of the labourers¹¹².

The various self employment programmes for the youth started under the social action forum and the eye donation progamme recently started deserve special mention. The number of the blind people are estimated about one lakh in Kerala. With the noble eye donation campaign of the social action forums they could provide eye sight to a lot of our blind brotheren¹¹³.

¹¹⁰ *Thrissur Diocesan Directory*, 1990, p.157.

¹¹¹ Joseph Pettah, *op.cit.*, p.54.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.56.

¹¹³ *Annual Report Diocese of Irinjalakuda, Social Action Forum, Ernakulam*, 1991, p.9.

The social action units of the parishes and the religious congregations whole heartedly co-operate and actively participate with the numerous programmes of the dioceses and the government schemes benefiting all sections of people. About 7% of the priests and brothers and 10% of the nuns of Kerala are fully engaged in social service activities¹¹⁴. Thus the church tries to see and respect a brother in every man by performing its paramount duty in the field of charity and social welfare. The generosity of the rich people of the community and also other communities and the co-operation of different sections of people encourages and enable the church authorities to carry out the social action programmes to a certain extent. The growing population rate of Kerala, unemployment, industrial and agricultural problems, non-availability of grants from the government are problems of the church's social service activities also.

¹¹⁴ *Religious from Kerala, A Statistical Presentation*, 1986.

TABLE 7

Syro-Malabar Catholic Social Institutions in Trichur District*

Institutions	1887	1896	1923	1944	1970	1987	1997
	Bishop Medlycott (Erection of Vicariate)	Bishop Menachery (Division of Vicariate)	Bishop Vazha-pilly (Elevation of Diocese)	Bishop Alappatt	Bishop Kundukulam	Thrissur and Irinjalkuda Dioceses	Thrissur and Ininjalkuda Diocese
Industrial Schools	-	-	-	8	8	13	22
Technical Institutions	-	-	-	-	-	28	36
Deaf and dumb school	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
Orphanages	-	-	2	3	21	47	52
Creches	-	-	-	3	3	12	13
Homes for the aged	-	-	-	2	7	14	15
Homes for the defectives	-	-	-	-	-	9	11
Training center for mentally retarded	-	-	-	-	-	2	4
Rehabilitation center for women	-	-	-	-	-	3	5
Social centers	-	-	-	-	-	90	95

3. Cultural Contributions of Indian Church

Religion has played a very important role in Indian society. It was not only the base of the Indian Hindu Society even after the rule of Islam for more than seven hundred years it was still the regulation of the Indian life. Idolatory, caste system and religious bigotry had become so rigid. Even the reformist religions started by Buddha as Buddhism and by Jaina, as Jainism in the 3rd century B.C. could not wipe away the religious taboos of the Indian society.

The immigrations of different foreign groups to India especially to Kerala and their settlement here paved the way for a desirable fusion of different cultures. Since persuasive sociological trends do not follow the principle of one-way traffic, the immigrants who settled in India had themselves to undergo radical changes in their ways of life, habits, customs and manners.

Due to certain historical reasons one main aspect of Kerala life and history is worth mentioning here. Kerala appears to have had the largest and longest contacts with the rest of the world, dating back to the millennium preceding the Christian era. There were important trading centres along the Kerala coast. viz. Kollam, Cochin, Crangannore, Kadalundi, Kozhikode and Kannur. Egypt, Asia Minor, the Assyrian and Babylonian empires at the height of their power, the Greeks, the Romans, the Chinese all maritime nations, had trade relations with Kerala long before the Christian era. During the early centuries of the Christian era, trade relations existed with the Malayan Peninsula, the Phillipines, Jawa and Sumatra. Ships from these countries of the East and the West Laden with cargo, sailed into the Kerala waters to return rich with the special products of the land. Traders from Arabia and elsewhere also came in large numbers. The Kerala kings in particular, the Perumals and later the Zamorins, gave them all help and

facilities and even permitted them to settle down here. Classical writers like Pliny, the anonymous author of the *Periplus* and Ptolemy give detailed accounts of the sea-ports through which Kerala kept up her commercial and cultural contacts with foreign countries in the early centuries of the Christian era. The most important of these ports were Muziris (modern Kodungallur), Tyndis, Barace and Nelcynda.

The confluence of religions in Kerala is another aspect which contributed to the Kerala culture. Even in the ancient period Kerala became the meeting ground of all world religions. In addition to the Indian religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism foreign religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam also found here a congenial soil.

Christianity was introduced in Kerala first in 52 A.D. by St. Thomas one of the twelve apostles of Christ who landed in Cranganore in Kerala. The first Muslim mosque in India was also founded in Cranganore, Kerala by Cheraman Perumal in 7th C.A.D. the last chera emperor who converted to Islam. Islam might have been introduced in Kerala by Arab traders who settled down in Cranganore and established a separate colony of their own in a part of the town like the Jews and the Christians. The landing of Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese Navigator which marked the beginning of a new epoch in history of European advent to India was at Kozhikode in Kerala in 1498.

In fact, a great deal of cultural symbiosis has taken place during the two-millennia-long presence of Christianity in India. This process intensified and spread to more regions during the past half a millennium after Vasco da Gama's arrival.

The results of the dissemination of Christian knowledge and outlook have been more visible in certain specific cultural fields which may be briefly touched upon here. Many elements from other cultures and countries have

found their way into today's Indian culture.¹¹⁵ Many Christians and Christian institutions were chiefly instrumental in rediscovering and researching many aspects of Indian culture and propagating these findings here and abroad, which must perhaps be considered as one of the most valuable contributions of Christianity to Indian culture in general, and in particular to Indian religions, art, architecture, history, music, dance, literature, etc.

Analysing Indian Christian cultural contributions, three somewhat distinct major streams may be distinguished: the contributions of the Christians of St. Thomas or the Mar Thoma Nazranies of Kerala from apostolic times spreading over two millennia; of the Latin Catholic Christianity during the last 500 years beginning with the arrival of Vasco Da Gama just before the dawn of the 16th century; and of the Anglican and Protestant Christianity during the last three hundred years commencing chiefly with the arrival of Henry Pluestschau and Bartholomeo Zeiganbalg of the Danish-Halle mission.

Christianity has been as much instrumental in the formation of the modern concept of India as one country and Indian culture as one culture during the latter part of the second millennium as much as Sankara's¹¹⁶ life and work toward the end of the first millennium. As great as the role played by Sanskrit to unify the country is the role played by Western languages like English and literatures from many Western lands which arrived here with Western Christians and Western Christianity. While it would be incorrect to identify the Western trading communities which came to India at different times and from different countries, the fact remains that these were Christian at least in name if not in all their ideals, purposes, and practices. And all these

¹¹⁵ S.C. Raychoudhary, *Social, Cultural and Economic History of India*. New Delhi, 1984, p.126.

¹¹⁶ "Sankarajarya., a Hindu reformer of India, Kerala of 1st millennium A.D". Appan Thampuran, *Cochirajacharithangal*, (Mal.), Trichur, 1927, p.26.

eventually led the spread of Christianity in India. And for Christianity all Indian regions and religions, cultures, peoples, and languages were equally important: whether Aryan or Dravidian, Northern or North-Eastern, tribal or rural or urban, aboriginal or casteless. The vibrant Christian idea of one-world, and a universal outlook is seen to take root in Indian thinking in a real and practical way, proceeding beyond narrow nationalism, fundamentalism, and sectarianism.

In modern times India herself and the world at large 'discovered' the real India and Indian culture chiefly through the efforts of Christian establishments, organisations and persons. The great religions and languages of India; the books, the teachers and leaders of the past; arts, customs and manners, all became more exactly known through the efforts of Christian writers. The research and studies undertaken in connection with the Vedas, the Thirukkural and the other Great Books of the East are just one example of this initiative. The study of the Asoka Pillar inscriptions is another. The excavations and studies connected with the Indus Valley are a third in this category. In modern times the Indians are more religious minded and God fearing. The increase in the number of temples and mosques especially in Kerala are sufficient example for that.

A specific field where the contributions of Christians were most decisive was the field of language studies. The first scientific and modern dictionaries and grammars and in some cases even the alphabets, scripts, and the very fabric of linguistics of a large number of Indian languages and dialects owe their existence to Christians and especially to the Christian missionary scholars¹¹⁷. The vocabularies of Indian languages have greatly profited through contacts with the Church from the earliest times and its personnel speaking Syriac, Portuguese, German, Dutch, French, or English.

¹¹⁷ George Menachery, ed., *op.cit.*, p.85.

In the early stages of the art of printing, the making of vernacular types, and the production of books and periodicals also were largely the fruit of missionary efforts.

Although it would be attempting the impossible, one might still try to list a few names and particulars connected with the various contributions more or less generally attributed to the above. The following is merely a random selection intended just to indicate the range, extent, and scope of the contribution made mostly by missionaries and following their footsteps by many Indian Christians. The first scientific grammars in most Indian languages were the work of Angelo Francis, Hermann Gundert¹¹⁸, N.Garthwaite, Rev. Robert Caldwell, Rev. Joseph Pitt, Robert Drummond, George Mathan, and I.C Chacko with regard to Malayalam;¹¹⁹ Dupuis, Julian Vinson, Rev.G.U. Pope, Clayton, and of course Rev. Robert Caldwell for Tamil; C.P.Brown and C.D.Campbell for Telugu; Rev.Dr. F.Kittel, T.Hodson, H.Spencer, and De.F.Ziegler for Kannada; J.Brigel for Tulu; Denys Bray for Brahui; F.Max Muller and H.H. Wilson for Sanskrit; Edwin Greaves for Hindi; Xavier Maffei for Konkani; Geo P.Taylor and Tisdal for Gujarathi; T.J. Maltby for Oriya; Ernest Trumpp for Sindhi; G.W. Money for Nepali; Thomas Latter for Burmese; Captain H.G.Raverty for Pushto, and so on. Among the pioneer lexicographers to remember are Arnos Padri, Hermann Gundert, Benjamin Bailey, Rev. Rechard Collins (Malayalam); Pailo Paul and Vettom Mani (the Puranas); Rev. M.Winslow, mousset, Dupuis, M.A.Lap, and Rev.Dr.F.Kittel, Reeve, Sanderson, Dr.F.Zeigler, and Rev,J.Bucher (Kannada); Rev.A.Manner (Tulu); monier Williams (Sanskrit); D.C.Phillott, S.W.Fallon and Forbes (Hindustani) ; Xavier Mafferi and S.R. Dalgado(Konkani); J.T.Molesworth and T. Candy (Marathi); William Carey

¹¹⁸ Herman Gundert, *Keralapazhama*, Trivandrum, 1967 (reprint), p.2.

¹¹⁹ Krishna Chaithanya, *A History of Malayalam Literature*, New Delhi, 1971, p.207.

(Bengali), etc.¹²⁰ Similarly a large number of Christians have done yeoman service to all the language areas of India, including the collection of proverbs; and writing of histories of languages, literatures, lands, and peoples. The foregoing list is appended only as a pointer to the range of their contributions.

The knowledge of non-Indian languages and literatures that was gained from Church-related personnel and institutions considerably enriched Indian literature and culture. New ideas and ideals, institutions and establishments, types and styles and genres in literature (e.g., the novel, the travelogue) and government (e.g., modern democratic systems in government at all levels) were introduced to the Indian life by them. The modern sciences, educational patterns, manners and customs, practices relating to medicine, health, hygiene and cleanliness, food habits and dress – all found their way into Indian society and culture and were of then blindly imitated and even irrelevantly copied and propagated.

This may perhaps be the appropriate context to mention also the Church's direct and indirect contribution, as part of its work of evangelisation and education, to the commencement and development of journals and newspapers in India.¹²¹ The effective establishment of Indian journalism was due to the missionaries of Serampore. In 1918 the missionaries began to publish a weekly newspaper in Bengali and English; and following their example Indians took up the profession in earnest. During this period India in general and Bengal in particular experienced a new intellectual atmosphere provided by English education, newspapers, and the active preaching of evangelical Christianity. The nature of the response can best be learnt from the life and work of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the

¹²⁰ *Indian Christian Directory, op.cit.*, p.86.

¹²¹ L. Natarajan. ed., *Glipses of Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1998, p.62.

Brahmo Samaj. When Christians in Kerala started the first printing presses, magazines and journals came to be published from there Basel Mission's Dr.Gundert's *Rajyasamacharam* was the first such effort (June 1847).¹²² *Paschimodayam* followed in October. The Kottayam C.M.S. Press published *Jnana Nikshepam* in 1848. In the world of Indian newspaper publishing, the various records established by the (*Nazrani*) *Deepika* and the Malayala *Manorama* are still unsurpassed as the record achievements of D.C. Kizhakkemuri in book publication. With regard to other languages and regions, too, the Christian contribution to journalism has been outstanding. The various fields of the communication media in general, including the advances in the print and electronic media, such as the introduction and use of printing presses, typewriters, radio programs, slide-projectors, film-projectors, tape-recorders, VCRs, and of late computers and the TV owe a great deal to the Church in India. The far reaching changes in the Indian cultural scene made by these initiatives one way or other are significant.

The Sangeet-Natak fields of modern India owe much to the Church. Church music in Goa, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, etc. has developed its own style which has passed into the common secular life of those parts. Music has also very much developed in connection with retreat centers and the celebration of Christmas, Easter and other festivals. The Anglican, Protestant and Pentecostal denominations have popularised their own music forms in the country which have been widely imitated. Audio cassettes carrying devotional music and songs are being produced by innumerable Christian agencies and groups. There are also a number of 'orchestras' and institutions for music training run by Church related groups.¹²³ The Church has also made popular a large number of musical instruments such as the *Nakaram*(Drum), the Violin

¹²² *Ibid.*,

¹²³ *Scheme of work, Kalasadhan, Trichur. 1972, p.3.*

and Revekka (Viola), the Tamboru (a string instrument like the guitar), the Triangle, the Harmonium, the Piano and above all the Organ. Many types of dances have also been introduced, developed, and promoted by the Church. Performing arts like *Margam Kali*, *Chavittunatakam* and *ParichamuttuKali* are being organised by many Church groups.¹²⁴ The Church has been one of the chief promoters of the modern drama form in the country. The whole cultural life of the North-East is permeated with the Christian presence. The cultural symbiosis that has been in progress in the country between Christianity and other cultures is nowhere quite as noticeable as in the states of Kerala and Tamilnadu. In all these, and in the promotion of all cultural activities in the country – whether religious or secular, Christian or non-Christian – the role of the educational institutions and devotional groups under the aegis of the Church also has been phenomenal.¹²⁵

Account must be taken of the architecture and art objects given birth to by Christianity in India both before and after the coming of European Christianity to India. Malabar churches have an architecture of their own which is fully Indian and at the same time fully Christian, the three –level gabled roofing of Kerala churches, in descending order, over the Sanctum Sanctorum, the Nave, and the Portico have all the beauty, utility, and traditional scientific perfection of Kerala architecture.¹²⁶ The timber roofing often covering an area of thousands of square feet without pillars is a marvel rarely found elsewhere in the country during the period. The three objects in front of the churches, viz., the huge open-air rock obelisk crosses rising from a lotus at the top of an intricately carved multi-stepped pedestal or *balikkallu*, the metal-sheathed flagstaff or *dhwaja-sthamba* (*Kodimaram*) and the rock lamp-stand or *Deepasthamba* are some of the earliest expressions of Indian art

¹²⁴ *Trichur Archdiocesan Annual Report*, 1995.

¹²⁵ *Indian Christian Directory*, p.87.

¹²⁶ Jacob Srampikal. *Indian Christian Directory*, Ernakulam, 2000, p.84.

related to places of worship. These are so Indian and at the same time carrying Christian significance that they could provide some answers to those seeking indigenisation. In fact India's national flower lotus, and the national bird peacock first appear in Keraka art on the rock crosses, even before idols of vedic gods and goddesses appear there. The gold and silver crosses, bronze lamps, *Muthukkudas* or colourful decorated processional umbrellas, wooden sculptures, and above all some of the huge pre Mughul, pre Rajput mural paintings of Kerala churches deserve to be more famous than they actually are.¹²⁷

During the Western periods also we find great advances in architecture and art, often combining elements of Greek, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Norman, Baroque, and Rococo art and architecture in the building of Indian churches, which has also influenced secular building activity, and in some cases even the construction of temples and mosques.¹²⁸ The development of painting and sculpture in modern India is highly indebted to Western examples popularised in India by Christians, missionaries as well as government servants and traders.

What must not be lost sight of is the Church's contribution in the field of education, social and cultural reforms. The eradication of the evils of the caste system has always been one of the top priorities of Christianity in India. Untouchability is very much less in modern India mainly due to the work of the Church and persons and governments influenced by the Church. Education was used to open the horizons of knowledge to all which was the guarded preserve of a few elite until the Church's work of evangelisation and education got well-established. Almost in any part of the country the major credit for the rate of literacy must go to the Church and to Church-influenced

¹²⁷ P. Thomas, *Churches in India*, New Delhi 1965, p.130.

¹²⁸ See H. Sarkar, *Monuments of Kerala*, Ernakulam, 1975, p.105.

institutions. Kerala and West Bengal and certain other regions in today's India lead in literacy and education mainly because these were the earliest and most impressive fields of missionary activity in the country. The importance attached by the Church to women education has been the one major element that has led to the enlightenment of Indian women of all religions, castes and regions in modern times.¹²⁹ The Church has also worked untiringly for the eradication of other injustices to women like Sati, taboo on the use of upper garments by lower caste women, polygamy, widow remarriage, equality of status, divorce, abortion, female infanticide etc.¹³⁰

The new awareness of the importance of even the lowest individual combined with the sense of pride in the country's past, both helped and encouraged by the work of Christians in India, especially during the closing centuries of the millennium, found expression in the literature produced at this time, in music and drama, in the renaissance of Indian art, in the study of science and in the pursuit of organised amusements. In all these activities Indians often followed the foot-steps of the westerners and the missionaries.

In the social and cultural emancipation of Christians the Church has played a key role. The intelligent Christian priests understood the life habits of the Keralites and included festivals in the activities of the Church. The recitation of Hindu scriptures was substituted by the 'Panapattukal'. The missionaries also included 'Chavittunadakam' (an imperfect adaptation of the Kerala dance art 'Kathakali') and substituted Hindu with Christian Themes.¹³¹

¹²⁹ *Annual Reports, Educational Institutions under Catholic Management*, Ernakulam, 2000.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹³¹ *Annual Report*, Kalasadan, Trichur, 2002. p.4.

The establishment of Charitable and educational institutions has been a notable activity of the Church in Kerala¹³². The Church attacked casteism untouchability and feudalism and released modernizing forces which compelled the Hindu orthodox to relax caste and feudal rules.

In the field of publication and particularly of newspaper the Church has played a constructive role. The 'Nasrani' Deepika and 'Malayalam manorama' were started in 1887 and 1890 respectively¹³³.

Church and Electronic Media

Though, television made its powerful presence in India during the second half of the 20th century, the church was hesitant to enter the field. The efforts of the church in electronic media were mainly confined to training personnel and producing programs.

The tremendous impact television has on the minds of viewers has compelled the church to enter the field. The Jeevan TV company founded under the chairmanship of Mar Jacob Thoonkuzhy, the Archbishop of Thrissur, Kerala which was later expanded into an organization incorporating all Episcopal churches of Kerala, is a response of the church to this dire need of time. Jeevan Telecasting Corporation Limited is a Public Limited Company which started Telecast on August.1.2002.¹³⁴ The company was established with a main objective of starting a full fledged TV channel by carrying on the business of producing, acquiring, and telecasting value base programs for entertainment and promoting human values.

Though wonderfully entertaining, profoundly informative and efficiently communicative the medium of television today has sadly corrupted

¹³² The first orphanage in Travancore was started by a native priest at Kainakari, see M.O. Joseph, *Kerala Christianikal* (Malayalam) Cochin, 1972, p.429.

¹³³ A. Balakrishnan Nair, *The Government and Politics of Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1994. p.13.

¹³⁴ *Project report*, Jeevan Telecasting Corporation, Ernakulam, 2002, p.4.

the values of our society. This is because it is the marketing force of modern consumerism that drives this medium forward. Strange it may sound when we state that the depiction of sexual and violent imagery in the TV is only a small face of the corruption of the society subjected to. Such is the power of the 'product advertisement' that grave indeed has become the burden of insatiable desires in the extent even the young ones of every household carry it.

The company, with the support of creative contributions of the good meaning members of Film/TV/press fraternities and good wishes of the common man, plan to combat this evil of materialism with the weapon of Truth, of Love and of Life. However, this will be as in any other Channel, through TV serials, Music videos, Talk shows, sports programs travelogues, Documentaries and even feature films. For example, the news coverage, news analysis and talk shows shall be grounded in Truth – not in sensationalism, controversy or private interests. The dramatic narrative shall proclaim the unfailing power of Love. Our films shall speak of the superiority of forgiveness and suffering above that of other courses of retaliation available against the oppressor.¹³⁵

"Thus we plan to change the palate of an audience tuned to false imagery and pervasive entertainment language".¹³⁶

Communal harmony and peace

The spirit of Christ does not refuse the church to have cordial relationship with other religionists or non-religionists . The internal renewal of the church especially of the last decades of the 20th century called upon the Christians to recognize the signs of times and great efforts are being made for

¹³⁵ *Jeevan T.V. Objectives*, Trichur, 2002, p.1.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*,

the communion of people of all traditions.¹³⁷ In the modern period of communalism, regionalism and terrorism the church remains an example to others by proclaiming the gospel love and peace. Communal riots were not in history of Indian church as happen even today between other religionists in India. The characteristic of the closed church of the last several generations has been given way to the open church. Since the Christians were well established in India they formed an integral part of Indian caste system forming an intermediate level between the higher castes and lower castes. The services of the church is open to all people of India without any discrimination to caste, creed or religion.¹³⁸

The principles of Christ influenced all humanbeings in one way or other. The people of different religions saw in Jesus the ideal Guru-Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Gandhiji etc. were examples. As P.S Majundar once stated, "Socrates for the Greeks, Confucius for the Chinese and Krishna for the Hindus, but Jesus Christ is Guru for all humanity".

