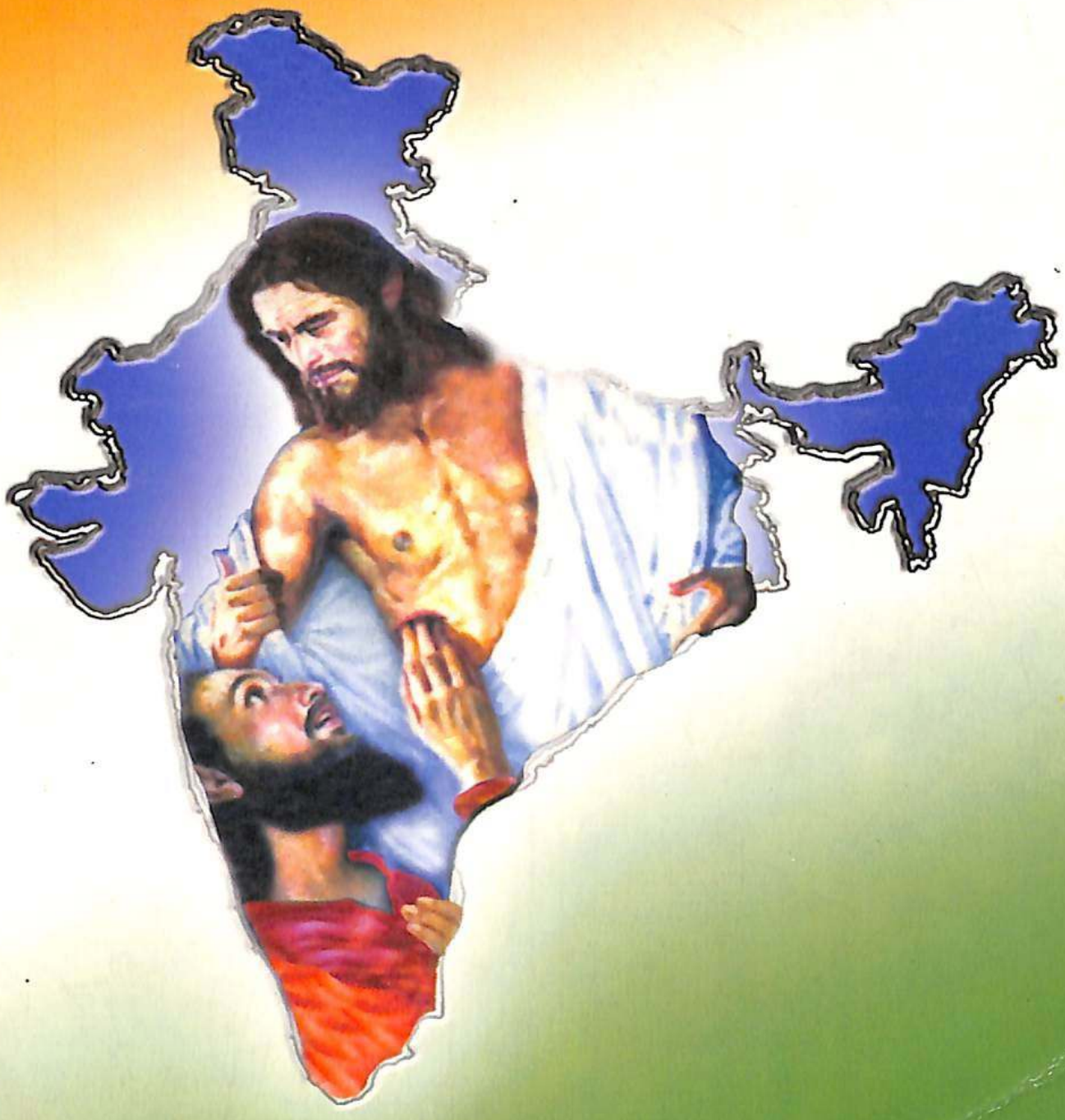
MY LORD AND MY GOD

The Ecclesial Identity of the Syro-Malabar Church

Dr Francis Kodiyan mcbs



Published by the Diocese of Kalyan on the Occasion of the 1950th Anniversary of the Arrival of St. Thomas in India



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FOREWORD

The Risen Lord commissioned the Apostles to preach the Good news to the whole world saying: "You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth" (Acts1:8). The Apostles went out to different parts of the world to preach the Gospel and bear witness to the Risen Christ. The Christ experience of the Apostles was the basis and the core of their preaching. As St. John writes in his first letter that the testimony of the Apostles were based on what they have heard, what they have seen with their own eyes, what they have looked at and touched with their hands' (1 Jn 1:1). Out of his earnest desire to have the personal experience of encountering the risen Christ, St. Thomas refused to be satisfied with the reports of the apparition of Jesus by the other apostles. He said: "Unless I can put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (Jn 20:25). Jesus gave him that unique privilege and it gave rise to the most sublime faith expression – "My Lord and my God," uttered by St. Thomas, our Father in faith when he encountered the Risen Lord. Armed with this Christ-experience and motivated by his earnest desire and committed love 'to go and die with Him' (Jn 11:16), St. Thomas set out on his mission to India, a country of deep-rooted religiosity and age-old spiritual traditions.

The living tradition of two thousand years and

the firm faith of millions of people who consider him as the Father of faith is the best proof of the apostolate of St. Thomas in India. Many mountains and valleys, the sea and its shores in South India silently but convincingly speak about the apostolate of St. Thomas in India. The Syro-Malabar Church is an apostolic Church with a history of two thousand years of existence in India. The sons and daughters of the Syro-Malabar Church – bishops, priests, religious and laity are present all over the world, engaged in continuing and expanding the mission entrusted to them by Christ Jesus through St. Thomas, their father in faith.

Since independence, as a result of the economic depression, many of the sons and daughters of the Syro-Malabar Church migrated to the big cities of India, especially Bombay, Pune, Nashik and so on. They were seeking employment and better prospects of life. Hundreds of thousands of Syro-Malabar Christians who thus migrated were in a totally alien atmosphere with regard to their religious and spiritual life. However, it was not the wish of the Universal Church that they should lose their Syro-Malabar heritage and tradition. She desires that her children should grow faithful to the spiritual tradition of the particular Church. "Attention should everywhere be given to the preservation and growth of each individual Church. For this purpose parishes and a special hierarchy should be established for each where

the spiritual good of the faithful so demands. All Eastern Rite members should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their lawful liturgical rites and their established ways of life" (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum,* 4&6). The same idea was expressed in another document of the Second Vatican Council, in *Christus Dominus*: "A special hierarchy could be established for each different Rite, should the Apostolic See judge this to be opportune." (Ref. *CD* 23,3).

And the Holy See judged it opportune to establish a diocese for the Syro-Malabar faithful in Bombay and other cities of the region, as expressed in the all-important letter of the Pope to the Bishops of India, dated 28th May 1987. "Given the number of the Syro-Malabar Rite in the Bombay – Pune region of India, the situation presently existing there can be considered mature enough for the establishment now of an Eparchy of the Syro-Malabar Rite." As a follow up of this letter, His Holiness Pope John Paul II, established the diocese of Kalyan on 30th April 1988. In the Papal letter establishing the diocese of Kalyan, the Pope expressed the hope that "the Syro-Malabar Church make the greatest progress and that its Rite be carefully fostered."

The mission of the diocese of Kalyan is two fold – pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar faithful and evangelisation through Christian witnessing where the Christian presence is at the moment very little. So,

of the fifteen civil districts of Maharashtra that belongs to the diocese of Kalyan, the Syro-Malabar population is concentrated mostly in Bombay, Pune, Nashik and Vasai regions. Ten districts where the Christian population is very little, are entrusted to different religious congregations for missionary apostolate. Thanks to the dedicated services of over 131 priests and 247 religious sisters and equally committed lay people, the diocese could organize its activities in over 164 centres and engage in effective ministry in the fields of social, charitable, educational and health services. Fourteen years after its establishment, the diocese of Kalyan can look back now with gratitude to God and to its numerous benefactors both inside and outside the country and take pride in the fact that a long-cherished dream has come true.