Women empowerment

The Christian women of Kerala have many peculiarities in their customs and manners which distinguish them from the other women folk of Kerala. Though the girl children in the Christian families were brought up in more obedience, humility, modesty and discipline than the boys they were given equal opportunities inside and outside the houses. They were given freedom to attain higher education, to participate in the religious activities in the churches and other social organizations along with men.

The initiatives of the women empowerment was taken by the Christian missionaries in Kerala. The Kerala Christians priests followed their examples

¹³⁷ Louis, J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures*, New York, 1980, p.379.

¹³⁸ *Scheme of work*, Catholic Union, Trichur Archdiocese, 2003.

Blessed Chavara Kuriakose Elias (1805-71), a young and dynamic Syro-Malabar catholic priest was one of the greatest socio-religious reformer of the 19th century Kerala.¹³⁹ He perceived education as the only means to reform the Kerala society. The idea of establishing one school attached to each parish church was firstly introduced by him in 1865 when he was Vicar General of Kerala Syrian Catholic. Palli (Church) and Pallikoodam (School attached to Church) were the places where the SMC women freely attended. He founded a religious congregation for men in 1831 and for women in 1866. A women named Eliswa, who became a widow at age of 19 and her daughter Anna and her sister Theresia were the first members of the women congregation.¹⁴⁰ A lot of women joined in the religious congregation later and they started educational institutions throughout Kerala especially for women.

Now a large number of women of the Syro-Malabar Community are working as teachers and nurses. Thus the education given to the women helped them to become responsible citizens of the society. Within the family and outside women were granted personality and individuality of their own with the establishment of education.

Akkama Cheriyan, the woman freedom fighter of Kerala during the 1930s and 1940s popularly known as the Rani Lakshmi Bai of Kerala was a member of SMC. She was a teacher in the SMC school before entering into politics. She was the headmistress of Kanjirapilly St. Mary's School.¹⁴¹ In 1938 she resigned the teacher post and actively participated in politics.¹⁴² She joined in Travancore State Congress and it was she who led the historic procession to the palace of Travancore Maharaja as a protest against the government laws. She was also the leader of the Congress women

¹³⁹ Archival Document, Chavara Cultural Centre, Mananam.

¹⁴⁰ *CMC Directory*, 2000.

¹⁴¹ John Kachimattom. *op.cit.*, p.712.

¹⁴² Accama Cheriyan. 1114 nte Katha (mal)., Kottayam, 1977, p.3.

organization called. "Desasevika Sangam." She was imprisoned two, three times for participating in the political agitations against the government, once in 1942 during the Quit India movement and again in 1946 and in 1947. Heroism as a freedom fighter and an advocate of social justice and opposer of political corruption is well expressed by a Mahatma Gandhi in the following words.

"I have before me a letter describing the ill-treatment of Shrimati Accamma Cherian a political prisoner. If what she declared in court is due, her treatment was surely disgraceful She is a cultured woman. She gave up the headmistressship of a school in order to join the struggle for liberty. It hurts one to think that in an advanced State like Travancore, which boasts of an enlightened prince, an equally enlightened Maharani, his mother and an experienced Dewan, liberty is being choked by rude repression".¹⁴³

Anna Chandy, the first woman High court judge of India in 1959 was a member of SMC in Kerala. She was born in 1905. Her mother Sara Jacob was a teacher in the Holy angels SMC school in Trivandrum. The role played by Anna Chandy for women empowerment in India as a member of different women organizations from 1930 onwards till her death in 1996 are memorable. Along with the practice as a lawyer she was very much interested to work for the women emancipation. She was the editor of a women Magazine called "Sreemathi." She was also active in state politics. She was defeated by Pattom Thanupillai in 1931 from Trivandrum constituency.¹⁴⁴ Later she was nominated to the Travancore government assembly. There also she raised her voice for women equality. Because of her pressure in the municipal assembly, the non-eligibility to women for becoming the members

¹⁴³ Accama Cheriyan, *op. cit.*, p.38.

¹⁴⁴ M.O. Joseph. *op.cit.*, p.420.

in a department was removed.¹⁴⁵ She was famous as an actress. In 1937 she acted along with men in a drama which was a unique event in those days. From 1968-71 she was the member of the commission for constituting laws. She was keen to make timely and substantial changes in the laws and submitted the report to the government with suggestions.

Anne Thayil was another prominent SMC lady who entered into politics and social life from the profession of a teacher in a catholic school, Trichur. After a few years as teacher she entered into politics. She was elected as member of Legislative assembly in 1945. She was very much active in the political, social and religious fields. Being a writer of more than 78 books and orator and social worker she is a good example of the role played by women for a new society. In 1957, she was very much active in liberation struggle against the communist government in Kerala. Her courage and initiative as a political leader as well as a writer are praiseworthy. She was the member of the minority commission for 10 years and member of central welfare Board. Her public services include C.B.C.I. National advisory council Vice-President, All Kerala Catholic working committee member, general secretary of all Kerala Literary Association, Sahithya Academy executive member etc. she was also a Bible scholar. She was given the Christian Literary Association Award.

P.K. Thresia, the first woman chief engineer of India, the member of a reputed Syrian Malabar Catholic Family at Trichur was born in 1924. In 1971 she was appointed as the chief engineer and she functioned in this position efficiently till her demise in 1981 at the age of 57. She has taken the Engineering degree in 1944 from the Guindy Engineering College in Madras when only a few women was in this field. She entered in the Cochin government development services. Remaining as an unmarried woman she

¹⁴⁵ John. Kachimattom. *op. cit.* p. 1044

devoted her whole life for the development and reconstruction of her nation. In her words, "I am satisfied for accepted engineering as my profession because I can participate present days nation's development and construction programmes" which was mainly done by the engineering department.¹⁴⁶ There are a lot of work in Kerala itself to her credit as construction of bridges, roads, collectorates, Tourist Banglows, which certainly improved the standard of living of the people. She is well remembered as the protector of women dignity and human welfare.

Miss. Mary Pothan, an SMC women, who worked hard for the improvement of women education was born in 1905, as the daughter of Pothain and Marriamma in Changanassery, Kerala. Her dream was "to achieve social progress and prosperity through women education." She secured B.A, M.A. L.T. degrees from Madras University. Because of her effort in Andra Pradesh, Gundoor District the church started a training college for women and she was the principal of that college for 16 years. Again she was the Principal of S.I.E.T. Women's College in Madras. In 1956 she secured doctorate from American University.¹⁴⁷ She has taken degrees in different subjects like counselling and guidance, education and psychology etc. She was elected as the International catholic women federations working committee member in 1952. In 1957 she attended international catholic congress of the laity as the representative of India.

Mary was the foundress of Home Science college for women in Angamally, Kerala, the first of its kind and another in Moolamattam. She extended her services in the following departments too. Kerala university Home Science Board of Studies member, Angamally Martin counselling centre director, Madras university Senate member etc. In 1965 she was given

¹⁴⁶ *Personal diary Notes*, P.K. Thresia

¹⁴⁷ John Kachimattom. *op.cit.*, p. 1157

a special award for women by the American university. She was also a writer of different books called, 'In Spiritual Mission of woman today', 'Teacher teaching and taught', 'should teachers be guidance minded etc. After her death in May, 2000 her memory is ever green in the minds of many of the Kerala women as an educationalist, an advocate of women freedom, equality and women uplift and progress through education.

Christianity advocated that men and women are equal before one another and before God. They were entrusted equal moral responsibility of bringing up children in the family. Even though in Churches they were not given the spiritual responsibilities with the men ie. priesthood to women at present in SMC, their presence and active participation in the other church activities are allowed and highly encouraged. In the modern period women are very much willing to take up jobs in different private and public sectors to supplement the family income.

4. The Moral and Spiritual concerns of the Church

The church has existed through the centuries in varying circumstances and has utilised the resources of different cultures in its preaching in order to spread and explain the Christian principles like love, brotherhood, justice, truth etc. The church has but one sole purpose, the values of god must reign the country. The church is entrusted with the task of propagating the love of god for men and guide and enlighten them in their search for love and truth. Christ revealed to the world that “god is love”¹⁴⁸. He assures those who trust in God that the way of love will be easy and that effort to establish a universal brotherhood will not be in vain. Hence the church is at work in community of men by the power of god’s spirit. It strengthens and assists men to be firm and luminous in love, hope and charity.

The following actions of the church dedicated to the service of men which directly or indirectly enable them to observe what Christ has commanded and encourage them to engage in all works of charity, piety and justice.

(a) Liturgy:

Liturgy means the forms of public worship arranged by the church.¹⁴⁹ The offering of the mass, the saying of the Divine office and the other prayer services are the main forms of public worship. Processions, public prayers and the ceremonies used in the official public worship of the church also belong to the liturgy. Liturgy helps people mainly to love and to worship god and grew in brotherhood. It is also meant to instruct and to help people to

¹⁴⁸ *The Holy Bible*, 1 John, 4/8.

¹⁴⁹ *Austin Flannery*, ed., Vatican II. The conciliar and Post Conciliar documents, Bombay, 1975, p.27.

pray. Liturgy is the primary and indispensable source from which the Christians are to derive the true Christian spirit¹⁵⁰.

The parish centred active liturgy is a worthy feature of Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala. The liturgical life of the parishes centred around the parish priests who are fully engaged in the spiritual and moral progress of the people of the parish since priests are the specially dedicated persons who voluntarily came forward to serve the Church in a particular way. In Kerala each parish has one priest and in bigger parishes additional priests are appointed as assistants. The priest is a spiritual father to the laity. As a father he communicates divine life to the laity through the liturgy. He guides them in the way of Christian living. The participation of the laity in liturgy was active from the early years of the church. Ever since the introduction of liturgy into the vernacular Malayalam in 1967 the participation of the people in liturgy have become more active¹⁵¹. The recently revised liturgical rules also made the liturgy more accessible to the people. There are a good percentage of people who attend daily Eucharistic celebration in all the parishes. Nearly 70% of the people participate the liturgical services of Sunday, days of obligation and other feast days.

The church earnestly desires that all the people should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical and makes every effort for its fulfilment. Masses or other liturgical services for particular groups are conducted during retreats, seminars and courses in churches attached to schools, colleges, hospitals and other institutions for students and staff members. House masses are allowed rarely for the sick people¹⁵².

¹⁵⁰ Austin Flannery, *op.cit.*, p.27

¹⁵¹ Bishop Alapatt Circular dated 22.5.1967 (Trichur Diocesan Archives)

¹⁵² Annual report of Thrissur Diocese, 1987

The people listen the word of God, the Bible in the liturgical services and understand the thoughts, and principles of Christ and try to apply them in the various of activities of their everyday life.

The community gathered around the table of the God receives inspiration and power to go forth to put the word of love, justice and peace into action. Eucharist and other liturgical services not only gather the community, it also send them forth for mission and action. The decrease in the number of priests in the last decades of the 20th C in SMC necessitated the church to involve the lay people in the liturgical and prayer activities. Eventhough there is a demand from a section of priests and people to grant priesthood to family people as in past centuries and in present protestant church, celibacy and religious life, still is the main eligibility factor for priesthood.

The last decades of the 20th century A.D. are, but periods of domatic and liturgical crises in the history of the SMC. People, especially young generation evince a curious reaction when they reflect deeply on the function of the church in the modern world. They respond with a sigh, "the church is necessary after all." This involves a crisis because people don't want to hold on the church, her dogmas, sacraments and liturgy as the indispensable instruments of their own personal salvation. The negation of the social commitment of the church changed the attitude of even the elders to the church. They like to consider the church not as an institution to save the souls through liturgical services and other obligations but to perform a work of service for all humanity.

The relationship between prayer and action was also a challenge. Those who are actively participating in the prayer and liturgy and performing all other sundary and other obligationing services in the church could not practice the spirit of love and service in the society. So now-a-days those

people are nicknamed as "Sunday-Bhakthar" ie. prayer on sundays and in churches only, nothing in life. The luxurious and non-spiritual life of the priests and other religious leaders of the church are also one of the main reasons for loosing the credibility of the church.

In all the dioceses various active groups, associations and movements were organised by the church for the people of all age groups in order to involve them in various religious and social activities and also to educate them the Christian responsibilities and in every parish they have units.

The following are the main associations.

(a) Kudumba Sammelanam (Communion of families):

This is rather a new phenomenon known as the emergence of "Basic Christian communities". In Kerala practically all the parishes are divided into a number of wards or smaller groups consisting of 15-20 families of a small locality and they meet regularly at least once in a month in one of the houses. They pray together and share their Christian experience and seek solutions to problems. They confront individually and in common. This help to strengthen the solidarity of the Catholics as it was in the early church¹⁵³. These new communities are the historical churches becoming as real and authentic churches i.e. real communities of people with mutual sharing of fellowship. Here the word of God becomes once again powerful and alive in the life of the people and the whole community try to become really 'prophetic'. Here also the participation of the people are not satisfactory owing to the busy life of the modern men.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Annual report of Trichur Diocese, 1987

¹⁵⁴ Annual report of Kudumbasamelanam units. Dioces of Trichur, 2000.

(b) Holy childhood

This association was canonically established in 1939 for the children of the lower primary classes. The end of the Holy childhood being the welfare of the children and also the rescue and support of thousands of babies and abandoned children all over the world through small contributions the children are easily fascinated to join this association established in the various church schools. The small contributions from the members was spent for the welfare of the children in the various orphanages, baby welfare centres, dispensaries and hospitals.¹⁵⁵

(c) Kerala Catholic Students Leagues (K.C.S.L) :

It is the first student organization of Kerala, started in 1915. It is a training forum for Catholic students in high schools. Inspired by the gospel values KCSL aims at the integral formation of its members as faithful Christians and loyal citizens. Although the membership is restricted to Catholics its services are extended to all irrespective of caste and creed, and it co-operates with all men of good will. Various activities to develop solid leadership are organised in time with the KCSL motto: faith, study and service. Cells and diocesan units are free to organise group activities once in a week, in the spirit of KCSL constitution¹⁵⁶.

(d) All India Catholic University Federation(AICUF):

It is aimed at campus apostolate among the University students. The units of AICUF are well organised in the catholic colleges in Kerala. From a

¹⁵⁵ *Annual report*, Holy Childhood, Trichur diocese, 2000.

¹⁵⁶ Joseph Puthenpura, 'Kerala Catholic League for integral formation'. *K.C.S.L. Platinum Jubilee Souvenir*. 1992.P.57.

very humble beginning decades ago, it has grown into a very efficient organization. It was recognised by the CBCI in 1948 as the specialized university catholic action in India. Its distinctive features are the leadership and social awareness camps conducted in different parts of the country on a national, regional and local level. The aim of the camps being the formation of the complete man, they are always dominated by a two-fold programme integrating both humanistic and spiritual values¹⁵⁷.

(e) The catholic Mother Association:

This is another useful association functioning successfully in Kerala. The catholic mothers are given instruction and training for the efficient and economic management of the house and the healthy and proper up-bringing of the children, including their religious instruction. It is highly interesting and encouraging to note how the household and the kitchen-are transformed as soon as they become members of the catholic mothers league. They attend monthly meeting, and read essays and make speeches; discuss problems of house hold management and children's education; participate in monthly retreats and conduct family visits helping the suffering and the needy¹⁵⁸.

(f) Catholic Labour Association(C.L.A) :

The political and social atmosphere during the years 1950-57 affected the lower class to such an extent that many a labourer kept aloof from church and sacraments¹⁵⁹. The Church in Kerala was losing its hold on the labourers in general. The influence of the Marxist and communists were on the increase. As communists are known patrons of the poor ad depressed, they easily attract uneducated labour class. This state of affairs stimulated many priests and laymen to find out means of bettering the situation of labourers. Thus the

¹⁵⁷ Thomas Pothacamury, *The Church in Independent India*, Bombay, 1961, p.132.

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Pettah, *op.cit.*, p.60.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.56.

catholic labour Association was formed in 1957. It aimed at the economic and moral betterment of the workers. The association conduct social and spiritual animation programmes for the labour class to make them conscious of their responsibilities and rights as Christians and as responsible citizens and to appreciate the dignity of labour¹⁶⁰. The association discuss the labour problems and help the unemployed people to find employment and financial existence were also given to them.¹⁶¹

(g) Catholic Union and Catholic Movement:

These are the two lay organizations of the church and its junior wing is known as Kerala Catholic Youth movement (K.C.Y.M). Established in 1937, the union has awakened the laity, it aims at "the participation of Catholic laity in the hierarchical apostolate, for the defence of religious and moral principles; for the development of healthy social action, under the direction of the catholic hierarchy; outside and above party politics; in order to restore catholic life in the family and society".¹⁶²

This movement has been a very creative pressure group in the socio-economic and political fields to struggle for justice. It has succeeded in bringing up genuine catholic leaders at the state and even at national levels. For conscientization among the Catholics, they organise regular camps and seminars. They undertake activities concerned with social justice, youth apostolate and current issues in the society. It has units in all the parishes. Unlike in many other diocesan associations in the country these associations took active interest in each and every political and social issues of the Kerala

¹⁶⁰ K.K. Jose, ed., *Labour voice*, 2003, p.4.

¹⁶¹ *Constitution and Action Programme of C.L.A.*, 2002, p.2.

¹⁶² Joseph Pettah, *op.cit.*, p.51; *Catholic Movement Constitution Irinjalakuda Diocese*, pp.1-2.

state and the country¹⁶³. Here also the church was not able to organize the youth under its leadership. The values of the young generation is different from the church. As we discussed earlier a church world dialogue is invertable in the modern period. The reducing membership of youth in these associations clearly reveal the alienation of the youth from the church.

(h) Family Apostolate:

This is an organisation of qualified persons, including doctors, social workers, counselling experts who engage themselves in the family apostolate. Under the auspices of the family apostolate youth are prepared for marriage through courses on responsibility of parenthood, psychology of partners, sexual problems, necessity of adjustments and on natural family planning. Parish wise pre-marital courses are arranged in preparation for marriage¹⁶⁴. Those who are employed outside, find it difficult to get time for proper preparation for marriage. The dowry system prevalent in the region makes it difficult for the girls of the poor families to get married. The separation of couples, owing to employment outside country often create problems. Most of the marriages are arranged by parents and are blessed in the parish church.

The family apostolate organises counselling, seminars and courses for married people and for alcoholics. Alcoholism and drug addition have become a menace to the modern world. There are a lost of persons as well as families in Kerala which are destroyed by alcoholism. The after effect of this social evil is uncountable. Many families are really in total poverty. The poor wives and children are suffering a lot. Many a time quarrels, accidents and even murders take place because of the influence of alcohol. Considering all

¹⁶³ *Catholic Movement ... op. cit.*, p.53.

¹⁶⁴ *Annual Report*, Deaddition and family counselling centre, Aloor, 2000-2001.

these problems a separate centre in each diocese for alcoholics and drug addicts is run by the directorate of family apostolate. They conduct residential camps both for the drug addicts and also for their wives. Their programme includes not only deaddiction camps but also seminars and propagation against alcoholism and drug addiction¹⁶⁵.

Here also the factors like economic development, technological progress and increasing human organisations challenges the church. The world situation is changing day by day. What does today's world ask from the church is different from what they had asked yesterday. The present family apostolate programmes of the church could not drive men to communicate with other men and to make contacts outside the narrow circle of the family. Their programmes include propagation against alcoholism and drug addiction. But their programmes does not include to prevent a man becoming an alcoholic. We can hear in this decade the cry of the church against alcoholism and state policies related to it, but no voice against any of other social injustice affecting the common man. What the church should focuss is that, it has to utilise the ever increasing and accelerating store of energy that man has at its disposal for solving his problems and satisfying his needs. Her pastoral approach should not be to create another world within the world or fashioning the institutions that isolate the Christians from the rest of the humanity as in the past but a church world dialogue. In recent times this phenomena is slowly emerging in SMC. The Pope recently asked pardon to the world for the mistakes the catholic church have committed in the past¹⁶⁶ and that is an excellent sign of church's change of policy and recollection.

¹⁶⁵ *Annual Report, op. cit.*, p.2.

¹⁶⁶ *Malayala Manorama Daily*, March 2000, 13th Monday.

As regards the pastoral care of priests in the parishes and other institutions and nuns in the convents are concerned, the close contact and relationship between them and the people and the respect given to them are decreasing in the church. Eventhough the priests and nuns are observing the vows of chastity, obedience and poverty, their lives are not exemplary. The amassing of wealth, the construction of huge buildings in the name of charity, moral scandals in their personal lives etc. created a kind of discomfort in the minds of people to recognise them as spiritual and moral leaders in the present century. The church is not too late to correct its defects. As the old saying; "In essential matters, union : in doubtful matters freedom; in all things, charity".

Section B

The Role of St. Thomas Christians in the Economic Life of Kerala

In the first centuries of the Christian era, a number of Jews immigrated into Kerala and settled in that portion of it which afterwards became the kingdom of Cochin and Christianity also made its way into the country about the same time. Both these communities seem to have been allowed to remain in the country unmolested and helped on by their own enterprise and by the intercourse which they kept up with the Eastern Mediterranean countries.¹⁶⁷ They appear to have steadily grown in prosperity and importance so much so that the local kings by charters engraved in copper plates constituted them self governing communities. By these charters, Joseph Rabban was made the hereditary chief of the Jews and Iravi Cottan that of the Christians and they were also given the powers and privileges of Naduvazhi chiefs.¹⁶⁸ The dates generally assigned to these grants are 774 and 824 A.D. respectively. Jews' deeds are identical with those enumerated in the grant to the Christians but the latter were also given the right of the 'curved sword' that is the right of carrying arms which was not granted to the Jews. These privileges must have been granted in return for substantial help, pecuniary and otherwise which was rendered to the kings by these trading communities in repelling foreign aggressions.

Thus from the very beginning day of their history St. Thomas Christians distinguished themselves in such professions as agriculture, trade and military service According Gibbon, in arms, in arts and possibly by virtue the St. Thomas Christians excelled the natives of the Hindustan. The Husbandman cultivated the palm trees and the merchants were enriched by pepper trade.¹⁶⁹ Throughout their history they were known as educated

¹⁶⁷ C. Achutha Menon, *op.cit*, p.52.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.281.

¹⁶⁹ Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol. II, Trivandrum, 1906, p.180.

farmers or even both. Their competency for farming is unquestioned. They can be attracted to any corner of the world where employment to cultivate land is available, where rubber, coconuts and pepper will grow. The Kerala Catholic settlers in the Andaman islands and West Indies are reported to be the best and ideal farmers whom the government officials consult and propose as model farmers.¹⁷⁰ St. Thomas Christians had the advantage of having been involved in trade and commerce in the Kerala society where there was the conspicuous absence of a trading caste within the Hindu caste structure. It was with the gains from trade that they managed to acquire ownership of large areas of land in Travancore. And as the main beneficiaries in the spurt of land transactions that followed the break-up of joint family holdings, many St. Thomas Christians also extended their land holdings by taking up waste land, acquired educational qualifications, expanded their interests in trade, and through European planters, got an introduction to the plantation system.

The Syro-Malabar Christian community on the whole is economically much better off than many other groups. Consequently it is considered to be a forward (economically and socially) community by the Government with regard to eligibility for reservations and economic aid. The community's two traditional occupations are agriculture and trade. From ancient time they have been a merchant community with important privileges in the various kingdoms.¹⁷¹ Quite a few are landed proprietors. T.J.Nossiter remarks that after the Bhramins the Syrians (St. Thomas Christians) are the most prosperous community in Kerala.¹⁷² By 1931 in Travancore the Syrians had already overtaken the high caste Hindu Nairs in terms of annual income per family. In 1968 only 1.6 percent of all Kerala households were estimated to

¹⁷⁰ George Menachery ed., *op.cit.*, p. 126

¹⁷¹ Jose Kuriedath, *op. cit.*, p.23.

¹⁷² T.J.Nossiter, *op.cit.*,p.21,

have an annual income in excess of Rs.8,000; 3.1 percent of Syrian households fell into this bracket, constituting nearly 30 percent of all high income households. The St. Thomas Christians are strongly represented in most forms of business, banking and government service but they are particularly identified with plantation agriculture.¹⁷³

History of colonialism reveals the tendency of the native population to initiate the life style of their colonial masters. This tendency is particularly strong when there is religious affinity between the two. However, in the case of St.Thomas Christian it was their economic life which was subjected to such kind of influence.

St.Thomas Christians earliest foreign influence was their contact with the Persian Christians who were great traders. Following the path of Persian Christians, St. Thomas Christians also entered into commercial activities and soon distinguished themselves as a successful merchant community. Later the influence of the Portuguese also directed their economic life through this time.

By the latter decades of 19th century British entrepreneurs had pioneered plantation agriculture in the high ranges of Travancore like Peermade, Devikulam, Munner etc., In the last century British investments were mostly in coffee and tea plantations. By the first decade of 20th century British planters started investing in rubber. Some St. Thomas Christians from Meenachil, Thodupuzha and other midland taluks of Travancore, which lie adjacent to the high ranges, started rubber plantations from around 1910 onwards¹⁷⁴.

¹⁷³ T.J.Nossiter, *op.cit.*,p.21.

¹⁷⁴ A.V.John, *All India Rubber planters conference souvenir*, the Mundakkayam Rubber Planters Association, Mundakkayam, 1969.

From around 1920 onwards a large number of small St. Thomas Christian farmers from the midland taluks of Travancore started cultivating plantation crops like rubber, either in newly acquired areas in the high ranges, or in and around their own villages in the midland taluks. Planting by small St. Thomas Christian land holders were particularly high in the case of rubber¹⁷⁵.

This was the beginning of the cultivation plantation crops in Kerala of which not only revolutionized the nature of Kerala economy but also now sustains it. It is in this area of Kerala economy that the St. Thomas Christian played their historical role. However this was only a prelude to the great role they are destined to play in the economic life of Kerala and its economic development i.e., migration of St. Thomas Christians to the northern districts of Kerala from 1930 onwards. This aspect deserves special treatment.

Individual St. Thomas Christian farmers, mainly from the Taluk of Meenachil, Muvattupuzha and Thodupuzha, the strong holds of St. Thomas Christians¹⁷⁶ began to move to Malabar, a district in the former Madras Presidency, in the British India, from 1920 onwards. They went to Malabar mainly in search of cultivable land. These individual excursions, given into a migration of sizeable proportion between 1930 and 1960s.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ K.M.Chandy Rubber Plantation Industry – A Critical Review Rubber Planters Conference *India Souvenir, Indian Rubber Board, Kottayam, 1974, p.2.*

¹⁷⁶ The percentage of Christian population in Meenachil Taluk was 54.9 percent in 1901, 59.8 percent 1911 and 59.6 percent in 1926. In Muvattupuzha Taluk it is 43.3 Percent, 48 percent and 47.8 percent in 1901, 1911 and 1921 respectively. In Thodupuzha it was 33.4 percent, 38.4 percent and 44.7 percent in 1901, 1911 and 1921 respectively. Source: Census of India Travancore 1901, 1911 and 1921.

¹⁷⁷ Hardly any systematic work on the actual course of the farmers migration from Travancore to Malabar is available. The only feasible way to reconstruct the different stages of the migration is in the recourse to memories of the early migrants and their relatives.

During the first decade of the migration, 29 St. Thomas Christians from Travancore can be identified as to have acquired land in Malabar or nearby areas.¹⁷⁸

From 1930 onwards it is feasible to trace the development in settlements of St. Thomas Christians from Travancore to Malabar. During 1930-40, four such settlements of significant proportions are known to have emerged. They were kuttiadi in the present Kozhikode district, Mananthavadi in the old Wynad Taluk and Peravoor and Kulthuvayal in the old Kottayam Taluk in Malabar.

In addition to these four major settlements, small groups of St. Thomas Christians from Travancore had moved into Palakuzhikunnu, Tharinjal and Porur near Mananthavadi in old Wynad Taluk. In small numbers they had also moved into places like, Naduvayal, Vazhavatta and Theneri, near Sultan Battery in the Malabar Taluk of Wynad. Similarly small groups had also moved into Kanichiyar, near Kulathuvayal in the old Kottayam Taluk.

The period between 1940 to 1950 was the peak period of the migration of St. Thomas Christians. The three or four scattered settlements of the 1930s got developed further, and around 50 new settlements emerged in this period.

Between 1950 and 1960, the earlier settlements increased in population and new settlements developed either as offshoots of earlier ones, in nearby places or independently. Nearly 30 new settlements emerged in this period. The year 1960 seems to be a turn-off point as far as the migration is

¹⁷⁸ Avira Tharakan, Jose Kattakkayan, Dr.P.J.Thomas, Kochappu Tharakan, Sebastian Punnathura, Paulose Elakkattuparambil. Thomas Mannankari, Pappan Purayuidattil, Dr.A.P. Mathew, Thomas Konnakal, Joseph Poranganal, Jacob Thomas Karipparambil, E.P.Mathew Kudakkahcira, Mathachan Kattakkayam, Mathai Cherian, Itty Vakil, N.C.Peter Nadikunnel, Rattel Asan, Mathai Pallath, Mani Chelakkandathil, Kuriako Vadakkedath, Varkey Pongampara, Scaria Kollaurinkal, Thomas Purayidathil, Joseph Pullai - all St. Thomas Christians - are some of them.

See. Thomas Pazheparambil: *Malabar Kudiyetta Charithram* (Mal), unpublished manuscript.

concerned. After 1960, the inflow of migration of St. Thomas Christians is not as strong as it used to be before 1960.

As a result of this migration, the St. Thomas Christians population in Malabar, which stood at around 54000, out of a district total of over three million in 1921, increased to around 1,54,000 in a district total of around 47,50,000 in 1951.¹⁷⁹

The number of persons born in Travancore and enumerated in Malabar in the 1951 census is indeed very high compared to the previous censuses. The following Table (Table I) illustrates this. Since majority of migrants settled down in rural areas of Malabar, the figures of the number of persons born in Travancore and enumerated in the rural tracts of Malabar, should bring out more clearly the dimensions of the migration. Table II illustrate this

TABLE I

Statement showing the number of persons born in Travancore and enumerated as such in Malabar in successive Census, 1901-1951.¹⁸⁰

Year	Number of Persons
1901	3,049
1911	2,611
1921	2,030
1931	3,328
1941	N.A.
1951	88,275
Source: Census of India: Madras, 1901,1911,1921,1931,1941 and 1951	

¹⁷⁹ Table showing the increase in Christian population in the District of Malabar, 1901 - 1951 is given in the next page.(Table II).

¹⁸⁰ Source: *Census of India*, Madras, 1921 and 1951.

TABLE II

Statement showing the number of persons born in Travancore – Cochin and enumerated as such in the rural tracts of Malabar

Districts in 1951

Name of Rural Tract	Persons born in Travancore – Cochin And enumerated in Malabar in 1951
Kozhikode	13,636
Chirakkal	5,509
Eranad	802
Kottayam	12,655
Kurumbranad	10,612
Palaghat	3,001
North Ponnani	177
Walluvanad	2,022
Wayanad	23,482

(Source: Census Handbook 1951: Malabar District.)

The table shows that the presence of persons born in Travancore – Cochin was particularly high in the rural tracts of wayanad, Kozhikode, Kottayam and Kurumbrand. These same taluks registered high percentages of increase in total population for the whole taluks as well as for the rural tracts alone, during 1941 – 1951 decade.

The total number of persons born in Travancore – Cochin and enumerated in the rural tracts of Malabar, comes to slightly over 70,000 in 1951. Even after granting that a portion of this migrant population could have come from Cochin and not Travancore, this figure should still be fairly representative of the number of migrants from Travancore, in Malabar, in 1951

The above mentioned figure of the number of persons born in Travancore – Cochin and enumerated in Malabar in 1951 can be compared with the number of Syrian catholic parishioners¹⁸¹ in the Latin Catholic diocese of Calicut, in 1953. The figures available indicate, that over 74,000 parishioners, out of a total of around 91,000 were Syrian Catholics by the end of 1953¹⁸² and later another diocese of Thamarassery.

Three important aspects of the migration of St. Thomas Christian from Travancore to Malabar, emerge from this brief review of the population statistics of Malabar. First, the number of migrants from Travancore in Malabar, as it stood in 1951 can be assessed to be between 60,000 and 70,000. The second point emerging from the review is that the impact of the inflow of migrants from Travancore was felt mostly in the rural tracts of Malabar, and that too, in the Malabar taluks of wayanad, Kozhikode, Kottayam and Kurumbranad, in particular. Yet another point is that the migration assumed dimensions significant enough to attract attention, only between 1941 and 1951.

There are several reason for this migration of the St. Thomas Christians. The patritineal system which they followed necessitated the division of landed properties among all sons and settling them on their land. This tradition and the rapid population growth among them increased pressure on their cultivable land. Fall of the prices of crops consequent upon the depression made migration a question of survival for the middle class of St.Thomas Christians who began to search cheap land in the North of Kerala. On the other hand well of St.Thomas Christians were in search of new areas for the expansion of the empire of their success.

¹⁸¹ Parishioners are members of a parish- the administrative and ecclesiastical unit of the catholic church. A parish normally covers the catholic population of one village, and has a priest designated as vicar, as the spiritual and administrative head.

¹⁸² 'Malabaril oru Suriani Roopatha', The Dcepika(Mal.) Kottayam,01.02.1954.

These and similar factors are there behind the migration of the St. Thomas Christians. But such factors affected in one way or other all other communities of Travancore and elsewhere. Then why did the St. Thomas Christians-they alone took the lead?

The reason is that along with these factors mentioned above, the particular spirit of the St. Thomas Christians – the spirit of adventure, the risk bearing attitude and above all the preparedness of hard work which they believe that their father St. Thomas possessed¹⁸³ and they inherited from him from generation to generation- which enabled them to go and migrate to those remote areas and survive fighting with wild animals and diseases like Malaria and other insurmountable obstacles.

The migration of St. Thomas Christians have great impact in the social, political and economic life of Kerala. Not only it helped the spread of St. Thomas Christian culture to the northern parts of Kerala but also helped the all round development of these areas, especially economic and educational development. In those migrated areas the settlers began to develop public facilities and institutions such as schools, hospitals, roads and churches. The pattern of development of most of the settlements were to first build a church and then a road to nearly town or settlements followed by schools and hospitals. Along with the migrated St. Thomas Christians, the political and social forces which were confined to the central Kerala began to expand to those migrated areas. Above all it helped the development of Kerala economy by transforming vast areas of non – utilized lands to cash crops like, coconut, rubber, coffee, tea etc., in the extent that the future of Kerala economy itself

¹⁸³ The image of St. Thomas found in the gospel is that of a man of courage, adventure, curiosity and deep affection towards his Guru. He was ready to go out with Jesus and die with him even when other disciples were rather reluctant to move out for fear of the hostile Jews. The same courage, adventure and conviction are manifested in his journey to India in those days when overseas travel was unimaginably arduous.

is depended upon these sands which the St. Thomas Christians made precious as gold. The growth of the infra structures which are very necessary for economic development is very fast in these areas, promising and pointing towards further economic development of Kerala, adding new feathers in the economic role of St. Thomas Christians.

In short the role of SMC in the economic development of Kerala is what the role of Protestantism in the development of capitalism. Just like Max Weber argues that the spirit of protestarism was behind the development of capitalism¹⁸⁴ one can argue that the spirit of SMC has behind the economic development of Kerala.

¹⁸⁴ Max Waber, *Protestanism and Capitalism*. London, 1960, p. 180.

Section C

St. Thomas Christians in the Political Life of Kerala

History is full of examples of the strained relations between the church and the state. For example in the beginning there was persecutions and later there was the struggle between the church and the state on the issue of supremacy. Even now in many countries serious disputes and conflicts are going on between the church and state over their respective functions, rights, eg. , that of educating children, law of inheritance, conversion, principles of morals and faith etc.

However Christianity in India, especially in Kerala presents a different picture. It had never been subjected to official persecution nor entered in to any serious conflicts with the state.

In the beginning of St. Thomas Christians we see them enjoying royal patronage and privileges from the native rulers. The rulers of the country considered them as high castes and granted them great privileges and honors. These privileges were given in written documents in the form of copper plates¹⁸⁵. They enjoyed the privilege of being called the “sons of kings” and enjoyed some privileges granted only to the heirs of kings such as riding on elephants¹⁸⁶. As protectors of seventeen low castes they were called “lords of seventeen castes” and could try all the cases of their subject and even inflict capital punishment on them.¹⁸⁷ The European authors like Vincent Mary and Paulinus call this community, “Christian Republic”.¹⁸⁸ Vincent Mary notes

¹⁸⁵ Some of the important Copper Plates are : *The Thomas of cana plates, The Terisapalli Copper Plates and Irivakortanan Plates*, See. Krishna Chaitanya, *History of Kerala*, p. 62-63

¹⁸⁶ Ananthakrishna Ayyar, *The anthropology of Syrian Christians*, Ernakulam.

¹⁸⁷ Paul Thenayan, *op. cit.* , p.16.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* ,p.17.

that once upon a time they had a king of their own¹⁸⁹. Ananthakrishna Ayyar asserts that they were almost on par with their sovereigns and they were even allowed to have a military force of their own¹⁹⁰. According to Gouvea they even supplied the king of Cochin with an army of 50,000 gunmen¹⁹¹. A native prince was feared or respected by his neighbors according to the number of these Christians in his dominion. They used this military power to safeguard their special privileges.¹⁹²

The Arch deacon of the St. Thomas Christians was regarded by the local rulers as the secular superior of the Christians. He was given the first place among the chieftains known generally as "Raja" owing allegiance to the king of Cochin¹⁹³. He had certain civil powers also. Vineezo, a carmelite missionary noted in the 17th century that the bishop with the Arch deacon adjudicated quarrels of a civil nature and other disputes¹⁹⁴. He is reported to have had considerable influence among the non-Christians, especially before the local king. In a letter written in 1684 by the carmalite missionaries in Kerala to their perfect of mission it is said that the Arch deacon went to visit the king of Cochin, who gave him, according to the custom, a gold ring, recognized him as arch deacon and head of all the Christians of St. Thomas and as such promised him all favors and helps, in the same way as to his predecessors in the past¹⁹⁵. From this letter it is evident that even during the 16th century the Arch deacon enjoyed princely status as it was before.

The St. Thomas Christians tradition hints at the existence of even a Christian dynasty around the period extending from the 9th to 15th centuries.

¹⁸⁹ Paul Thenayan, *op. cit.*, p.16.

¹⁹⁰ Ananthakrishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, p.55.

¹⁹¹ Mundadan, *op. cit.*, p.120.

¹⁹² Paul Thenayan, *op.cit.*, p. 17

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁹⁴ Mundadan *op.cit.*, p. 184

¹⁹⁵ Kollaparmbil, *op.cit*, p. 165.

Many historians identify this dynasty with the villarvatton (Biliarte) royal family¹⁹⁶. However historians are not unanimous about the existence of such a Christian dynasty. For example according to Mundadan, the villarvattom kings were probably the special protectors of the St.Thomas Christians¹⁹⁷.

St.Thomas Christians having great political prestige and power incorporated certain community organization of the period into their ecclesiastical organization. For example, the yogan of the St.Thomas Christians had its origin in the system of Manram¹⁹⁸, the community organization in South India.

In short as far as the pre sixteenth century of St.Thomas Christians are concerned, their political role was that of a royal and loyal citizens who obeyed the kings and the laws of the state and the Law of St.Thomas, at the same time enjoyed greater amount of autonomy, power and prestige in the political set up.

Relationship of St.Thomas Christians with the Portuguese

The initial relationship between the Portuguese and the St.Thomas Christians was cordial.¹⁹⁹ On the second arrival of Vasco Da Gamma in 1502, St.Thomas Christians met him in Cochin, gave him presents and even expressed their willingness to accept the political leadership of the Portuguese.

As already seen when the Portuguese began to interfere in the religious and social life of the St.Thomas Christians who followed the Syrian languages for liturgy and other Syrian practices their attitude towards the

¹⁹⁶ K.Rangachari. *castes and tribes of southern india*. Delhi. Vol, V1, 1975, p.423

¹⁹⁷ Mundadan op-cit pp.125 - 129

¹⁹⁸ Manaram was a kind of autonomous village, the heads of families being the members of the administrative body.

¹⁹⁹ Jose Kuriedath, *op.cit.*, p.106.

Portuguese also changed. The Portuguese missionaries accomplished the Latinisation of the St. Thomas Christians with the full support of the Portuguese political power²⁰⁰. In the struggle between the St. Thomas Christians and the Portuguese missionaries, Portuguese political leaders and the native political rulers, who for their own interests, supported the Portuguese missionaries. In other words in this struggle the power bases of the Portuguese were naturally the political patronage of Portugal, the support of the Roman ecclesiastical authorities, and their superior position in India due to race, color, money and colonization. On the other hand, the power base of the St. Thomas Christians headed by the archdeacon was the customary status and the support of the community.²⁰¹

It is striking to note that St. Thomas Christians did not seek a political solution to their religious problems. It seems that they took Latinization by the Portuguese as a religious issue and did not give a political colour or dimension. It must be remembered that by the time St. Thomas Christian revolts against the Portuguese missionaries and their Latinization programme were taking place, anti-Portuguese feelings were already mounted up at least in certain parts of Kerala. Still there are no evidences for St. Thomas Christian participating in the anti-Portuguese uprising under Kunhali Marakkar (1600) or the early anti-British uprisings like the Pazhassi Revolts which took place between 1793 – 1805²⁰².

However it doesn't mean that the St. Thomas Christians revolt had no power perspective at all. Of course it had, it is wrong to conclude that these revolts were staged purely for religious reasons. Along with religious motives, there was the desire to protect the power and status of a proud community and its proud leader, the arch deacon. The revolts were an expression of the

²⁰⁰ K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *op. cit.* p.483.