This book is meant to give information to all those who want to know about St. Thomas, the Syo-Malabar Church and the diocese of Kalyan, especially to the youth who are not very familiar with our traditon. The author speaks clearly about the apostolate of St. Thomas and the history and growth of the Church, its identity and spirituality, its mission and the challenges ahead. I am sure, that this book will enlighten the reader, to a great extent, on the various aspects of the Syro-Malabar Church and its past, present and its future. It is indeed a fitting memento of the 1950th anniversary celebrations of the arrival

of St. Thomas in India, more so because it is being published on the day when the holy relic of St. Thomas, brought from Orthona is installed at the St. Thomas Church, Kalyan West and when that church is proclaimed as a pilgrim center of St. Thomas in the diocese of Kalyan by His Beatitude Mar Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. The relic of St. Thomas installed in St. Thomas' Church, Kalyan will be a constant reminder and silent echo of the faith expression of St. Thomas the Apostle, "My Lord and My God." This book gives expression to the prayer of the Apostle that has been reverberating in the hearts of many, down the centuries. I congratulate the Author Rev. Dr. Francis Kodiyan on his achievement and wish that this book be able to bring forth in the hearts of its readers the same words of faith as uttered by St. Thomas: "My Lord and My God."

Thomas Elavanal,
Bishop of Kalyan

INTRODUCTION

Chendamangalam is a typical Kerala village in Parur taluk of Ernakulam district, dotted with tall coconut palms with their prolific foliage on the banks of River Periyar. It is situated between Kodungallur (6km) where St Thomas the Apostle landed in 52 AD and Kottackavu (5km) where he established one of his seven churches. Chendamangalam, where India had the first European seminary (Jesuit Seminary), is the cradle of the only Christian Royal family in India called Villarvattom. It has even today a synagogue, a Jews Street and a Jewish cemetery which prove the centuries-old Jewish settlements along the Malabar Coast. As I was born and brought-up in this village, I had the rare privilege to mingle with the Jews living in my neighbourhood who are now settled in Israel. Living among the Jews, it was easy for me to believe that St Thomas came and preached the Gospel in India. But this is not the case for millions of others, especially the scholars in Europe and America. They cannot easily believe that St Thomas came to India in the first century to preach the Gospel of Jesus.

I was very glad when His Excellency Dr Thomas Elavanal mcbs during the presbyterial council of the Kalyan diocese held on 21st September 2002 asked me to write a book on St Thomas Christians as a commemoration of the 1950 anniversary of St Thomas' arrival in India. The diocese of Kalyan

solemnly celebrated this anniversary on 13-15 December 2002. On 17th November 2002 the CBCI and the KCBC commemorated this event together with the 450 death anniversary of St Francis Xavier at the Marine Drive Ground, Ernakulam. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, the renowned scientist and the President of India, His Eminence Cresensio Cardinal Sepe, the Papal Representative, His Grace Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri, the Papal Nuncio, Mr AK Antony, the Kerala Chief Minister and many Cardinals, bishops, hundreds of priests and religious, and tens of thousands of lay people participated in it.

This book, *My Lord And My God: The Ecclesial Identity Of The Syro-Malabar Church*, a memento of the 1950 anniversary of the arrival of St Thomas in India, is an initiative of the diocese of Kalyan. This brief study on the Thomas Christians in India is primarily meant for the youth of Kalyan diocese who are born and brought-up in Maharashtra. It is written with the intention to provide certain significant notions about the roots and wings of the Syro-Malabar Church so that they may better understand and appreciate the valuable traditions and contributions of their Mother Church. Those who seek more elaborate and deeper information regarding the Syro-Malabar Church are requested to read the books given in the bibliography.