²⁰¹ Jose Kuriedath, *op.cit.*, p.116.

²⁰² M. Josepath ed., *Glimpses of Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1988, p.29.

outrage against the degradation of the arch deaconate which, the community thought, stood as a symbol of not only the unity and autonomy of their church, but also of the high status they enjoyed in the eyes of the local rulers. The community legitimately feared that their position in the country would be lowered once they became totally subservient to foreigners²⁰³. Without the Archdeacon the community would be nothing but a body without head. In a very short time it would disintegrate. It was the community's unity that had made the non- Christians, among whom they lived, to respect them²⁰⁴. Apart from the concern to protect the status and unity of the community, the revolt was also a strong demonstration of the demand of the Christians for indigenous leadership, internal autonomy and democracy.

St. Thomas Christians won the battle against Latinisation which they fought lonely. In 1886 all disputes regarding patronage were settled by a concordat between the Pope and the King of Portugal under which the innermost desire of the St.Thomas Christians to regain their lost identity of a catholic autonomous Oriental church found its initial fulfillment²⁰⁵. In 1887 separate Apostolic Vicariates for the St.Thomas Christians were erected in Trichur and Kottayam. Thus the syrians were seperated from the Latins in India – under separate administrators. It was the success of a one man's army against the mighty colonial and eccleiaistical empires. It was with the confidence of this success and with the jubilant and victorious mood that they entered into the twentieth century political history of Kerala. Having won the religious freedom struggle they turned towards the political freedom of the country.

²⁰³ Joseph Thekkedath , the troubled Days of Francis Garcia S.J., Arch bishop of Cranganore (1641 – 59), Rome, 1972, pp.60 – 61.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁰⁵ K.P. Padmanabha menon, *op.cit.* p.487.

The role of the Christians in the freedom struggle in Kerala

Along with other communities the Christians also played a decisive role in the social renaissance which took place in the 19th and 20th centuries which was at once the cause and consequence of the political awakening and freedom movement.

Upto the second decade of the 19th C the consolidation of British power had more or less than achieved there were occasions of stiff and violent resistance against them in Kerala. Thus the expansion of British powers in Kerala was by no means a smooth affair. Even then by 1812 British control was effectively established all over the three regions of Kerala – Malabar, Kochi and Travancore.²⁰⁶

With Malabar directly administered by the British as part of Madras Presidency and guided by the paramount power Kerala enjoyed perhaps the longest span of relative peace in her history. It was, moreover, the period when she felt the full impact of the west which helped lay, as it were, the foundation of a "New Kerala."

Under the aegis of the British Government and the enlightened rulers of Travancore and Kochi, substantial developments took place in the administrative, social, economic and cultural fields of Kerala. Reforms and changes were introduced in the administration. The judiciary and the legal systems were completely reorganized. Humanitarian and welfare measures – abolition of slavery and removal of the ban on the wearing of upper – cloth by the low – caste people, to mention only a few were undertaken. Public works like roads, irrigation and communication received special attention. Above all, the 19th century saw the introduction and spread of western education, in which a very significant role was played by the various Christian missionaries.

²⁰⁶ M. Josepath, ed., *op.cit.*, p.31.

Through the medium of English education, Kerala was exposed to the full blast of western civilization. Her intellectual isolation was broken.

Reforms necessarily entailed changes in the conditions and outlook of the people and these changes in turn necessarily opened the floodgates of further reforms. In fact from 1812 until almost the close of the century, though political life was characterized by inactivity and society presented an outward calmness, subversive forces were forming and developing.²⁰⁷ Kerala was in ferment. It was on the whole, undergoing a gradual and steady transformation. This current of social transformation gradually led Kerala into the mainstream of political struggle for freedom and responsible government in the 20th century.

The British who followed a policy of divide and rule tried to apply this tactics in Kerala also As a part of this policy they tried to create an impression that the British Government was the patron of the Christian community and tried to keep the Christian community away from the main stream of nationalist movement²⁰⁸. For this purpose they used every weapon in their armoury to foster that impression and wean the Christians away from joining the national movement.²⁰⁹ A clear indication of the trend can be had from the incident which took place in Trichur during C.Rajagopalacharis visit in 1921, to popularise the non co-operation Movement. The Government enlisted the services of some Christian loyalists to break up the meeting addressed by the distinguished leader. Here was a deliberate attempt on the part of the officialdom to create the impression that the Christians as a community were

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33

²⁰⁸ Bipin Chandra. *Communalism in India*, Delhi, 1984, p.242

²⁰⁹ Nagam Aiyya, V., *op. cit.*, p.258.

opposed the freedom movement²¹⁰. However this was only a passing phase and the Christian community soon identified itself with the nationalist cause.

An important agitation which took place in Travancore in the early forties was the Poorna Samatwavada Prakshobanan, which aimed at the achievement of equality in the matter of civic rights. The immediate cause of the agitation was the denial of appointments to the Avarnas among the Hindus, the Christians and the Muslims in the Land Revenue Department of the State on the ground that the department administered Devaswams (temples) to which persons belonging to these classes were denied entry. The leaders of the aggrieved communities like E.J. John & T.K.Madavan started a movement to get this discrimination abolished. They formed an organisation called the Civic Rights League in 1919 was formed by Christian, Muslims and Ezhawas and took up the issue with the Government.²¹¹ The Government met the demand of the agitationists partially by bifurcating the Land revenue Department into two the Revenue Department and the Devaswom Department, and the agitated communities were made eligible for appointments to the new Revenue Department. An age old discrimination was thus ended and equality of opportunity in respect of appointments in Government services was guaranteed at least to a limited extent.

This agitation for Civic Rights was only a prelude to another agitation in which the dormant political force and power of St.Thomas christians made their full appearance.

It was in the Absention movement in Travancore which took place during the first half of the 1930s under the auspices of "All Kerala Catholic Conference".²¹² that dormant political force of the St.Thomas Christian

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 243.

²¹¹ A. Balakrishna Nair. *The government and Politics of Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1984, p. 34.

²¹² Government record, Dated, 22-09-1933. State Archives, Trivandrum.

community made its most powerful appearance. The genesis of this movement lies in the policy of discrimination being followed by the Government of Travancore in providing representation to various castes and communities in the legislature and public services which resulted in the denial of representation in the legislature and public services to the backward Hindu communities like the Ezhavas and other religious minorities like the Christians and Muslims in proportion to their numerical strength.

TABLE I²¹³

Community	Population	Literates	Literates in English	Women Literates in English	Appointments held	Appointment above Rs.100
Non-Malayale						
Brahmins	54141	26431	8226	460	2838	35
Nair	868411	308223	18606	3295	13384	212
Vellalah	69627	21606	2919	217	1053	20
Ezhava	869863	165047	5201	1064	912	11
Other Hindus (other than depressed)
Muslims	353274	41801	1607	37	609	8
Jacobites	337872	122897	8241	1765	1353	52
Marthoma	142486	64585	6359	1501	960	61
Church of England	85261	21926	3422	1059	146	24
Protestants	208725	43564	3991	1050	658	63
Catholics	809390	218033	15232	4217	923	38
A. Latin	360217	67372	7335	2451	492	23
B. Syrian	449173	155661	7897	1766	431	15

As a protest against this discrimination the Ezhava, Muslim and Christian communities joined together and abstained from the elections to the Legislative.²¹⁴ The word 'Abstention' was chosen particularly because the

²¹³ *ibid.* p. 2

²¹⁴ Report presented to the Government by the Travancore Catholics, dated, 3. Nov. 1933. State Archives. Trivandrum. The Electricity Agitation was the most sensational agitation of the decade which took place in Trichur in the mid-thirties.

agitators did not want to identify themselves with the non co-operation movement of Gandhiji.²¹⁵ These steps produced the desired results. The table below shows the position of caste Hindus, Lower castes Hindus and non-Hindus in the Public Services. (Table.1). In 1932 a public service commission was appointed to ensure fair representation for all comm

unities in the public services. Since then 'efficiency combined with preference on communal basis' was made the basic principle governing appointments to Government Services in certain categories of posts. The Legislative Reform Act was amended widening the franchise, reducing property qualification, reserving seats for Ezhava, Christian and Muslim Communities in the legislature.²¹⁶

TABLE II²¹⁷

Officers	Salary upto Rs.20	Salary up to Rs. 20-50	Salary above Rs. 50	Total
High Caste Hindus	3325	388	104	3817
Low Caste Hindus	99	37	11	147

The success of the Absention Movement helped the empowerment of the St. Thomas Christian in real terms. This movement had far reaching consequences so far as this community was concerned. It not only brought them due share in political but also taught them the lesson of pressure politics and inaugurated an era of 'bargaining politics' which became more powerful later and is being followed now in Kerala. It brought the community much closer to the backward sections of the Hindu Community and to the Muslim and equipped the commiity with the necessary power and enthusiasm to

²¹⁵ Kusuman. *op.cit* p. 34.

²¹⁶ Kerala State Gazetteer. Vol.I, 1986. p. 54.

²¹⁷ Malayala Manorama Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, 1960. p. 470.

play vital role in the national movement and later in the democratic set up of the country.

If the Absention Movement brought the Travancore St. Thomas Christians into 'politics' and full fledged participation in freedom struggle it was the Electricity Agitation which took place in Trichur in 1936, which brought the influential Christian community of Trichur into the nationalist mainstream.²¹⁸

With the formation of the State Congress, St. Thomas Christians were attracted to it and identified with its causes at all stages and at all periods.²¹⁹ The participation and dominance of the Christians like T.M. Varghese, Akkama Cheriyan, A.J. John, Mamman Mappila, P.T. Chako, Annie Maskerene etc.,²²⁰ in the State Congress was such prominent that at that time State Congress was even known as Christian Congress. Diwan C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, in order to break the State Congress, carried on a propaganda that the State Congress was a Christian dominated body and encouraged Mannath Padmanabhan and the leaders of the Nair Service Society to form the Travancore National Congress as a counterblast to the Travancore State Congress. This attempt of the Diwan was a failure.²²¹

²¹⁸ The Electricity Agitation was the most sensational agitation of the decade which took place in Trichur in the mid thirties. In 1936 the Government decided to entrust the work of distribution of electricity in Trichur Town to a private company, i.e., the Chandrika company of Madras, though the citizens of Trichur had formed a company of their own called "Trichur Electricity Corporation" and wanted the state Government to entrust the work to this company. This act of the Government sparked off an intense popular agitation in Trichur. It was led by such leaders as Dr. A.r. Menon, E. Ikanda Warriar, C.R. Iyyunni etc., The Government decided to suppress the agitation with an iron hand and arrested, its leaders like C.R. Iyyunni, the agitation ultimately fizzled out, but served to bring the influential Christian community of Trichur within the ambit of national movement. see. A Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p.114.

²¹⁹ L. Naturajan, ed., *op.cit.*, p.40.

²²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 549.

²²¹ P.K. Gopalakrishnan. *op.cit.*, p.549.

Measures like the liquidation of the Travancore National and Quilon Bank (1938) and the move on the part of the Government to bring the schools in the private sector under state control created misgivings in the minds of the St. Thomas Christians and served them to bring them more and more actively into the political movements in the State.²²²

In Malabar area also the attempts of the British Government to wean the Christians away from the mainstream failed to yield any positive result. Mr. Samuel Aaron, Mrs. Gracy Aaron and Mrs. Margarret Pavamoni were active in the national movement in Malabar.²²³

Thus, St. Thomas Christians well organized and united served as a backbone to the freedom movement. Another contribution of this community was that it contributed an array of leaders to this movement. Stalwarts like George Joseph played their role in the national level. Akkama Cheriyan, E.J. John, N.V. Joseph, T.M. Varghese, C.R. Iyyunni, A.J. John, Mathai Manjooran etc.,²²⁴ are the other St. Thomas Christian leaders who played decisive roles in the freedom struggle and the related movements. St. Thomas Christians leaders not only led these struggles and movements but also shared the responsibility of Government when occasions arrived. P.G.N. Unnithan who became the acting Diwan initiated discussions with the Travancore State Congress on the future Government of the state. Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese, A. Achuthan, A.P. Udaayabhanu, A.J. John and Akkama Cheriyan represented the congress in the discussions with the government.²²⁵ As a result of these deliberations on Sep. 1947 Sree Chithra thirunal Maharaja made a declaration concerning the granting of responsible

²²² T.K. Velupillai *Travancore State Manuel*. Vol.II, Trivandrum, 1977, p. 779.

²²³ Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p.98.

²²⁴ Akkamma Cheriyan, *op.cit.*, p.18.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

government to the people of Travancore in Kerala.²²⁶ Among the two ministers of the first popular Ministry of Travancore under the Prime Ministership Pattom Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese was the one and the other was C. Kesavan. Prof. C.J. Varkey who was returned to the Madras Legislature from the constituency reserved for Christians was included in the Rajaji Cabinet in the vacancy caused by the demise of Kongattil Raman Menon who originally represented Malabar in the Council of ministers.²²⁷

So far as the history of St. Thomas Christians is concerned, their participation in the freedom struggle has certain unique significances. They participated in the freedom struggle by neglecting the patronage and privileges they could have enjoyed if they sided with the British. Their religious affinity with the British did not prevent them from siding with the nationalist forces. By this they asserted the fact that they are at the same time Christians as well as Indians, proved that they have not only religious commitments but also political commitments too, and they too have a claim for due share in the political life of independent India. Above all it offered an opportunity to reinforce their self confidence, for empowerment which they had already acquired in course of her history especially in their religious struggle against the colonial powers. It is in this background that they entered into the political life of democratic India.

Independence and after

Independence gave birth to a new constitution for India. The new born constitution carried genes of India namely secularism the spirit of which have been in the Indian soil from time immemorial. Besides the constitution also guarantees certain fundamental rights to the minority communities like the SMC community. Thus sheltered under secularism and protected by minority

²²⁶ *The Indian Christian Directory*, Kottayam, 2002, p.66.

²²⁷ N. Jose Chander ed., *Dynamics of State Politics in Kerala*, Bangalore, 1986, p.62.

rights the SMC began to play its role in the political life of the country especially in Kerala in different capacities, with a view to protect the country and its newly born democracy, for defending the faith and principles for which it is existing and to make a suitable political environment conducive to its existence and growth.

The organized Christian Church in Kerala is a well-knit and soundly structured interest-group, influential enough to have a say of its own in Kerala's politics and elections. Usually in a system working under a multiparty set-up, the scope of interest groups should remain minimum. But the kaleidoscopic nature of the politics of the state, its unique social structure and the numerically almost even division of the various communities provides Kerala with a favourable slant for communally oriented interest groups. This uniqueness of Kerala's political mechanism and social set-up has helped the church grow in dimension, raising it to comparatively privileged social and political prominence. Though the Church started involving itself in politics from the beginning, in an inimitable style of its own, mild and veiled, it began attracting keen academic interest and provoked strong public debate only since the first elected Communist government in 1957., its subsequent overthrow through mass upsurge by liberation struggle in 1957 and the mid-term poll that followed in 1960.

Early Years After Independence

The Christian community and its religious leadership have played enough role in politics even in the pre-Independence days. When the right to franchise was confined largely to the landed aristocracy, the Church leadership found it easy to influence the voting patterns of the Christian electorate. In the early days of popular representations, electioneering was not what it is today. Still those who sought a seat in the legislature took enough caution to invoke the blessings of the bishops before they entered the

fray. The goodwill of the Church was considered one of the best guarantees for electoral victory. However, the influence of the Church assumed a decisive political significance only in the post-Independence period. Ever since the first election in Travancore after Independence to-date, there was hardly any electoral battle in the state in which the influence of the Church was not felt. The interference of Church in elections need not necessarily be always direct. On the contrary it often prefers only to drop certain hints to indicate its political preference to the Christian electorate.²²⁸

For the first two decades of independence the Christian Churches in Kerala remained absolutely identified with the Indian National Congress. But things began to change with the gradual growth of Kerala Congress as an effective political wing of the Christian community. Though the genesis of the Kerala Congress was not something to be much proud of practical expediency warranted the Church to have some sort of political identification with a regional party whose rank was mostly swelled by the Christians. The growth of the Kerala Congress has considerably diminished the role of the Church as a political interest-group. But in elections the involvement of the Church still gets easily surfaced and clearly discernible. Amongst the Christian Churches, there are more than a dozen denominations of them – the SMC remains the most effective in elections, powerful enough to brighten or mar the electoral chances of a candidate, party or a front.

In the 1948 elections in the erstwhile state of Travancore, results were indeed a foregone conclusion. The Travancore State Congress (which for all practical purposes was the state branch of the Indian National Congress) swept the poll as expected, since the electorate was still under the magic spell of the newly won independence. Though the selection of candidates was left to the party bosses, they in the process did consult the bishops and sought

²²⁸ N. Jose chander ed., *op.cit.*, p.88.

their preferences in the matter. But the Congress, which won 93 seats out of 108 in the legislature, could not keep its government in power for long. Owing to the internal bickerings in the party and constant personality clashes amongst the ministers, the first cabinet headed by the veteran Pattom thanu Pillai had to bow out of office. Subsequently Thanu Pillai left the Congress to found the Socialist Party. The Congress managed to form another government with Parur T.K. Narayana Pillai as Chief Minister. It was under his government that Travancore and Cochin got integrated into one political and administrative unit viz., Travancore-Cochin State. On the eve of the first General Election (1952) a change of government became inevitable owing to the in-flights in the ruling party. It was common knowledge that C. Kesavan's ministry was only a stop-tap arrangement.

The elections in 1952 witnessed the crumbling of the monolith of the Congress in the state, though the party survived as the single largest one in the legislature. For the first time the Communist Party emerged as a recognized opposition, formidable enough to challenge the Congress at least in certain parts of the state. Election results also proved that the Christian belt remained a Congress bastion and ensured the return of a number of party candidates to the legislature. Undeniably the communal and religious forces played a decisive role in the 1952 elections. The Hindu Maha Mandalam, founded jointly by Mannath Padmanabhan and R. Shankar, did in fact convert the election into a blatant communal campaign.²²⁹ The Congress was called 'Christian Congress' and the Hindus were exhorted to resist, by all means, the growing Christian domination in the politics of the state. The post-election government formed by A.J. John further helped to make the Christian community the best ally of the Congress. But the irony of the situation of the Catholic laity, put up its own official candidates in many a constituency in

²²⁹ Hindu mandalam was a coalition of two organizations, the NSS and the SNDP, representing the two major, Hindu communities, Nairs and Ezhawas.

the predominantly Catholic areas to oppose the Congress. But the Catholic electorate rejected in toto the candidates sponsored by the Catholic Congress. This was mainly because they prudently followed the guidelines given by the Church leadership regarding their political choice. The total defeat of the Catholic Congress in elections was, no doubt, enough proof of the profound hold the bishops had over their faithful. On the contrary, it was also an indication of the wider outlook and the higher political wisdom of the Christian electorate. The candidates of the Hindu Mandalam too met with the strange fate of total defeat, most of them even losing their deposits.

The Church came in for criticism again when the bishops threw their weight on the side of the Congress during a by-election to the Lok Sabha from the Meenachil constituency in 1953. The by-election was due to the resignation of P.T. Chako from Parliament. The Meenachil constituency was considered a Catholic pocket, from where the Congress could count on an easy electoral victory. But things took a different turn when its candidate George Thomas Kottukappally, a Catholic aristocrat and banker, was challenged by no less a person than Accamma Cherian, who had the halo as one of the heroic fighters of the freedom struggle to her credit. She was popularly known as the Rani Laxmibai (Rani of Jhansi) of Travancore.²³⁰ Accamma sought election as an independent, of course, with the open backing of all opposition parties. She decided to settle scores with the Congress as she was denied the party candidature, for reasons unknown, in 1952 as well as in 1953. Accamma cherian decided to contest, declining the offer of a Rajya Sabha seat made to her by the party leadership. The by-election in Meenachil (Kottayam district) witnessed a keen political battle in 'one of the largest constituencies in the country and where the Catholic voters constituted a majority of the electorate. It was alleged that the Congress campaign was organized Church-wise, often the parish priest himself acting as campaign

²³⁰ N. Jose Chander, *op.cit.*, p.90.

manager in his respective locality. A pastoral letter published by the local bishop-Sebastian Vayalil of Palai – was interpreted as a clear indication of the Church's preference in the matter. The Congress won the election with a convincing majority of over 40000 votes.