This study on the genesis, history, hierarchy, identity, and spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church and the birth and growth of the Kalyan diocese, is

divided into six chapters besides an introduction, bibliography, and appendix. The first chapter treats with the life and mission of St Thomas the Apostle. The second chapter deals with the history of the Thomas Christians under the Chaldean and Latin rule. The third chapter delineates the restoration of the Syro-Malabar hierarchy and its growth into a Major Archiepiscopal Church. The fourth chapter explains the ecclesial identity of the St Thomas Christians. The fifth chapter highlights the spiritual characteristics of the Syro-Malabar Church. The sixth chapter discuses the genesis and development of the Kalyan diocese.

The main sources used for this study are the writings of Xavier Koodapuzha, AC Perumalil, Mathias Mundadan, Bishop Gregory Karotembrel, George Nedungatt, and James Aerthayil.

I place on record my deep gratitude to His Excellency Mar Thomas Elavanal mcbs, the bishop of Kalyan and to the presbyterial council of the Kalyan diocese for entrusting me with this noble task of writing on the Syro-Malabar Catholics. I acknowledge my indebtedness to Revd Fr Thomas Srampickal, the Rector, Revd Fr George Madathikandam, the Vice Rector and Librarian, Revd Fr Benny Maramangalam, the Procurator and Revd Fr Joseph Mackolil, the director of Jesus Fraternity, and all other staff and students of St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor for their

great care and concern while I stayed there to refer books. I thank Revd Fr Dominic Mundattu mcbs, Revd Fr Tomy Kariyilakulam mcbs, Sr Anne Jose chf, and Bro George Kochuchackalackal mcbs for their encouragement and assistance in different ways.

In a special way I thank His Excellency Mar Thomas Elavanal mcbs, Msgr Thomas Thalachira, Revd Fr Antony Kollannur, Revd Fr Mathew Kuttikottayil, Mr Joseph Arracken, and Professor John Kurien for reading and correcting the manuscript. I extent my sincere gratitude to St Paul publications for its excellent printing and to Mr Jerry Davis for designing the cover page.

Chapter One

Life And Mission Of St Thomas The Apostle

Introduction

Go to the cities and villages of the United States of America, Europe, Africa, Australia, and Asia, there even in the most remote villages and in the most high-tech cities you will find the St Thomas Christians, either as a priest or a religious or a computer specialist or an electronic engineer or a doctor or a medical nurse. One of the recent statistics points out that 73% of the Indian missionaries are the St Thomas Christians[1] . What are the reasons for the amazing vitality of this Catholic community? Who may be the Father of these most vibrant Catholic Christians? How do even after 1950 years of their history, the St Thomas Christians still keep their age-old traditions and principles, the 'Law of Thomas'? It is only because of the fact that they are from God's own land – Kerala and that they received faith from St Thomas the apostle, one of the twelve

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[1] Xavier Koodapuzha, "Ecclesial Identity of the St Thomas Christians", in Xavier Koodapuzha, *Oriental Churches Theological Dimensions*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1988, 57.

disciples of Jesus Christ. This chapter briefly unveils, first of all, the life and mission of St Thomas and secondly, the genesis and early history of the Thomas Christians in India.

Early Life

Thomas called Didymus, the Twin, was born in Galilee in Palestine. He was by profession a fisherman. He went to fishing while he was young and proved himself to be an expert in his profession in the lake of Galilee. When Jesus called Thomas, he followed him immediately and most willingly, leaving behind whatever he had. (Mt 10,3; Mk 3,18; Lk 6,15; Acts 1,13). Thus he became one among the twelve apostles of Jesus of Nazareth.

Personality

St John in his Gospel depicts some short but noteworthy experiences of St Thomas which reveal a number of his significant personality traits such as courage, adventure, straight forwardness, determination, ardent love for Jesus and thirst for God experience, which we will briefly explicate below.

Adventurous And Courageous

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill Jesus stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, "Let us go back to Judea". The disciples said, "Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews were trying to stone you; are you going back there again?" ...Then Thomas said to the other disciples, "Let us also go to die with him" (Jn 11,5-16). The other disciples shrink back for

fear when Thomas steps forward and invites them to keep Jesus' company till death. He is ready to follow Jesus unto death, that manifests his courageous and adventurous nature, the qualities which are essential for today's missionaries. This was literally realised in Thomas' life a few years later at Chinnamala, near Chennai in 72 AD.