Having lost on the floor of the House, Chief Minister A.J. John advised fresh election and the state went to the polls again, for a third time in six years, in 1954. For the first time a United Front of Opposition parties challenged the Congress and the election thus was keenly fought, causing enough anxiety and tension even in New Delhi. Congress lost the battle despite the unreserved support of the Church. But the Church's backing helped Congress win a good number of seats in the Christian belt, making it again the single largest party in the legislature. The Church leaders were more concerned this time, since the Congress was seeking a mandate under the leadership of A.J. John, the renowned Catholic leader whom even his political adversaries acclaimed almost a sage. The bishops appealed to the faithful to vote for godly and democratic-minded candidates and the very wording of the pastorals read from the pulpit was clear enough to make anyone understand that the preference of the prelates had been for the Congress. In most of the churches special prayers were conducted for the success of the democratic candidates, which meant none other than Congress candidates. Many priests, it was alleged, converted their Sunday homilies into campaign speeches for the Congress and its candidates. No doubt, the Church's goodwill and support saved the Congress for a second time to survive as the major political force in the state.²³¹

The post-election scene in the legislature indicated the possibility of assumption of power by a non-Congress government, which the Congress legislature party, Panampally Govinda Menon, wersted the Praja Socialist

²³¹ Cyriac Thomas, *The church and politics in Kerala*, 1977, p. 40.

wanted to stall at any cost. The leader of the congress Party from the opposition United Front by offering unconditional support to the PSP's chairman and the leader of its legislature wing, Pattom thanu Pillai. Thanu Pillai always had a weakness for power and it was a matter of everyone's knowledge that he kept somewhat of a sentimental attachment to the Chief Minister's chair. The veteran freedom fighter thought it wiser to accept the offer of the Congress than forming a Government with the support of the Communists. But Thanu Pillai fell out with the Congress sooner than expected and hence his government could not last even for one year. The Congress Government that followed, with the redoubtable Panampalli Govinda Menon as Chief Minister, also had to quit quickly due to internal party dissensions. The ouster of the congress government led to a span of President rule which witnessed the emergence of the new state of Kerala, on the lines recommended by the State Reorganisation Commission.²³²

The Church and the First Communist Government

The Second General Election was held throughout the country in 1957, and Kerala made history by electing the communists to power, the first of the communist victory through a ballot system.²³³ The bishops tried their best to prevent an electoral victory of the Communists by persuading their flocks to vote for the Congress. The belief of the Marxists in dialectical materialism in the theory "end justifies the means" and the crusade of the Communist states against the Church elsewhere made the Christians believe that their religion will be destroyed in due course, if the Communist Ministry continued in Kerala. The Church was also particularly fearful of the educational policy of the Communist Ministry since Christian educational institutions have continued to be the instruments of control over the future generation of

²³² P.T. Joseph. *Parties and Politics in Kerala*, 1958, p. 28.

²³³ E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Reminiscences of an Indian Communist*, 1987, p.52.

Christians and propaganda.²³⁴ They were quite aware of the authoritarian and undemocratic nature of the communist policies which includes party discipline, education, organization and propaganda who use the administration in the interest of the party. The church also was the supporter of the views of Gandhiji and K. Kelappan who criticized communists as people trained not in non-violence and truth, but in class war and dogmatic intolerance. Even though in the 1950's the communist party earned esteem for their sincerity and simplicity it turned to terrorism and sabotage later. Several places in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore witnessed vandalism and brutality.²³⁵ At many places public meetings where Kelappan and the Gandhians spoke, were disrupted by communist trained peasants, workers and others.²³⁶ The *Deshabhimani* was suppressed on 12 April 1948 following the communist violence in Malabar.²³⁷ At the same time the party sought to broaden further its popular base by championing the cause of backward communities and laborers. The total number of trade union membership for the whole of Kerala during 1953-54 was 1,27,549 and it rose to 2,75,000 in 1959.²³⁸ During this period though the church authorities were anti communists there were Christians who began to support the communists. The Christian elected members in the communist government like K.C. George, T.V. Thomas and Joseph Mundassery who assumed office on 5th April 1957 as ministers are examples for this.²³⁹ The uninspiring state of affairs of the

²³⁴ *The Deepika* (Mal.) Kottayam, (April 17, 1957), a pro-catholic Newspaper pleaded strongly with the catholics to be friendly to the Congress which controlled the Central Government.

²³⁵ P.M. Mammen, *Communalism Vs. Communism*. Calcutta. 1981. p.86.

²³⁶ For the report of discription of the meeting at Kannur see *Mathrubhumi Daily* 24 Janury 1940. At Calicut the meeting at which Kelappan spoke was disrupted by a gang led by E.K. Imbichi Bava who later became a prominent leader of the communist party. (*The Mathrubhumi Daily*, 18 April 1940).

²³⁷ *The Deshabhimani Daily*, 11 April 1952.

²³⁸ Communist party in India. Kerala State Committee Draft Report Part II. (Organization) submitted to the 5th conference in November 1959, p.6.

²³⁹ *The Mathrubhumi Daily*, 7 April, 1957.

congress party made a sizable section of the Christian electorate indifferent to the exercise of franchise. The voting pattern proves that the Congress lost the battle mainly due to its failure in mobilizing positive political votes. Unlike the communist party, the congress party could not mobilize the mass, through their organization machinery, party propaganda, discipline and education. The support given by the communist party to the agricultural labourers, landless classes, trade unions, etc. encouraged a majority section of the people of Kerala to vote for them. The defeat of Panampally Govind Menon in Chalakudy, where the chunk of the electorate was Catholic, and the defeat of K.M. Chandy in Puliyanor (Palai), the Catholic heartland, remain adequate proof of the Congress failure in mustering its strength even in some of its pockets. On the whole, the Christian belt still remained with the Congress.

The communist rule of 28 months and the frequent confrontations it had with the Church and its interests and the controversial 'liberation struggle' that followed against Education Bill which was introduced in 13 July 1957, by the communist government to nationalize and control the Christian educational institutions made to surface the active role of the Church in the politics of the state. The Catholic clergy decided to oppose the bill on the very day of the introduction of it in the state assembly.²⁴⁰ It had opposed the idea of government control of the schools curtailing the powers of private agencies, mainly Christian managements. Together with the government control and appointment of teacher through the PSC in aided schools, the question of reservation to backward communities also came. This move was thoroughly opposed by the Nair service society also. The opposition of the Bill increased and it ultimately led to the intensification of the liberation struggle. Finally the agitations carried out by the catholic church and NSS were given the official support of the KPCC and the congress decided to

²⁴⁰ *The Malayala Manorama Daily*, 11 June, 1957.

spearhead the movement for the overthrow of the communist government on 3 June 1959.

It is evident from the report of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the chief Minister submitted to the Central Committee of the CPI in May 1957 that the educational legislation was not a programme of the party and he did not mention it at all in the report. C. Achutha Menon also had written that educational legislation was not originally planned by the communist party. It was an idea contributed by Joseph Mundassery, Education Minister himself, but later accepted by the party. Mundassery himself has acknowledged this in his report to the state committee of the (P) in 1957.²⁴¹ Though the initiative was taken by Mundassery, the party accepted it in toto under the impression that this piece of legislation would enhance its prestige and bring more support to it.

The 'liberation struggle' for which the personnel and funds were supplied by the Church and the Christian community culminated in the ouster of the first elected Communist government and no doubt, added to the political prestige of the Church in Kerala.²⁴² The agitation against the government took violent forms and at least 16 persons were killed in police firing and thousands injured within a short period. In the mid-term poll that followed in 1960, the bishops and the clergy demonstrated an almost equal concern and anxiety regarding the outcome of the election.²⁴³ From the senior-most prelate of the hierarchy to the ordinary parish priest of the remote village every Church leader took pains to ensure the defeat of the Communists. Though no bishop appeared on any election platform, they took

²⁴¹ Joseph Mundassery Report on the minutes of the Ministry of education, submitted to the State Committee of the CPI in 1958 (N.C. Sekhar's collection).

²⁴² *The Mathrubhumi Daily*, 17, July, 1959.

²⁴³ *The Deepika* 3 January 1960.

care to issue pastoral instructions jointly and separately exhorting the faithful to vote against the candidates of the Communist Party.

The Overthrow of Communists and the Political Conditions of Kerala after 1960

The strong alliance on the political plane by the Congress, the PSP and the Muslim League, and the cordial unity forged amongst the Nair, the Christian and the Muslim communities, indeed made things easy for the Church to mobilize its efforts to ensure the electoral victory of the candidates of the United Front of democratic forces. It has to be conceded that religious and communal factors played an active role in the election campaign of 1960. The *Deepika*, the noted Malayalam daily run by the monks of the Congregation of the CMI (Carmalites of Mary Immaculate) devoted its pages fully to ensure the defeat of the Communists. Explaining the inherent and implicit dangers of Marxism, it featured a series captioned 'Catholics and Communism'. Almost every day on the eve of the election priests spoke from the pulpit during the service, explaining the importance of the election and the devastating consequences of a possible Communist victory again. Bishop Sebastian Vayalil of Palai went a step further and warned his people that a Catholic, under no circumstances, should vote for a Communist or a fellow-traveller.²⁴⁴ He instructed that in all Churches under his jurisdiction special prayers be conducted every day after the holy mass for the victory of the democratic forces, till the election was over.

Though the Communist Party was reduced to a minority in the legislature in 1960 (table 1), it retained almost the same percentage of votes it polled in 1957, once again proving its popular base in the state.

²⁴⁴ *Pastoral Letter* issued by Bishop Sebastian Vayallil on 15 January 1960.

TABLE III²⁴⁵
Election Position in 1960

Particulars	Numbers
Total votes polled	8 169 786
Democratic Front	4 361 546
Communist Party and its independents	3 555 614
RSP and independents	164 363
Invalid	82 263

The voting pattern shows that the candidates of the Democratic Front were returned mainly from either the Christian belt or from constituencies where the Christians constituted a decisive bulk of voters, due to the efforts of the Church leaders. The bishops and the clergy took it as their prestige and of the Church, and left no stone unturned to see the Communists defeated at the polls.

Kerala Politics after 1962

The Lok Sabha election of 1962 provides another angle to analyse the involvement of the Church in politics. This time circumstances gave the bishops no option but to extend their blessings – spiritual and temporal – to the candidates of the Congress to ensure their electoral victory. This was particularly about the two predominant Catholic constituencies of Kottayam and Moovattupuzha, where the party leadership had finally bowed to the wishes of the Church leadership even in the choice of candidates. On the eve of the election, things were made dangerously delicate for Congress by the formation of the then formidable Malanad Karshaka Union (a forum of agriculturists) under the leadership of a popular firebrand and a rebel Catholic

²⁴⁵ N. Jose Chander. *op.cit.*, p.93.

priest Fr. Vadakan,²⁴⁶ his close co-operation with A.K. Gopalan, Communist leader and Member of Parliament, in opposing and resisting all moves for evicting tenants mainly Christians from forest and temple lands, the public debate between Fr. Vadakan and Home Minister P.T. Chacko on the desirability of priests entering politics, etc. The in-fighting in the Congress also contributed in making things worse for the party. The leadership found it difficult to have a choice in the selection of candidates for the Kottayam and Moovattupuzha constituencies from amongst the veterans who staked their claims. In the Kottayam constituency Mathew Maniangaden, sitting Member of Parliament, was sponsored by the organization wing headed by none other than the party Chief, C.K. Govindan Nair whereas K.P. Mathew, a Catholic aristocrat and Banker, had the backing of the Ministerial faction led by the Chief Minister R. Sanker and Home Minister P.T. Chacko. For the Moovattupuzha seat, K.M. Chandy made his claim with the support of the organization group, whereas Cherian Kappan enjoyed the blessings of the Ministerial wing. The situation got confused when George Thomas Kottukappally, sitting member, decided to seek the party ticket again from Moovattupuzha. Kottukappally was believed to have had the support of the then Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon who was considered then the conscience keeper of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru) and M.O. Mathai, former private secretary to the Prime Minister, staked his claim for Kottayam. The state election committee of the Congress thought of fielding M.O. Mathai from Kottayam and Mrs. R.V. Thomas (who was neither an applicant nor an aspirant for Parliament), widow of one of the freedom fighters and a founder leader of the state Congress in Travancore, from Moovattupuzha. To compensate the Kottayam seat which had gone to a non-Catholic Christian (M.O. Mathai), Annie Thayil, a prominent catholic lady and a reputed orator

²⁴⁶ Joseph Vadakan. *Ente Kithappum Kuthippum*, (Mal.), Trichur, 1980, p.32.

was offered the Trichur constituency.²⁴⁷ The choice of candidates made by the Congress election committee caused much opposition in the ranks of the two warring groups in the party, forcing the Central Parliamentary Board of the Congress to review the matter. As an apparent settlement between the two groups, the Kottayam seat was finally given to Maniangaden and moovattupuzha to Kappen. Anne Thayyil too was replaced in Trichur. Once the question of the distribution of party tickets got rather amicably settled, the party realized to its shock that its electoral chances even in its pockets were quite dim as long as Fr. Vadaken and his newly formed Forum of Agriculturists remained opposed to the Congress. A number of conciliatory moves were made but none of them produced any concrete positive results. Even the efforts of some of the bishops to make Vadakan mellowed did not prove fruitful.²⁴⁸ The Deepika the catholic daily, too strove hard to see the Congress candidates returned to parliament. Pastoral instructions were issued by the bishops indirectly, making their preferences clear. The Congress won in the Christian belt again but lost heavily in a majority of constituencies in the state.

Assembly Elections 1965

Politics in the post-liberation struggle period cost the Congress considerably and its ranks eroded due to the unimaginative policies of the coalition government of Thanu Pillai as well as the Congress government of Sankar which succeeded it. The disaffection amongst the people towards the Congress got snow-balled, gradually culminating in a major split in the party in 1964. The defection of 15 Congress MLAs en masse and the formation of the rebel Kerala Congress was rather its final phase. The alleged moral scandal which forced Home Minister Chako to quit office, the eviction of

²⁴⁷ John Kachimattom. *op.cit.*, p. 980.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Fr. Joseph Vadakadan on July 18, 2002.

settlers (a majority of them Catholics) from forest lands by Sankar Government after Chako's exit from the cabinet, the volley of Church desecrations and the government's failure to book the culprits all made things worse for the Congress. As a result, a good number of ordinary Christians drifted away from the mainstream of the Indian National Congress. The sudden and unexpected death of P.T. Chacko hastened the pace of the split and the Kerala Congress successfully played up the emotions of the people to its political advantage. Almost all the Catholic bishops were away in Rome at the time of split, attending the Second Vatican Council and hence they could not do anything to save the situation. By the time the bishops returned home the political stage in Kerala was set for the electoral confrontation of 1965 which proved fatal for the official faction of the Congress despite the patronage and support extended to it by some of the senior and politically powerful bishops of the hierarchy. A few senior prelates of the Church did not hesitate to throw their weight on the side of the Kerala Congress. Perhaps this was the first time the bishops stood divided on their political sympathies. While Archbishop Joseph Parecatil (who became a Cardinal later), Archbishop Joseph Attippetty (Verapoly), Bishop Thomas Tharayil (Kottayam), Bishop Sebastian Vayalil (Palai), Bishop George Alappatt (Trichur) and Bishop Jerome Fernandez (Quilon) stood firmly with the Congress Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios (Trivandrum), Archbishop Mathew kavukattu (Changanacherry) and Bishop Mathew Pothanamoozhy (Kothamangalam) were known for their sympathies for the Kerala Congress. Even in places where the bishops sided openly with the Congress and its candidates, a number of priests and nuns did not hesitate to identify themselves with the Kerala Congress. The congregation of the faithful also remained divided this time. The support extended by the Deepika, the chief Catholic daily, to the newly formed Kerala Congress caused the Congress lose a chunk of its Catholic followers. The total and collective backing hitherto

enjoyed by the Congress from the Christian community thus practically came to an end for ever. The Kerala Congress gradually emerged as the champion of conservative Christian interests, consolidating the Christian votes, particularly in the central Kerala region.²⁴⁹

Though some serious efforts were made by a few of the senior Archbishops and Bishops to effect a post-election agreement between the Congress and the Kerala Congress, it did not produce any positive results. From 1965 onwards the Kerala Congress, remained a force to be reckoned with in the politics of the state, making the Church leaders role in elections more complex, complicated and delicate.

General Elections 1967

In the 1967 elections – both to the Lok Sabha and to the state legislature – the failure on the part of the Congress and the Kerala Congress to come to terms proved politically disastrous for both as they helped the Left United Front to have an almost easy walk over with a two-third of seats in the legislature.²⁵⁰ A majority of Bishops proved pro-Congress this time; the Latin Bishop of Trivandrum, Peter Bernard even appearing on a Congress platform for N. Gamalial, who contested from Parassala. (In the Parassala constituency Latin Catholics constituted a decisive bulk of votes). During an official visit to one of his churches (Marangoli) in the Palai diocese, Bishop Sevastian Vayalil was asked by one of the faithful about the ensuing elections and the Bishop had no hesitation in categorically declaring that his political preferences were for none other than the Indian National Congress. In fact he was one of the Bishops who never had spared any effort for a reunion of the Congress and the Kerala Congress. Archbishop Benedict of Trivandrum, a known sympathizer of the Kerala Congress also made every effort for a

²⁴⁹ N. Jose Chander *op.cit.*, p.96.

²⁵⁰ *The Deepika*, 18 January, 1967.

congress – Kerala Congress amity. He found the stand taken by the Kerala Congress leadership during the talks untenable and made it known that his support goes to the Congress this time. The Congress could win only nine seats in the legislature, whereas the Kerala Congress reduced its strength to five.

Internal dissensions plagued the Left United Front soon setting the stage for a political crisis again. The Presidential election of 1969 (on the demise of Dr. Zakir Hussain), and the consequent split in the Indian National Congress, turned the politics of the state upside down. In the emerging political set-up the Marxist Party practically got alienated in the national and state politics alike. The hitherto untried alliance between the Congress (under Indira Gandhi) and the CPI marked a new turn.²⁵¹ For almost a decade this new experiment of coalition provided the state with a kind of political stability for the first time since Independence. Achutha Menon's government was the first to complete its full term. Since the Kottarakara by-election (1970) in which C. Achutha Menon sought his entry into the legislature, the Church and the Christian community were gradually mellowed towards the CPI, and a new theory that amongst the Marxists and the CPI, the latter was a lesser danger, was given very wide currency by the *Deepika* and the *Malayala Manorama*. Even nuns voted for Achutha Menon in Kottarakara without any prick of conscience, owing to the newly found political theory advanced by the protagonists of the Congress – CPI united front. Achutha Menon's image as a clean political personality and the inimitable compromise and political maturity and tact evinced by him as Chief Minister made him one of the most acceptable amongst the Communists for the Christian Community and the Church leadership. Even the sequence of splits in the Kerala Congress, which made things difficult and even embarrassing for the Church leaders, did not in

²⁵¹ Shashi Tharoor, *India from Midnight to the Millennium*, Delhi, 1997, p.277.

fact diminish their enthusiasm for Achutha Menon's leadership of his tight-rope walking coalition, which surprisingly survived for almost seven years. At the height of George (K.M. George) – Mani (K.M. Mani) feud in the Kerala Congress, Achutha Menon personally sought the good offices of Bishop Sebastian Vayalil of Palai for some kind of a truce between the warring groups.²⁵² When there was a split amongst the Jacobite Christians into those supporting the Patriarch of Antioch and the Catholicose of the East (Kottayam), it was Achutha Menon who brought the two sides to a conference table and settled the matter for the time being. He decided to make a discourse to them on the spirit of Christian love when this division and the subsequent show of strength between the two factions became a law and order problem for the government.

Barring the mid-term poll of 1970, in the election of 1971 (Lok Sabha) and 1977 (Lok Sabha as well as State Legislature) the coalition of Congress, Kerala Congress and CPI worked well. In 1970 elections the Kerala Congress changed sides at the last minute on its hard bargain over seats. In six months it went back to the CPI – led front, but again moved away from it when its application for entry into the government was kept pending for long, trying the patience of the party leadership. Again it went to the Congress coalition, almost overnight, once the Emergency was proclaimed in 1975.

The church leadership and Christian community were generally happy about the order and discipline the Emergency brought in the beginning. But prelates like Archbishop Yuhanon of the mar Thoma Church and Bishop Sebastian Vayalil of Palai minced no words once the government tried to encroach upon the rights and liberties of ordinary citizens on one pretext or the other. But this did not deter the Church leaders from extending their support to the Congress and its coalition in the election held in 1977. This

²⁵² C. Achutha Menon, *Marakatha Anubhavangal*, (Mal.) Kottayam, 1981, p.101.

was mainly because they found the Congress their only option, as it seemed to them the only national force formidable enough to provide a stable government for the country.

Janata Victory at the Centre

However, the totally unexpected Janata Victory (1977) did not disturb the church and the Christians. In the early phase of Janata rule, the Church leaders were, indeed, happy about the return of the atmosphere of fearlessness and freedom in the country. Seeds of suspicion and fear gripped the Christian community once the Tyagi Bill was introduced in Parliament. It was only a private member's bill seeking some curbs on missionary activities as well as religious conversion. A delegation of bishops met Morarji Desai, the then Prime Minister, to request his intervention in persuading Tyagi to drop the bill. Mother Teresa also wrote to the Prime Minister, endorsing the Bishop's request, and Prime Minister Morarji advised Tyagi not to press his proposal. The Tyagi Bill certainly cost the Janata the goodwill of the Christian community. Many in the church leadership and the Christians in general began to consider Indira Gandhi a better champion of the cause of the minorities.²⁵³

While the north went with the Janata in the 1977 elections, Kerala along with the other southern States stood by the Congress(I) and Indira Gandhi. The Congress(I) led coalition swept back to power in Kerala, and Karunakaran formed the Government. But he was forced to quit soon when the High Court found him guilty of submitting a false affidavit in the Rajan case.²⁵⁴ The controversy regarding the arrest and disappearance of Rajan a young engineering student of REC, Calicut during the Emergency while Karunakaran was the Home Minister in Achutha Menon's government – did

²⁵³ Shashi Tharoor, *op. cit.*, p.276.

²⁵⁴ L. Natarajan, ed., *op.cit.*, p.48.

in fact rock the state politics and changed its course considerably. An unwilling Antony (A.K. Antony) was prevailed upon to succeed Karunakaran as the leader of Congress legislature party and Chief Minister. Karunakaran was left to fight his case in the court. The scene of national politics too underwent changes and the Congress was split once again. The Shah Commission was holding its 'Durbar' in Delhi and Indira Gandhi was fighting for her very survival. The political developments in New Delhi naturally had its repercussions in Kerala too, and the two factions of the Congress, one by Karunakaran and the other by Antony – parted their ways. The Antony's Congress made gestures of goodwill to the Marxist party in an effort to build up a United Front of leftist and progressive forces in the state. Karunakaran took up the anti-Marxist banner and tried to consolidate the Democratic Front. Kerala Congress too had a split dividing the party into Kerala Congress (M) and Kerala Congress (J) – the former led by K.M. Mani and the latter by P.J. Joseph. The genesis of this split began when Mani had to resign from Antony's government when the State High Court invalidated his election to the State Legislative Assembly from his own home constituency of Palai. The election case raised much dust of controversy, since the names of Bishop of Palai and a senior police officer hailing from the place were dragged into it. It was alleged that the Bishop convened a conference of priests and prominent leaders at the Bishop's house on the eve of the election to ensure Mani's return to the legislature. The officer too was believed to have attended the conference. Mani won his appeal in the Supreme Court and returned to his ministerial chair. The already sore relationship between Mani and Joseph became tense, leading to a bitter parting of the ways.

Assembly Elections 1980 and 1982

The period witnessed political changes in quick succession and A.K. Antony quit his post, passing the Chief Minister's chair to P.K. Vasudevan

Nair of the CPI.²⁵⁵ Since the Marxist party insisted on the resignation of the government as a precondition to form a new Lefist Front on a clean slate, Vasudevan nair obliged. Meanwhile the Janata crumbled in New Delhi, and Charan Singh's stop-gap government did not survive even six months, forcing a mid-term national poll (1980). Close on the heels came election to the state legislature too; this time the choice confined to the Democratic Front under the Congress (I) and the Left Democratic Front led by the Marxist party. The position of the Church leaders became delicate, as the Kerala Congress of Mani and the Congress of Antony were with the Marxist Front. Some of the catholic Bishops felt personally unhappy to disown Mani and his faction of the Kerala Congress, though their preference was for Indira Gandhi and her Congress in national politics due to their firm faith in Mrs. Gandhi's secular image and leadership abilities. There was victory of Xavier Arackel, Congress (I) candidate in Ernakulam, over his Congress (A) rival Dr. Henry Austin, Central Minister in Charan Singh's Government, and the defeat of George J. Mathew, sitting MP and Chairman of the Mani Group Kerala Congress by George Joseph mundackal of Kerala Congress (J) in the Moovattupuzha constituency, and the fact that K.M. Chandy, KPCC (I) Chief, lost only by a meager margin in the Kerala Congress – Marxist fortress of Kottayam. It shows that a majority of Christians did not like the new political experiment of Kerala Congress (M) and Congress (A) with the Marxists. The Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference issued a joint statement, signed by 22 Archbishops and Bishops, which was noting but an open declaration of their preference for the Congress (I)-led anti-Marxist Democratic Front.²⁵⁶ The Left Democratic Front had their score when five Bishops, belonging to non-catholic Christian denominations and known for their progressive Leftist views, came out with a rejoinder – defending the Left Democratic Front.

²⁵⁵ *Manorama Year Book*, 2002, p.657.

²⁵⁶ *The Trichur Diocesan Bulletin*, 1982.

Thus for the first time the Bishops and the Christian community stood divided over the question of alliance with the Marxist party. Though the popular hold of the pro-Marxist Bishops was not close to the other conventional school, their statement provided a psychological boost to the Marxist Front as well as the Kerala Congress (M) and Congress (A), which were struggling hard to wear the mask of a progressive left image in defence of their alliance with the Marxist party and its coalition partners. The election verdict went in favor of the Marxist-led Left Democratic alliance. The Democratic Front, however, put up an impressive fight in almost all constituencies and its candidates lost in many places only by very narrow margins. Marxist Party's E.K. Nayanar formed the government, but insisted on keeping the Home portfolio too with the leading partner of the coalition.²⁵⁷ Soon the relationship between the Marxist party and the Congress (A) got sore; Antony often taking the Marxist party to task for the government's failure on the law and order front. Mani tactfully kept himself close to the Marxists and emerged as the Chief Minister's chief confidant.

The internal dissensions in the Front soon acquired wide dimensions when Antony and his Congress came out into the open, criticizing the Marxist party and its policies. Karunakaran played his cards so well that soon it became evident that the Left Democratic Government's days were numbered. Once Antony decided to leave the Front, Kerala Congress (M) found its position embarrassing, and after a home work of few days, it too decided to cross over. Nayanar resigned and a government was formed by Karunakaran.²⁵⁸ It survived on the casting vote of the Speaker (A.C. Jose) once Lonappan Nambadan, a Kerala Congress (M) legislator and a former minister defected from the ruling side. An electoral confrontation became

²⁵⁷ *Manorama Year Book*, 2000, p.657.

²⁵⁸ *Archives of Contemporary History*, JNU, Delhi, File No. 31/1982.

inevitable. The state went to polls again in 1982, when the Congress (I) had under its wings almost all parties of democratic denominations except the All India Muslim League and the Janata faction owing allegiance to Chandrashekhar and the national party leadership. The Bishops were so happy that the Congress(I) and the two Kerala Congress factions came under the same banner this time, and they found their task of mobilizing the Christian votes in favour of the United Democratic Front under the Congress (I) rather smooth and comparatively effortless. The *Deepika*, which took an apparently neutral but slightly slanted stance in favour of Kerala Congress (M) in the 1980 elections,²⁵⁹ pooled its efforts to see the Democratic Front win at the polls in 1982. From the Cardinal to the ordinary Bishops of the Catholic hierarchy the Catholicos of the Orthodox and the Jacobite South India (CSI) and all other denominations made it known in their own way that their political preference goes this time unreservedly to the Congress(I) – led United Democratic Front. The Front won with convincing margins in a majority of constituencies in the 1982 elections.

The Church – A Communal Pressure Group

In a state like Kerala where interest-groups are invariably communal or occupational, the church's involvement in politics will certainly remain a factor that cannot be completely discarded. An analysis of the Church's role in politics reveals some unique characteristics of the structure of the Christian community. A peculiar feature of the community and the Church is that the real leadership lies with the Bishops and the clergy and not with the laity. The lay leadership constitutes only a second line, but in times of actual confrontations they function as agencies for implementation. The reason is that the resources of the community remain ultimately at the disposal of the Bishops and the clergy. Either in the matter of administration of Church

²⁵⁹ *The Indian Christian Directory*, 2002, p.115.

owned institutions or in the appointments there, the lay leadership plays no appreciable part. Because of the peculiar social structure of the community, the hierarchy has in effect come to represent the Christian community. Hence the Church has assumed such importance in matters like politics and elections. In the Nair and the Ezhava communities, the priests seldom have so much of a social stature or importance, and hence social and political leadership is in the hands of others. In the Christian community even social leadership lies largely with the Bishops and the Clergy, and making use of their social position the Church leaders find it rather easy to influence even the political attitudes and electoral preferences of their men. The sacrosanct position of the church leaders adds to their power and their sway over an enviable position in the politics of the state, particularly in times of elections. And it remains the same since the situation continues to be what it is today.

CHAPTER VII

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

The history of Christianity has been the history of challenges. The spiritualism it advocates has been challenged by materialism, love by hatred, brotherhood by enmity, peace by war, faith by skepticism, unity by schisms and so on. Challenges against religions all over the world – unprecedented development of science and materialism and the consequent loss of faith, drifting of the young and intelligent from religions, breaking up of the family and the related social institutions, loss of values – are all challenges to Christianity also. As the Church is part of history and is composed of concrete, particular living men all challenges to human development- massive poverty and degradation, hunger, disease, inequality among individuals and nations, injustice, oppressive structures, atheism, political and economic imperialism in their national and international dimensions, wretchedness and misery, religious revivalism and fundamentalism, misguided and selfish power politics, repression, oppression and exploitation, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic conflicts, addiction to alcohol and drugs, unemployment, tragic realities of women like dowry, destruction of female fetuses, high incidence of suicide, divorce, confusion over moral norms on euthanasia¹ - are all challenges to the Church too. And all these challenges to the Church are challenges to the Christianity in India especially to SMC since it is part of the universal Church. However, here we deals only with, those challenges which very often stand in the way of achieving the mission of SMC and the responses it has to make to face these challenges.

¹ B. Gaudencio, ed., *For all the Peoples of Asia*, Asian Bishops statement on Mission community and Ministry Social Action Lay Apostolate Dialogue 1974-1986, Volume II: Manila, 1987, pp. 379 – 382.

The mission of the Church of every type, every time and every place is evangelization, which is the propagation of Christian principles.² Therefore, there is no better test of the excellence of Christian church than to examine its achievement in the field of evangelization as institutions must be judged in terms of its achievements in their objectives. When one view through this angle the SMC's role does not offer much satisfaction to the students of its history – religious as well as secular.

The Kerala Church is now nearly 2000 years old and is the most ancient Christian community of India. It is as old as Christianity itself and older than most of the churches in the world. In spite of the long and continued existence of Christianity on the Indian soil, the Christians at present constitute less than three percent of the total Indian population and only 25% of the total population of Kerala. We do not require any further evidence to show that the evangelization endeavor was very meagre. It had dwelt at home in India for twenty centuries, stricken by the most mysterious fame of sterility ever known in the Catholic history.³

The gravity of this failure becomes more clear when we know that within five hundred years after the birth of Christ, Christianity became the professed religion of the majority of the population of the Mediterranean basin, the most powerful civilized areas of the globe and by 1500 A.D, there was scarcely any department of European life and thought that did not reflect the influence of the Christian Church.⁴ This striking contrast must concern not only the religious but also any student of history.

² *Catholic Dictionary*.op. cit., p.83.

³ A. Gille, S.J., *Christianity At Home*, Calcutta. 1924. p.65

⁴ Paul Thenayan, *The Missionary Consciousness of St. Thomas Christians*, Cochin, 1982, pp. 36-37.

The usual and general explanation given to this failure is that there was little chance or time for Kerala SMC Church for evangelization as it was struggling for existence.⁵ But this explanation is not much valid. It is true that SMC had been under the western dominance from 16th to 19th centuries and was struggling for existence. But what about the rest of the period. Why did it fail in evangelization during the pre 16th century i.e., pre-western period. Twentieth century has been regarded as heyday of home missions of SMC. To accelerate the pace of evangelization, each syro-Malabar diocese set up its own unit of the society for the propagation of faith with a number of full time catechists. Several organizations like the St.Thomas society, the Mission League etc., are formed for helping evangelization directly or indirectly. Despite the concerted and unprecedented efforts of nearly 100 years no real achievements were made in evangelization. Of course it is true that during this period new Dioceses were formed, number of bishops increased and all other infrastructures developed. But these developments cannot be equated with the success of evangelization. The naked truth that only 75% of the population of Kerala, the homeland of St.Thomas Christians and 97% of the total population of India are not Christians betrays the claimed miracle of evangelization that is being taking place among the St.Thomas Christians even after the days of indigenous bishops. So neither the earlier periods indifference to evangelization nor the foreign domination over the Malabar Church are not the real factors responsible for the failure of evangelization or simply speaking, the spread of the Malabar Church. Similarly, the Malabar Church had been in the Indian soil for centuries without practically no persecution at all and enjoying the atmosphere of secularism. Still its achievements in terms of evangelization is not much. Therefore the stray incidence of atrocities on Christian missionaries taking place nowadays in certain parts of the country, the much feared threat to secularism are also not

⁵ Paul Thenayan, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

going to be serious challenges to Malabar Church. Several favourable conditions which facilitated the spread of Christianity in other parts of the world were absent in Kerala which adversely affected SMC to a very great extent. When the famous roads and Greek and Latin languages facilitated the spread of Christianity such facilities were not present in Kerala in the beginning days of St. Thomas Christianity. The western ghats walled off Kerala from the rest of India and there was no swift and easy communication even within Kerala itself and this isolation led to the sterility of the Gospel message in Kerala. Again the patronage of powerful kings contributed much to the conversion of Europe to Christianity. In Kerala, though the rulers were tolerant to Christianity, they did not give special support with regard to conversion. Again the Chaldean prelates, who were juridically established over the Malabarians at an early stage, never bothered to consecrate a single native bishop for them. The bishops who came from Persia from time to time, could not give any powerful leadership which was so much necessary for the growth and expansion of the Church. Same thing happened during Latin rule also.

What the people need today is not a preaching church but a serving church, an open church. At least there are elements for Church's satisfaction too i.e. even though the people of India are not converted to Christianity, many of them are very much inspired and guided by the powerful Christian messages of love and brotherhood. And the present teaching of the church is that even though the people are not converted to Christianity by Baptism, those who are following the principles of Christ are followers of Christ.

Behind all these there are some other live challenges. Some are external and some are internal – to the SMC. Among these the most important is still Hinduism as it had been in the past. The Indian society, the land of

Hindus, where caste system, idotary and religious bigotry had been so rigid even the reformist movements like Buddhism and Jainism could not do much. The religious biogotory had been so rigid that even the reformist movements like Buddhism and Jainism could not do much. The religious bigortny prevents them to convert to other religions. In the words of one of the followers of Rajaram Mohan Roy, "The country, (India) was over flood with ritualism. People strongly believed that they could purify themselves by bathing in the Ganges, the holy river, offering money to the Gods and going on pilgrimate to sacred places and by keeping fast. Brahmins, the priestly class of the society who accepted services under the English used to make particular efforts to maintain their superiority and caste previlages."⁶ This may appear strange as Hinduism is well known for religious toleration. But it must be remembered that though Hinduism is tolerant to other religions it is intolerant to conversion. It is all receptive and all comprehensive, so usually a Hindu does not see the necessity for anyone to change his religion to meet God. He finds it unnecessary in most case, to give up his own faith in preference to another. Hinduism neither requires nor attempts to make converts.⁷ A Hindu is born not converted. Formal conversion to Hinduism officially does not exist. The main note of Hinduism is one of respect and good will for all other creeds. Hinduism did not regard it as its mission to convert humanity to any opinion. For what counts is conduct, not belief. This peculiar feature of Hinduism has been preventing the spread of SMC not only outside Kerala but even in Kerala itself.

Another challenge to SMC has been the caste system. "When one spoke of Indian Philosophy, it is the philosophy of higher castes."⁸ Of course it is true that the caste system helped the survival of SMC to a certain extent,

⁶ M.C Kotnala. "*Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Indian Awakening*". Pp. 28-29.

⁷ Shashi Tharoor, *India from Midnight to Millenium*, Delhi, 1997, p.81.

⁸ K.M. Panikar, *A survey of Kerala History*, Madras, 1947, p.271.

as mentioned earlier, by accommodating it in its fold. But the positive contribution of caste system to SMC ends here. To leave ones caste is one of the greatest crimes one can commit. So the conversion of caste Hindus is not at all easy. This peculiar features of caste system also challenged the spread of Malabar Church. The invader is allowed to become a part of India, but he is isolated and thus prevented from contaminating the national life by the protective wall of social distance. The high caste Hindus were not ready to get contaminated by the evils of the European civilization or religion about whom they believed that, their progressive reforms and practices will impure their religion. That is why many of them opposed the progressive reforms of English, like abolishment of sati, polygamy and child marriage which were signs of respectability to the upper castes. They believed that western culture and religion is purely materialistic. In this process new religions that enter India have a good chance of survival, but they often lose their ability to spread⁹.

The SMC also compromised with the caste System. Their compromise with the caste system adversely affected its prospects in several ways. Firstly it prevented the conversion of the lower castes. Thus it violated the doctrines of Christianity itself and destroyed the moral strength of the SMC to grow. Again it inaugurated an era of customs within the SMC with far reaching adverse consequences.

When the possibility of converting caste Hindus was dim because of caste rules, the only chance of conversion would be from the lower castes of the society. Those lower caste people, in order to improve their social position, may embrace a creed which would offer them a fair chance in life, for as long as they remain Hindus, they have no chance of improving their life. SMC did not take advantage of this chance. They had in effect become a

⁹ John Webster, *God's People in India*, Toronto, 1959, p.23.

high caste, proud of their standing but not reaching out to make fresh converts¹⁰. They remained themselves as a high caste and closed community, It is generally known that the origin of the caste system is from *Varna*. The people of fair complexion began to be considered as superiors and the others as slaves or inferiors. We see the SMC Christians consider themselves as belonging to this group. Those who converted to SMC in the later periods from the lower castes are treated as inferiors by the SMC people. The St.Thomas Christians even kept away the low castes from their sight.¹¹

Thus by failing to love one another as Christ has loved all, St.Thomas Christians denied themselves, the opportunity to all men to know that they are the disciples of Christ¹². The life style of the early Christians was a strength and source of attraction for others, and this was followed by St.Thomas Christians, in the early period. They lived in harmony and requite the hospitality and toleration shown to them by the Kings and princes by respecting the faith and customs of their rulers. But in later years they identified themselves as high caste groups Hindus. This deviation was not only a violation of the doctrines of Christianity but against the egalitarian principles of Christian teachings. By this SMC lost its great moral strength and potential of growth. Instead of being the salt of the earth and leaven that leavens the lump, they became separate, self contained and

¹⁰ It is not arguing that The missionaries of St. Thomas Christians did not convert low castes at all. The earliest recorded incident of converting the low caste by the native Syrian Christian is in the latter half of the 16th century. It is stated that in two Syrian priests converted a few low caste Hindus, Malarayans by caste in the eastern hilly parts of Poonjar region. See Nagam Aiya Travancore State Manual vol.II, p.179. Ordinarily the conversion of low castes was not encouraged if not totally prohibited, due to the strict caste feeling prevalent among the people. The SMC, began evangelizing the untouchables about the middle of the 19th Century. The converted Harijans were denied almost all social economic and educational privileges. See George Menachery, ed., *The St.Thomas Christ Encyclopaedia of India*, Vol. II, Trichur.p. 123.

¹¹ "Christian Caste". *Encycloped Britannica*, Vol. III, p. 450.

¹² Christ exhorts – “ By this all men will know that you are my disciples: if you love one another as I have loved you.

self - enclosed community. Because of the way of symbol living and mutual love of the early Christians a number of people were attracted to Christianity all over the world. But the Thomas Christians living amidst their Hindu brethren rendered no effective witness in matters concerned with their faith in Christ.

St. Thomas Christians not only remained as a caste and abstained themselves from conversion work among low castes but also did not even let new converts made by the missionaries enter their churches¹³. They inaugurated an era of casteism within the Church, which exists even now. The behavior patterns of Christians in Kerala show that caste consciousness and caste – segregation still exist among them either openly or covertly. The tension and segregationism that exist in varying degrees between the different rites is based not so much on the relative superiority of one rite over the other, but on the beliefs regarding the nobility of lineage. Thus now Church in India especially the SMC is confronted with the task of overcoming the all pervasive and divisive presence of castes and communities both within herself as well as within the Indian society at large.

The problem of converted low caste Christians, known as Dalit Christians, is crucial to the SMC Church as well as to the whole Christianity in India. Dalit Christians, do not get social equality within SMC. The ill treatment to the Dalit Christians, within the Church not only prevents the further incoming of the lower castes to the SMC but also inaugurate their

¹³ They (St. Thomas Christians) do not baptize men of caste or tribe that are vile (low) for not losing their nobility. Such persons are sent to the Portuguese, and the baptized are not admitted in their churches nor do they have any close contact with them and for the same reason (of losing their nobility) they wash themselves (for purification) if they touch any of the low caste. By 1773 we see a decision of St. Thomas Christians not to send their Syrian Seminarians to Verapoly together with the Latin Seminarians since the former could not live and work together fearing lost the caste nobility would be lost since the Latins were considered as ignoble. In 1781 there were two groups of clerics at the Verapoly seminary, but each group used separate kitchens, dormitories and other things. See Paul Thenayan, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

withdrawal from the Church. The caste domination and discrimination against Dalit Christians within the Church is as serious and appalling as the persecution of the minorities in the country¹⁴. Dalit Christians still don't get their due share in admissions and appointment in educational institutions according to their population size. This stands as a glaring indication of their marginalisation in the Church.¹⁵ They feel that these are allowed to continue in the SMC rather deliberately. It is true that most Church bodies remains as ivory towers in matters relating to Dalit Christians.

Therefore, it is very necessary to put an end to casteism in the Church, eradicate all forms of discriminations and ensure equal opportunities to Dalit Christians within the Church structure and institutions. This is particularly important, among other reasons, that they have been denied the constitutional safeguards guaranteed for other Dalits, because of their conversion to Christianity, eventhough they were also backward and historically oppressed. Since Dalit Christians do not enjoy the reservations like the other Dalits, the only way that they can get some kind of reservation for education and employment is through a policy of reservations for Dalit Christians within the institutions run by the SMC. Even otherwise it is necessary because the percentage of Dalit Christians in the Christian educational institutions even now is as low as 6% of the teaching staff and other employees.¹⁶ Similarly special funds should be provided for their education, job oriented and technical based courses should be started for them in the educational institutions.