Straightforward And Matter Of Fact

Jesus said to his disciples, "I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you to myself, so that you may be with me where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going". Thomas said, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (Jn 14,2-5). This matter of fact and straightforward behaviour of Thomas was pleasing to Jesus, for he assured him and the others, "I am the way, the truth and life" (Jn 14,6). Later during his mission in India, Thomas, the seeker of the path became the path-maker. He paved the 'Way of Thomas' (*Mar Thoma Margam*)[2], or the 'Law of Thomas', which is the sum total of the theological, spiritual, liturgical, social, and ecclesiastical discipline of the Thomas Christians derived from the intense Christ experience of St Thomas.

Dubito Ergo Sum

Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection. So the other

[2] Mar Thoma Margam is the particular Christian lifestyle, introduced in India by Mar Thoma, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus.

disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord". But Thomas answered, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe" (Jn 20,24-25). Basing on this passage many consider Thomas as being obstinate and doubtful. To these persons, our answer is the Archimedean point for Descartes' theory of knowledge, the *cogito*, the *I think,* and its major premise, the *dubito ergo sum*! *I doubt therefore exist.* If one doubts, he knows he exists; exists with a vision, and a mission.

Credo Ergo Sum

Doubt arises from thinking. Thought with a genuine desire to learn truth leads to faith. Doubt in the sphere of faith may be followed by dark nights, aridity and stubbornness. However, for an honest and enduring seeker, this would be what is called *faith seeking understanding.* Thomas' *dubito* concerning the appearance of the Risen Lord manifests his *credo* seeking understanding. This is proven by his proclamation of faith in the risen Lord, "My Lord and my God" (Jn 21, 28) and which is the Easter faith par excellence. Understanding the genuineness of Thomas' *dubito*, the Lord affectionately called him and said, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe" (Jn 20, 27). Through this encounter with the Risen Lord, Thomas was purified and further strengthened by what he saw, heard and experienced. Following upon this, Thomas devoted his life completely to the task of proclaiming the Lord to people near and far alike. Therefore, St Thomas' victorious maxim is not *dubito ergo sum but credo ergo* sum. *I believe therefore I am.* He expressed this

through his confession "My Lord and My God". This is his Jesus' experience, the experience of the risen Lord, the mystical and the apostolic experience, which became not only the foundation of his missionary life but also the salvific *mantra* of millions of others.

St Thomas' profound faith experience reminds one of the famous fresco, *The Last Supper* of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), the most versatile genius of the Renaissance, an engineer, a scientist and a grand master of the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture. This fresco is in the Church of St Mary of Graces (S. Maria delle Grazie) in Milan, Italy. Examining closely this fresco, one cannot but be impressed by the privileged position given to St Thomas by Da Vinci. Convinced of the Apostle's greatness, his courage, profound faith experience and adventurous faith life, the artist places him immediately next to the Lord.

Missionary Expeditions

Strengthened by the experience of the risen Lord and empowered by the Holy Spirit who came down on the Apostles in the form of fire during the Pentecost, St Thomas set off to announce the good news to the Orient as demanded by his Master. He preached the Gospel to the Parthians, Medes, Persians, Socotrans, Hyrcanians, Bactrias etc. Marco Polo, an Italian traveller, on the basis of the Ethiopian tradition wrote that St Thomas preached in the kingdoms of Nubia and Ethiopia and then went over to Malabar. The Socotran tradition recorded by St Francis Xavier in a letter dated 18th September of 1542 stated that St Thomas preached in Socotra and converted many to Christian faith. Therefore, we come to the conclusion that St Thomas in his second apostolic journey from Palestine, travelled

through Alexandria, Nubia, Ethiopia, and Socotra, and reached Kodungallur[3].