Above all the empowerment of Dalit Christian community within the SMC is necessary by the equitable sharing with Dalit Christians in the

¹⁴ M. Mary John.'Dalit Christian Liberation Movement' in *the Rally*. Vol.76 No.12. AICUF Publication, Chennai, May 2000, P.7.

¹⁵ *Survey report. Dalit Catholics Sabha*, Changanassery, 2003.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 7.

structural and institutional power of the Church. This is possible by appointing Dalit superiors in religious institutions and accommodating Dalit leaders in various advisory and administrative organs of the SMC.

If abstention from conversion work among the low castes and casteism within the SMC shut its doors against the low castes during the previous centuries, in this century another reason also emerged to keep the poor and the weaker sections away from the SMC i.e, activities of the social reformist leaders, loss of reservations and privileges to lower castes offered by the government and later the emergence of communism in Kerala who championed the cause of the low castes.

Communism which marshalled the poor to its side by the middle of the fifties¹⁷ mobilized and politicized the properties and the under privileged and offered itself as a rival to the SMC. The poor found communism more appealing to liberate themselves from the tyranny of casteism and communalism and many supported communism. Thus communism in Kerala challenged SMC not through its atheistic stand but offering its weight with the poor. But the anticommunist stand taken by the Church¹⁸ further alienated the poor and the low castes from the SMC.

Therefore, SMC has to correct the wrongs of the past. She has to preach Christian justice by underlining the need for a radical change in economic and social planning in a way to give the poor a chance to help themselves by increasing their ability to produce and enabling them to have more of the goods of the world; to liberate them from all forms of material, social and spiritual alienation. In other words the mission of SMC has to

¹⁷ T.J.Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, University of California, Berkely and Los Angeles, 1982, p. 367.

¹⁸ The papacy of Pius XII was a period of conservative attitudes in the Church and uncompromising attitudes towards communism.
See T.J.Nossiter, *op. cit.*, p.155.

address itself to the problems of inhuman conditions created as a result of economic injustice, certain social and cultural factors, e.g. caste, restriction of women etc., which give rise to division among groups and bondage of individuals¹⁹. The SMC will fulfill its mission if she proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ, which implies an integral liberation of the whole man and every man from whatever alienates him from the integrity and fullness of existence as a total man. S M C should bear active and effective witness to Christ who lived for the liberation and transformation of the society. For this she must opt for the poor, for the oppressed members of the social class which is ardently struggling for its most elementary rights and striving to build a society when one can live as a human being. S M C should try real and active solidarity with the interest and struggles of the poor and the exploited class. She must not only fight the poverty but also change her own structure so as to become poor herself and be with the poor. The S M C also has the temptation, like all other human organizations, to seek its own institutional growth in number, in power, in wealth, in prestige as an end in itself²⁰. In this confrontation it has lost its power to speak with authority, to leaven the society in which it is set to be the conscience of the nation. The SMC cannot christinise unless she first lives the Gospel. With this purpose the SMC Bishops of India must discard honorific titles and luxuries which offend the spirit of poverty. They must even dispense with the use of the mitre, the crosier and ring which they inherited from the monarchical episcopacy of the Western world those are anomalies to the Indian background of high thinking and simple living, asceticism and renunciation. SMC should not only abandon out dated juridical structures and styles of authority, but also insist on unchangeable formulations of dogma and morals,

¹⁹ Paul Thenayan, *op. cit.*, p.194.

²⁰ Juan Luis Segundo, *The Community Called the Church*, New York, 1965, p.98.

she should abandon too narrow cultural criteria and all the encrustations provoked by the attitude of self defence.

Another challenge to SMC is its Oriental and Western idiom. Through out its history the SMC wore a foreign grab. During the days of western dominance, she put the grab of the western culture. In her 1500 years spread non-European history, she wore the grab of Persian Christianity. The SMC could not and did not create an indigenous theology and liturgy as an embryo, that could blossom into an Indian rite as Greek and Roman cultures did at that time. It is an undeniable fact that the alien character of the Eastern Rite in Africa followed by the St.Thomas Christians, was one of the main factors that stood in the way of St.Thomas Christianity entering into an Indian Rite. In India, the SMC remained cut off by all its habits of thought which have moulded the character of the Indian people for four thousand years²¹ Unless some means is found of making contact with Indian sources there seems to be absolutely no hope for Christianity making any deep impression on the minds of Indians. Unfortunately the lack of true Christian culture makes the presence of the Church in Kerala itself largely sterile from the missionary point of view. The liturgy, theology, spirituality etc., of St.Thomas Christians remain largely a closed book to the outside world as was the case even before the 16th century. In the pre Portuguese period they accepted and followed the theology developed in the Church of the East. After the sixteenth century they followed and still follow Westernised Eastern theology. No attempt has ever been made to relate the Gospel message to the cultural and religious traditions of India. It remained always foreign for the millions of non - Christians of India.

History has taught the hard lesson that Christianity has taken deep roots only in such places as in the Greco –Roman World where there was a

²¹ B. Griffiths, *Christ in India*, New York, 1966, p. 89.

real encounter and a fruitful dialogue between the Church and the local cultures²². Therefore in India, St. Thomas Christians should think and speak and act as Indians, they should lead an Indian way of life, they should be fully involved in the problems of social and national life, should be conscious of and use their cultural and religious heritage, should be fully rooted and permeated by the Indian spirituality. This adaptation however has never been achieved. The Church, by virtue of her essential catholicity can not be alien to any country or people. She is bound to make herself native to every class, culture and race. Wherever she is, she must strike her roots deep into the spiritual and cultural ground of the place and assimilate all that is of genuine value. Therefore St. Thomas Christianity too is bound to assimilate and adopt all the positive values found in Indian culture.

SMC must realize its genuine Indian identity and rid herself of the slur of being foreign which clings to her because of leaning too heavily on foreign support and of the style of life adopted by Western Christian communities. SMC should relate her christian responsibility to the total situation of the country and of the people. By humanizing social conditions overcoming corruptions, widening aspirations and by transforming cultural, social and political institutions, she should proclaim Christ.

The dictum, SMC is Indian in every respect is not correct. Experts on the Syro-Malabar rite and liturgy admit that liturgical prayers remained essentially Chaldean, inspite of Indian adaptations in regard to ritual ceremonies like the exsequies, commemoration of the dead and wedding, and in the field of art and architecture.

Therefore, SMC should not export its own liturgy which got developed in the Middle East. Its exact adaptation to the Kerala cultural forms, to the mission territories i.e., to the exarchates in North India will not be correct. It

²² B. Griffiths, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

should allow the exarchate to develop their own liturgy, theology etc., it should try to form and develop a theology of its own in order that the non – Christians may be able to grasp the eternal truths of the Catholic faith and a fruitful dialogue may be made possible.²³

As liturgy can also be a direct spiritual factor in certain cases, as in Kerala, where non- Christians often participate in the Christian celebrations of feasts, liturgy must be more and more incarnated in the local culture, be intelligible to them and transparent. The language used in liturgy was Suriyani or Syriac upto 1966 in the SMC, where as protestant groups like the Marthomites in Kerala started using Malayalam, the local language for liturgy even in the 1820's itself. The signs used in liturgy should signify Christian Faith, Indian religious attitude and the dense realities of human existence and national life. They must be genuinely and relevantly Indian. In practice that is needed in the Indian contest is a worship thoroughly Christian in its content and in basic structure and thoroughly Indian in its expression. Liturgy can be given more Indian character by integrating authentic Indian forms of worship, by adopting suitable Indian decorations, furnishings, postures, gestures etc., and by composing prayers and hymns which may also take their inspiration from the cultural and religious heritage of India. Alongwith Indian liturgies, Indian way of life and tradition of thought must be taken into account because evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not have an impact on their practical life.

Another challenge to SMC is the conflict of values and interests between the rulers and the ruled existing within it.²⁴ The patterns of authority

²³ See the Decree on the missionary activity of the Church in Conrad de Vito, *The Second Vatican Council at a glance*, Allahabad. 1966, pp. 125-128.

²⁴ Jose Kuriedath, *op. cit.*, p.298.

and leadership which had been predominantly decentralised more traditional and less bureaucratic at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese became more centralized and more bureaucratic since then. The internal structure of the SMC continues to remain centralized even after the appointment of local bishops²⁵. Even the high expectations raised by Vatican II, council held in 1963 for renewal of the catholic church did not inaugurate an era of decentralized authority in the SMC. The adverse effect of the extreme centralization of authority and marginalisation of the members of the Church is not confirmed to the denial of the laity in the participation of the administrations of the SMC. On the contrary it lead to the denial of the involvement of the laity in the evangelization process which is a major drawback of the evangelization process of the SMC. Modern education, democratic values and above all the new concept of the Church and the new teachings of council of Vatican II held in 1963 about the role of the laity in Church have raised high demands for decentralization and closer participation of the laity in the affairs of the church. Naturally the laity expect leadership role in the temporal administration of the Church. As a result conflict of values and interests between the rulers and the ruled exists in the SMC. The latter is now longing for an authority structure that is decentralized and revitalized.²⁶

Since the expectations are not fulfilled, the legitimacy of the existing structure for temporal administration has come under severe criticism and questioning, the very norms have come under serious challenge. While the leaders persist with conservative values of monarchy, concentration of power and the exclusive right of the clergy to govern the Church, the members expect the introduction of the values of democracy and participate authority in temporal administration where the clergy cannot claim any exclusive

²⁵ Jose Kuriedath, *op. cit.*, p.287.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

power by virtue of their priestly ordination. Due to this conflict of values and of power interests which lay hidden in the ideological garbs, the legitimacy of the present set-up for temporal administration is questioned by a significant section of the members; they refuse to accept it as it exists today²⁷.

It was centralization of authority by the Portuguese that came under severe challenge in 17th C and finally resulted the division of the Indian Christians in 1653. Even today the same problem is agitating the community. But this agitation may not grow into a movement of resistance and revolt but will take the form of disinterestedness, indifference and withdrawal from the Church. The laity is turning to secular organizations for the satisfaction of their needs and interests. The results would be the gradual confinement of the present religious authority and leaderships of SMC into strictly spiritual areas and the SMC will cease to exist as a multipurpose organization and their leadership in the non-religious life of the community will be lost.

Therefore, it is highly necessary to decentralize and democratize the authority structure of the SMC. It must be remembered that the Church has been placed in this world and hence SMC cannot keep aloof from the Indian scene where a democratic political culture has already taken shape. A centralized authority structure can not survive for long in any institution which is placed in the background of a democratic political culture. So SMC has to democratize and decentralize herself which will pave the way for maximum participation of the laity not only in the administration but also in the evangelization.

Besides the above mentioned challenges new ones are also emerging which demands the preparedness of SMC to face them. For example it is true that by providing schools the Church has made a decisive contribution to awaken the people and introduce them to the modern world. But this

²⁷ Jose Kuriedath, *op. cit.*, p.298.

becomes detrimental when she remains stagnant in theology and discipline and, consequently, in permanent conflict with the ruling elite, with students and with the workers - these are signs of a Church that is becoming more and more irrelevant to the needs, and fundamental aspiration, of the people²⁸. Therefore as the education through institutions and schools are losing more and more of their witness potential. The Church has to give attention to other effective methods for education, progressive and scientific methods of teaching, career guidance programmes etc. which enable the students to become responsible members of the society.

The Christian missionaries started their activities in India without any political motives. Unlike the European powers who finally followed a policy of conquest and established political power in India for their stability and achievement of economic motives, the missionaries didn't find political power is a necessity for the attainment of their objectives. At the same time before independence upto 1940's the Christians were tolerated and even encouraged by the rulers.

But the conditions changed after independence in India especially in Kerala. The government became the sole protector of people. As economists stated, "he who holds the purse holds the power." The whole government machinery and the economic matters were directed by the political parties. The resources of the country was exploited by the political parties. Now in the modern period there are so many other agencies who conducts educational and social service activities other than the church by accepting grants from the government.

Thus the church lost its credibility as the custodian of education and moral life as in the early period.

²⁸ Paul Thenyan, *op. cit.*, p.180.

The competitive and compartmentalized presence of various Churches in India, various rites within the SMC and various groups within the rite etc., prevent a united and inspiring action. This situation really weakens the SMC. For example the Knanaya Community (Southists) section of the SMC, finds glories in its having kept its identity and integrity and reveal superiority by avoiding both inter-marriages and incorporation. Such attitudes must be changed, because the Church in India is basically one. Divided into rites, dioceses, parishes and religious orders she ought to be one in common endeavor. The time has to come to subordinate not only petty selfish interests, but even the legitimate advantages of individuals to the overriding benefits of the whole.

The last and perhaps the most important challenge the SMC faces is the internal crisis. Now there is a serious psychological division within it. The division is between those who stick on the identity of SMC and oppose Indianization of the liturgy, theology etc., of the SMC on the ground that it will lead to the loss of its identity and those who strongly advocate inculturation, acculturation and Indianization of the liturgy, theology, option for the poor, oppressed etc., without giving undue importance to the identity of SMC. The former is so keen with regard to the identity of SMC that they act as if the maintenance of identity is the present prime mission of the SMC and are keen to go back to their ancestral ways. They not only ignore the renovations but even take a stand against all these renovations are taken. They oppose Indianisation of SMC and argues that SMC is Indian in every respect and hence no further Indianisation is needed. According to them Indianisation has already taken place in the SMC. They argue that St. Thomas Christians adapting themselves to the caste ridden Hindu social set up and Christianizing the ancient Hindu culture in all its aspects, became the sons of the soil in the fullest sense. They exhibit a tendency of isolation, may be because of the long history of isolated existence of St. Thomas

Christianity. They want St. Thomas Christians still live in the past unaware of the liturgical, catechetical and pastoral movements abroad. Their exaggerated orientation despite everything coming from the west. According to them acculturation would be tantamount to syncretism of religions. For them further Indianisation will lead to the loss of identity of SMC²⁹. Their clinging on identity prevents and disturbs SMC's efforts to identify with the people of India, with their culture and all other effective steps which redirected to Indianize Christianity by Indianizing liturgy, theology etc., it weakens and demoralizes its task of evangelization. This issue – issue of maintaining identity of Syro- Malabar Church is the most current and serious challenge which SMC faces in 1990's danger than most of the challenges³⁰.

Therefore, it is high time to put an end to this controversy. It is unnecessary and dangerous that St. Thomas Christians going back to ancestral ways. It will prevent the SMC meaningful to modern man with his manifold problem in life. Besides, when the Thomas Christians go back to their ancestral ways, there is always the question as to which these ancestral ways are. Should they stop at the Chaldean period when everything was imported from the East Syrian Church or should they go still further to the Apostolic times. In order that the Church may fully become missionary, the concept of the Church will fully become missionary, the concept of the Church will have to pass from a notion of the Church that is sectarian and parochial, territorial and static, imported and introverted, to a notion that is open and universal, experiential and dynamic, authentic and outreaching. The undue desire to maintain, identity will lead to isolation.

²⁹ Paul Thenyan, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

³⁰ Recently a major group of the SMC priests decided to violate the decision taken the Kerala Catholic Bishop Synod regards action changes in the celebration. As a result certain dioceses like Trichur compelled to return to the original position

The fear of the loss of identity should not prevent the SMC withdrawing from Indianisation. It is true that in the process of the transformation of the society the Thomas Christian community also accepted the social structure together with many Hindu customs and ideas, though it did not allow itself to be wholly absorbed into the Hindu majority. It retained its sense of foreignness which prevented the St.Thomas Christians from being absorbed into Hinduism assuring its existence outside the Hindu pantheon. Thomas Christians adopted higher standards of ritual purity in terms of religious practices and taboos defined by Hindu religion at the same time retaining its Chaldean, identity. There was only partial adaptation. There was no proper natural process of adapting the Christianity to the Indian culture. What actually happened was the picking up of certain elements from Hindu culture and there was no natural process of Christianity encountering the Indian culture³¹. Picking up of the Hindu customs and ceremonies cannot be a real adaptation. Rather this process could be considered a kind of accommodation to the situation in order to maintain their high position in society. What actually happened among St.Thomas Christians was some sort of Hinduization and not adaptation.³² So Indianisation remains to be fulfilled. The Church, which is the continuation and extension of Christi's incarnation should become incarnate in the Indian culture³³. SMC should make herself present in the Kerala cultural forms that could be easily understood by the people of Kerala by witnessing the simple teaching of Christ like love and brotherhood. Fidelity to tradition is not to be a dead veneration of the past but to be joined to a living adaptation to the needs of the people. It is in the

³¹ Paul Thenayan, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

³² The caste system is characterized as a closed system and inclusion into a caste is possible only through birth. Though the inclusion into a higher caste is not possible, a positive orientation of reference and invitation is permitted and even encouraged. In otherwords, it was possible for a community to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by Sanskritizing its rituals.

³³ Paul Thenyan, *op. cit.*, p.26.

self emptying love of the crucified Christ that a real identity could be found either as an individual Church or as a community. The SMC must equip herself to live and work in India of the new millenium, not in some dead past. If the St.Thomas Christians attempt to assert their identity in traditional dogmas, rights and moral notions, it will become irrelevant and unbelievable. It is not arguing that SMC must part with its identity and its traditions. Of course it has to preserve its individuality by retaining its traditions whole and entire, and at the same time, it has to adjust its ways of life to the various needs of time, place and people. What is needed is a compromise. When there is a conflict, opt for the latter because the mission of the Church is to be understood as one of humble and loving service, losing so to say one's identity in order to live in a new way and to make others live.

The real Indian identity of the St.Thomas Christians is yet to be discovered. Thus the real and urgent task of SMC is not only to save the souls, and conversion as in olden days but to serve the humanity by self emptying as Christ has done and establish the kingdom of God in the world itself. Only in a peaceful mind, the soul can dwell peacefully.

In the new millennium a social transformation of enormous magnitude under the leadership of Church has to be envisaged. The critical structural changes relate to a shift of decision making power towards the people by initiating a 'bottom-up' process, a change in the education system, redirecting it towards raising mass consciousness and remoulding clites.

Understanding the world, the presence of God in it and the place of people in it, must be the real task of the church. The creativity, the ideas, the experience and accumulated wisdom of the majority of the humankind must be tapped fully for the creation of a new society. There lies the challenge of initiatives of the church. It can only yield fruit through processes of the participation of people and democracies, which demand not abolition of the

church but its transformation, as the advocate of human rights and human welfare.

Church can play a vital role in people's development. The church is here in this world not to grow in structure and institutions but to grow men, to work as an agent of social justice and human welfare. It is the initiative of the faithful which are pushing the church towards transformation. Repression or indifference of these initiatives by the Church authorities either kills them or hardens them into perhaps violent confrontations. The achievement of the church depends on its cause towards the needs of the people. What the people need today is neither Indainisation or Chritianisation but humanization.

CONCLUSION

The trace of the origin and development of a community, in a historical perspective which claims nearly 2000 years of history, lead us to interesting as well as curious conclusions. The favourable conditions for the cordiality and the tolerance of the Indian rulers and people, provided a congenial soil for Christianity to settle peacefully in India, especially in Malabar. The landing of St.Thomas, in Muziris, the traditional founder of Indian Christianity on the Malabar coast, opened a new era in the history of India. Of course, this claim is based on a tradition, which cannot be substantiated with written evidences contemporary to the event. However, later historical studies support the tradition.

In solidarity with the local people and their customs, Christianity in India grew and developed. Some Indians adopted and appreciated Christianity as their religion. The seven small Christian communities which St.Thomas founded in seven different places of Kerala gradually flourished under the spiritual leadership of some priests whom St.Thomas is believed to have ordained from some leading families. Thus St.Thomas Christian Community originated in Kerala.. From the early centuries, there existed some kind of relations between Christians of Kerala and the Syrian Church of Persia as Christianity in Syria is attributed to Addai, one of the disciples of St.Thomas. More direct relationship between Syrian Church and the Malabar Church were established from 4th century. onwards owing to the immigration of Syrian Christians Kerala coast near Cranganore in 345 A.D. later the Syrian monks and priests followed them. The Malabar church began to depend on the East Syrian Church or Persian Church in religious matters. The Indian Church obtained its first Metropolitan see under the Persian Church in the 7th century A.D. Thus Indian Christians followed the Syrian religious practices especially Syriac language for liturgy. Probably it was during this

period the St.Thomas Christians in India began to be called as Syrian Christians.

This gave a foreign garb to them which later isolated them from the rest of the Indian community. The foreignness of Christianity, lack of indigenous leadership, East Syrian Liturgy etc. struck the roots and prevented the tender seed of Indian Christianity to grow and flourish. At the same time the Syrian dominance in Kerala was a support in the formation of a firm Christian consciousness and even for their survival. The other main factors, which contributed to the survival of this community, were the large heartedness and the tolerance of Indian rulers and the people. In India, the Hindus, the Muslims the Jews and the Christians all equally enjoyed the protection, friendship and sympathy of the native government.

The transformation of Kerala society took place by around the 10th century A.D. because it was at this stage the Brahmin rule of Kerala reached its zenith. Even though the 'Aryan' immigrations had taken place from early times it was during the 8th century Brahmin settlements were consolidated. By this period the Malabar society was stratified into various sects and separated by rigid caste barriers. In the process of this transformation of the Kerala Society from 10th to 16th century A.D., the St.Thomas Christian Community also accepted the 'Varna' model social structure together with many Hindu customs and ideas, though it did not allow itself to be wholly adsorbed into the Hindu majority. They adopted higher standards of ritual purity in terms of religious practices and taboos defined by the Hindu religion, but retaining its Syrian identity. At the same time they were loyal to the local rulers, and willingly laboured for the well-being and prosperity of the common wealth without any fanatical outbursts of bigotry. They also began to take agriculture and later spice trade as their occupation. The native rulers found in them good allies to satisfy their economic interests.

They were put in charge of different government jobs. Moreover the various privileges granted to them by different kings from time to time raised them to high social status and slowly they rose in wealth, power and influence. As a result they followed social practices, customs and cast rules of the *divijas* (twice born) of the Hindu Varna Model. By undergoing this process of hinduization they acquired a high social status and position in the stratified Kerala society. This acceptance of the Syrian Christians into the Kerala society as a noble class had significant repercussions in their religious life and profoundly affected their future in India.

What actually happened among the St.Thomas Christians was the picking up of certain elements from Hindu culture and there was no natural process of Christianity encountering the Indian culture. In other words, the Christian message did not penetrate the Indian culture producing a fusion of both, the result of which could have been the emergence of a true and authentic Indian church. And in the later period these Christians were against the conversion of low caste people and accepting them into their community. Thus they became separate, self-constrained and self-enclosed community who tried to preserve their privileges and rights by avoiding the low caste and poor people of this society. This finally paved the way for the emergence of different castes and divisions within Indian church. With the coming of the European Missionaries who came to India began to receive the low caste people into the Christian fold. The caste distinctions, accrued in the community over the year began to create problems within the church. The St.Thomas Christians were reluctant to allow the new converts made by the Missionaries to enter their churches.

Around 10th century A.D. this community seems to have undergone the process of sanskritization by adopting the customs and practices of the twice born (*dvija*). The result of this quasi-hinduization process was that they too

were considered as one of the high caste groups even by the rulers and they enjoyed all the privileges of the high caste nobility. They emerged into a powerful and influential community well organized under Archdeacon (*Arkkadiyakkon or Jathikku karthaviyan*) even possessing a military of their own.

Once in this position their preoccupation was to preserve their privileges, rights and social status of a high caste group. They were positively against admitting any of the low caste people into their community. They had nothing against admission of high caste Hindus into their community, as was the case with many inter-caste marriages between the Christians and Nairs. Normally, the situation was not favourable for conversion work. The rulers were against it. The Christians seemed to have forgotten or were unable to attend to their Christian vocation in a society where various religious communities peacefully co-existed with mutual respect and regard for each other's caste and creed.

Thus we see a the survival of Christian Community in the Hindu landscape even though not numerically grown during these centuries. This survival did not necessarily speak of the inner dynamism of this community. The Hindu religious tolerance, caste system, the foreign relations, the geographical position of Malabar and the absence of Muslim invasion were of the positive factors that contributed to their survival.

Coming to the present era, we have a history of four centuries behind, i.e. the period of European dominance in India. This was a period, for the St. Thomas Christians, of continuous struggle for the preservance of their ancient quasi-Hindu customs, Syriac liturgy and of hunting for Bishops from Persia. In the early stage of the Portuguese period friendly relations were established between the Portuguese and St. Thomas Christians who were under East Syrian jurisdiction. But later when Latin Missionaries began to

convert low caste people to Christianity and induced the St. Thomas Christians to submit their jurisdiction, the signs of mutual misunderstanding and suspicion began to appear among the St. Thomas Christians. The initial enthusiasm and mutual trust and sympathy were gradually vanished. The Portuguese became more and more intolerant towards the different customs and practices of St. Thomas Christians. Even in the middle of the 16th century A.D. they had launched a wholesale campaign of Latinization and they vehemently criticized many of the St. Thomas Christian practices as non-Christian or Hindu. The St. Thomas Christians on the other hand were attached to their Bishops from East Syrian Church and insisted on preserving their ancient rites and customs against the Latinization of the Portuguese.

The consistent and continuous efforts of the Portuguese to establish in St. Thomas Syrian community, a bureaucratic and hierarchical authority structure that was fully centralized in their own hands, had serious repercussions. As a part of this policy to establish monarchical episcopacy over the St. Thomas community and to correct "many errors" of these Christians, a Synod was convoked by the Portuguese Archbishop on June 20, 1599 at Udayamperur, which is called the "Synod of Diamper" by the Portuguese. The drama that unfolded through the course of a hundred and fifty years history and especially after the Synod, truly called a shrewd power game with little spiritual interest in it. The main power elements in the game were, on the one hand, the Portuguese leaders, viz. the Bishops, their assistants and Missionaries and on the other, St. Thomas Christian community headed by its leader, the Archdeacon. There are evidences for the existence of Archdeacon's office from 8th century A.D. among the pre-Portuguese Christians.

The power game finally reached in the division of the St. Thomas community into two groups and later several groups. One group grudgingly

remained under the Latin rule in order to be in Catholic Communion and they are the present Syrian-Malabar Catholics (SMC). The other group under the leadership of Archdeacon later got affiliated to the Jacobite Church of Antioch or West Syrian Church and came to be known as Jacobites.

No one can deny that the service that the Europeans, mainly the Missionaries, to restore the internal organization of the Indian Church. Their enterprises in India facilitated the spread of education and also created an infrastructure for the creation of modern machinery for imparting education and this period is rightly called as “the age of Mission Schools”.

The 20th century SMC is a flourishing Church. Having found the contacts with the East Syrian Church would only bring about further schism in the church, this community began to petition the Roman authorities directly. And when in 1887 this community members were separated from Latins and began to be called as Syro-Malabar Church through Apostolic decrees, and they began to enjoy a kind of relief from the domination of the Latins. Still they continued their petitions to Rome asking for Bishops of their own rite and nation. These demands for indigenous Bishops were granted in 1896 and again in 1923, when the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy was erected. Thus at last the St. Thomas Christians came under the rule of the prelates of their own blood after twelve centuries of East Syrian and three centuries of Western subjugation.

These Christians peacefully settled at home, began to undertake missionary works in an organized form. Various congregations of priests and nuns were founded giving the church a great missionary force for Apostolic work. The dedicated services of the priests and nuns were appreciated and encouraged by the people. Various institutions and churches were established in different parts of Kerala and even outside of Kerala. They were financially assisted by the foreign churches and persons and also by the generous people

of India. The Government also assisted them financially in the form of grants and they were exempted from taxes on the basis of charity. Thus the Syro-Malabar church established well both institutionally and structurally.

The status, power and prestige of these groups especially, of the authorities, grew up considerably. The status and power and interests of Bishops, Priests and some lay leaders became operative in the society. The priests began to enjoy spiritual as well as temporal authority. At the same time the structure continues to be bureaucratic and traditional. The structure continues to be rather stable but now faces several challenges like the pressure for the decentralization of power in temporal administration and the people's disinterestedness, indifference and withdrawal from the church.

The church authorities exploited and misused the power, prestige and respect, which were given to them by the government, its members and even by other religionists. The enmity and opposition the church now facing from others is because of this deviation. Those who admitted, accepted and appreciated the services of the church, themselves raise questions like, "so the church is necessary after all?" The reason is that people need a serving church not a dogmatic and authoritarian church. This dogmatic attitude issued unfriendly condemnations of progressive cultural currents in the society. Christianity must be lived as a creative principle: open to dialogue, sensitive to the problems of the common people, obliged to offer new formulations in the present Indian soil, a 'Christ model' not a 'dogmatic church model'.

21

APPENDIX A

SYRO - MALABAR DIOCESES IN KERALA

A.	Province of Ernakulam	-	Year of foundation
1.	Ernakulam	-	1896
2.	Trichur	-	1887
3.	Tellicherry	-	1954
4.	Kothamangalam	-	1956
5.	Mananthavady	-	1973
6.	Palghat	-	1974
7.	Irinjalakuda	-	1978
8.	Thamarassery	-	1986
B.	Province of Changanacherry	-	Year of foundation
9.	Changanacherry	-	1896
10.	Kottayam	-	1911
11.	Palai	-	1950
12.	Kanjirapally	-	1977
C.	Dioceses Outside Kerala	-	Year of foundation
13.	Bijnor	-	1972
14.	Chanda	-	1962
15.	Gorakhipur	-	1984
16.	Jagadapur	-	1972
17.	Kalyan	-	1988
18.	Rajkot	-	1977
19.	Sagar	-	1968
20.	Satna	-	1968
21.	Ujjain	-	1968

SYRO - MALANKARA RITE

A. Province of Trivandrum

1.	Trivandrum	-	1932
2.	Tiruvalla	-	1932
3.	Bathery	-	1978

LATIN RITE

A. Province of Veropoly

1.	Veropoly	-	1709
2.	Cochin	-	1558
3.	Quilon	-	1886
4.	Calicut	-	1923
5.	Vijayapuram	-	1930
6.	Trivandrum	-	1937
7.	Alleppy	-	1952
8.	Punalur	-	1985
9.	Kottapuram	-	1987

Appendix I

THE NAZRANIES: A ROUGH CHRONOLOGY

- 30 The Crucifixion
- 40 Apostle Thomas in the service of King Gondaphares in Takshasila.
- 52 Nov 21 St. Thomas, the apostle, landed at Cranganore (Kodungalloor, in the present Thrissur District).
- 52-72 The Apostle builds 7 churches: Palayoor, Kodungalloor, Parur, Kokamangalam, Niranam, Nilackal, Kollam.
- 72 Jul. 3 Martyrdom of St. Thomas in the vicinity of Mylapore, Madras.
- 98-117 Mesopotamia and Assyria become Roman provinces.
- 190 Pantaenus, probably the founder of the famous Catechetical School of Alexandria, visited India and the Nazranies, Sassanians become a major power.
- 232 Sassanians become a major power.
- 325 Archbishop John, of Persia and Great India, at the first Ecumenical Council of Nicea.
- 345 Thomas of Cana from Persia landed at Cranganore with 72 families of immigrants.
- 340-360 By the *Thazhekad Sasanam* the Nazranies granted special rights and privileges.
- 400 North Pudukkad church founded.
- 480 St. Hormis church, Angamaly founded.
- 500 Enammavu church founded
- 503 St. George church, Edappally founded.
- 510 Udayamperore (Diamper) church built.
- 522 Cosmas Indicopleustes visits South India.
- 570 Birth of Mohammad, Prophet of Islam in Mecca.

- 825 Mar Sabor and Mar Proth at Quilon.
- 849 King Ayyanadikal of Venad, by the Tharisappalli copper plate grants reconfirms the 72 royal privileges of the Nazranies.
- 883 King Alfred's envoys Sighelm and Aethelstan conveys alms to St.Thomas in India.
- 1293 Marco Polo, a Venetian traveller, visited the tomb of St.Thomas (at Mylapore), and Kerala.
- 1324 Oderic the Italian Franciscan speaks about Mylapore.
- 1329 Aug.9 Jordan Catelani appointed first bishop of the diocese of Quilon created by Pope John XXII.
- 1348 The Papal representative John Marignoli at Quilon.
- 1439 Pope Eugene writes to Thomas, Emperor of the Indians.
- 1490 Two Chaldean bishops John and Thomas in Kerala.
- 1493 May 4 Division of the world and mission lands between Spain and Portugal by Pope Alexander VI.
- 1498 May20 Vasco de Gama lands at Kappad near Kozhikode.
- 1499 Cabral at Kozhikode
- 1500 Nov 26 Franciscan Friars at Cochin.
- 1502 Nov 27 Vasco de Gama at Cochin.
- 1502 Nov 7 Vasco de Gama at Cochin.
- 1503 Dominican Priests at Kochi
- 1503 Mar Yabella, Mar Denaha and Mar Yakoob in Kerala.
- 1503 Sep 27 Work commenced on Cochin Fort and the Santa Cruz church.
- 1514 Portuguese Padroado begun.
- 1514 Jewish migration from Kodungalloor to Kochi.
- 1514 Jun 12 Portuguese Funchal rule over Christians in India.
- 1524 Dec 24 Vasco de Gama buried at St. Francis Church, Fort Cochin.
- 1534 Nov 3 Goa Diocese erected. The Parishes of Kannur, Cochin, Quilon, Colombo and Sao Tome (Madras) belonged to it.

- 1540 The Franciscan Fr. Vincent De Lagos starts the Cranganore Seminary.
- 1542 May 6 St. Francis Xavier, Apostolic Nuncio in the East, reaches Goa.
- 1544-45 St. Francis Xavier in Travancore.
- 1548 Dominican Monastery founded in Cochin.
- 1549 Mar Abuna Jacob, A Chaldean Bishop, stayed at St. Antonio Monastery, Cochin.
- 1550 First Jesuit House in Kochi.
- 1552 Dec 3 Death of St. Francis Xavier.
- 1555 Mattancherry Palace was built by Portuguese for the King of Cochin.
- 1557 Pope Paul IV erects the Diocese of Cochin. Canonization process of Francis Xavier begun at Cochin.
- 1565 Archdiocese of Angamaly erected.
- 1567 Jews shifted Mattancherry.
- 1568 Synagogue of White Jews built in Cochin.
- 1577 Vaippicotta Seminary of the Jesuits started.
- 1579 Augustinians reached Cochin.
- 1583 Synod at Angamaly by Bishop Mar Abraham.
- 1597 Bishop Mar Abraham, the last foreign Archbishop, died and was laid to rest at St. Hormis church, Angamaly.
- 1599 Dec 20 Fr. Francis Roz was declared bishop of Angamaly.
- 1599 Jun 20,26 Archbishop Alexis Menezes convenes the Synod of Diamper (Udayamperoor).
- 1600 Aug 4 Padroado rule imposed on Nazranies.
- 1601 Francis Roz was appointed as the first Latin bishop of the St. Thomas Christians.
- 1609 Dec 3 Erection of the Diocese of Cranganore. The Archdiocese of Angamaly suppressed.

- 1610 Dec 22 The Metropolitan of Goa limits the Pastoral Jurisdiction of Nazranies to Malabar.
- 1624 Dominican Seminary at Kaduthuruthy.
- 1626 Feb 5 Edappally *Ashram* started for the Religious Community of St. Thomas Christians.
- 1652 Aug 23 Mar Ahathalla in Madras, not allowed to enter Kerala.
- 1653 Jan 3 Coonan Cross Oath at Mattancherry, Cochin.
- 1653 May 22 Mar Thoma I ordained bishop at Alangad by the laying of hands by 12 priests.
- 1657 Apostolic Commissary Joseph of St. Mary OCD (Sebastiani), a Carmelite, in Malabar.
- 1659 Dec 3 The Vicariate of Malabar is erected by Pope Alexander VII.
- 1659 Dec 24 Joseph Sebastini bishop and appointed the Vicar Apostolic of Malabar.
- 1663 Jan 6 The Dutch conquer Cochin and destroy Catholic churches and institutions in Cochin, except the Cathedral and the church of St. Francis Assisi.
- 1663 Jan 31 Mar Chandy Palliveetil is consecrated the first Vicar General of the Malabar Vicariate by Bishop Mar Joseph Sebastiani.
- 1682 Seminary for Syrians at Verapoly.
- 1686 *Hortus Malabaricus* in 12 volumes printed in 17 years.
- 1687 Jan 2 Bishop Mar Chandy Palliveetil expires.
- 1700 Feb 20 Fr. Angelus Francis, a Carmelite, is appointed as the Vicar Apostolic of Malabar.
- 1709 Mar 13 Vicariate of Malabar is suppressed and the Vicariate of Verapoly is erected by Pope Clement XI.
- 1772 First Malayalam book *Sampskhepa Vedartham* (Rome) by Clement Pianius.
- 1773 Pope Clement XIV suppresses the Jesuit Order, except in Russia and Prussia.

- 1782 Dec 16 Kariyattil Joseph elected Archbishop of Cranganore; Consecr. Lisbon 1783; Died Goa on the way back to Malabar, 9th Sept. 1786.
- 1785 *Varthamanappusthakam*, the first written travelogue in India by Paremakal Thomma Kathanar.
- 1795 Oct 20 Conquest of Cochin by the British.
- 1818 C.M.S missionaries in Kerala.
- 1838 Apr 24 Dioceses of Cochin and Cranganore are annexed to the Vicariate of Verapoly.
- 1838 The Queen of Portugal suppressed all religious orders in Portugal and in her mission lands.
- 1840 Apr 10 St. Thomas Christians came under the archdiocese of Verapoly.
- 1861 May 20 Bishop Rocos sent by the Patriarch of Chaldea reaches Kerala.
- 1867 May 7 Property donated by Syrians to the King of Portugal to start a Seminary at Aluva. It was administered by the Diocese of Cochin.
- 1867 The Portuguese Missionaries start a seminary at Mangalapuzha for Syrian students.
- 1874 Bishop Mar Elias Melus sent by the Patriarch of Chaldea reaches Kerala-Melus Schism.
- 1876 The "Marthoma Church" comes into being—Palakkunnathu Mathews Mar Athanasious.
- 1976 Sep 19,20 Ollur Conference. The Apostolic Visitor Leo Meurin attends the conference.
- 1886 The Archdiocese of Cranganore is suppressed.
- 1886 Sep 1 Erection of the Catholic Hierarchy in India by Pope Leo XIII.
- 1887 Establishment of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy by the Brief "Quod Jam Prideus" of Pope Leo XIII. Vicariates of Trichur and Kottayam.
- 1887 May 19 The St. Thomas Christians are totally segregated from the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Verapoly and from the Padroado.

- 1887 May 20 The Vicariates of Kottayam and Trichur reorganized and the Vicariate of Changanacherry, Ernakulam and Trichur were formed.
- 1911 Aug 29 Pius X restored the Vicariate of Kottayam for the Suddhists of the Syro-Malabar Rite, descendants of the immigrants of A.D.345.
- 1917 May 1 The Oriental Congregation is formed by Pope Benedict XV.
- 1923 Dec 21 Establishment of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy with Ernakulam as the Metropolitan See, and Trichur, Chang
- 1930 Sept 20 Reunion of the eminent Jacobite Archbishop Mar Ivanios, Bishop Mar Theophilus, Fr. John. O.I.C., Bro. Asexander Mr. Chacko Kilieth with the Catholic Church.
- 1930 Sept 20 Reunion of the eminent Jacobite Archbishop Mar Ivanios, Bishop Mar Theophilus, Fr. John O.I.C., Bro. Alexander and Mr. Chacko Kilieth with the Catholic Church.
- 1932 June 11 The establishment of the Syro-Malankara Hierarchy by Pope Pius XI. Mar Ivanios becomes Archbishop of Trivandrum and mar Teophilus Bishop of Tiruvalla.
- 1933 June 1 Puthenpally Seminary is shifted to Aluva
- 1950 July 18 The protuguese Padroado over the Diocese of Cochin (from 157 Feb. 4 till 1950 July 8) suppressed and the Diocese of Cochin handed over to native clergy.
- 1952 Dec 28-31 Jubilee Celebration of St. Thomas and St. Francis Xavier at Ernakulam
- 1953 Nov 11 Cardinal Eugene Tisserant, secretary of the Sacred oriental Congregation, visits the Syrian Catholics of Malabar.
- 1953 Dec 31 Erection of the diocese of Tellicerhy by Pope Pius XII
- 1956 Jan 10 Pople John XXIII raised the diocese of Changanacherry into an Archdiocese with Kottayam and Palai as Suffragan Sees.
- 1956 July 29 Erection of the diocese of Kothamangalam under the Archdiocese of Ernakulam
- 1956 Nov 1 The present 'Kerala State' is established
- 1962 Mar 31 Chanda Mission, outside Kerala, for the Syro-Malabar Church

- 1962 July 3 Revises Syro-Malabar Liturgy in force. Holy Mass in Malayalam
- 1969 Mar 28 Archbishop Mar Joseph Parecattil of Ernakulam Cardinal.
- 1969 May All- India Seminar *Chruch In India Tody. T.En.* Conceived
- 1972 Dec 27 The 19th Century of the Martydom of St. Thomas the Apostle is celebrated at Ernakulam under the auspices of Catholic, Jacobite, Marthoma and C.S.I. Churches
- 1973 April 7 *TE.n* published by CArddinal Parecattil at he Cardinal House Ernakulam. H.H Moran Mar Aguen I Catholicos presided. Also on the dais were Mar Phelexinos, Mar Mankuzhikkary, mar Pawathil, . . .
- 1973 July 3 The Governor of Kerala nd the Cardinal release the St. Thomas Stamp and the *T.En. II* for sale
- 1986 Feb 1-10 Visit of Pope John Paul III to India
- 1986 Feb 8 Fr. Chavara Kuriakose Elias and Sr. Alphonsa are proclaimed blessed by Pope John Paul II
- 1988 May 30 Mar Antony Padiyara of Ernakulam Cardinal
- 1992 Dec. 16 Pope John Paul II raises the Syro-Malabar Church to a Major Archiepisocopal Sui Juris Church with the title of Ernakulam Angamaly *Quae Majori*. His Em. Cardinal Paidyara first Major Archbp.; Abraham Kattumana Pontifical Delegate.
- 1993 May 20-25 The first Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church
- 1995 May Trichur evaluated to an Archbishopric.
- 1996 Mar Geevarghese (Varkey) Vithayathil (Major Archiepisocopal) Apostolic Administrator.



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