Indian Mission

India is the home of one of the oldest and most dynamic Christian communities in the world. Ever since the Romans conquered Egypt in the year 30 BC, the importance of the commercial sea route via the Red Sea has been recognised. It was the pilot Hippalus who discovered what great assistance the trade winds offer to ships crossing the Indian ocean. The positions of the chief ports on the Malabar coast were well known to Greek and Roman geographers of the period.

Muziris, Cranganore of modern times, and Kodungallur of contemporary period, was the most prosperous of the Indian trading centres. It was also the capital of the Chera kingdom, one of the three Tamil kingdoms of immemorial antiquity. Pliny the Elder gives some information regarding the local circumstances at the time of St Thomas, his contemporary. By referring to Muziris, he wrote, "The landing place for ships is at some distance from the coast and cargo has to be transported to the coast in smaller boats"[4].

According to ancient, strong and continuous tradition, in 52 AD St Thomas came by sea and first landed at Kodungallur, the most important sea-port in South India. This was possible due to the fact that the Jewish trading settlements existed along the Asian coasts fringing the Indian Ocean. At the dawn of Christianity there were trade routs, connecting West Asia and the

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[3] AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 61.

[4] J Puthenkalam – A Mampra, *Sanctity in India*, Yercaud 2000, 26.

East. The land routes reached parts of North India while the sea routes reached the Coasts of Kerala and other parts of South India.

The Seven Churches

St Thomas preached the Gospel first to the Jewish colonies and then to the high caste Hindu families of South India, many of whom received Christian faith. He built churches, erected crosses and established seven Christian communities in Kerala such as Kodungallur, Palayur, Parur (Kottakavu), Kokkamangalam, Kollam, Niranam (Thrippal-eswaram), and Chayal (Nilackal), which were the important Jewish settlements of that time. Among the Jews it was a custom to ask visiting fellow Jews who came from Palestine, to address the Synagogue, to give a word of encouragement, and to tell them the news from Palestine. Thomas would surely have used this opportunity to speak of the life and death of Jesus Christ, the long awaited Messiah[5]. Thus the early Christian communities in Kerala were a mixed group of Jews and Hindus (Dravidians).

St Thomas ordained priests from four Brahmin families such as Sankarapuri, Pakalomattam, Kalli and Kalikav. Some of these families claim an unbroken succession of priests in the family from the time of St Thomas. Some even claim to be the 60th or the 61st priest of the family.

How was it possible for St Thomas the Apostle to undertake such a task? Even before Christ, South India was internationally famous for its trade in spices notably

[5] J Puthenkalam – A Mampra, *Sanctity In India*, Yercaud 2000, 28.

black pepper, cloves, cardamom, nutmeg, and cinnamon. Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, Arabs, Jews and Romans came and settled in Malabar (the present day Kerala) for trade. The Romans had warehouses in Kerala guarded by their own soldiers. Historians tell us that the first Jewish settlement in Kerala was after the Babylonian conquest of Judea in 586 BC under the leadership of Joseph Rabban. The Synagogues at Kodungallor, Mattancherry, Kollam, Palayur, Parur, etc, are some of the silent witnesses of the irrefutable historical presence of the Jewish colonies in Kerala[6].

Historical Evidences

The Thomas Christians have a rich tradition regarding the apostolate of St Thomas in India, which has been handed down from generation to generation orally and by folk songs, such as the Ramban Song, the Veeradyan Song, Marriage Song, Panan Song, and the Margam Kali Song.

There are ample references on St Thomas' Indian mission in the writings of the Greek, Syriac and Latin Fathers of the Church. For instance, St Gregory Nazianzen of Asia Minor (329-390) wrote the following about St Thomas the Apostle:

> Were not the Apostles strangers among the many nations and countries over which they spread

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[6] According to the report of a delegation of Jews who went to Kochi in 1686, printed in Lisbon, there were four synagogues in Kochi with 128 Jewish families, two synagogues with 150 members in Ernakulam, as well as a synagogue each in Parur, Palayur, Chendamangalam (Chennot), and Muttom.

themselves, that the Gospel might penetrate into all parts, that no place might be void of the triple light or deprived of that truth, so that the cloud of ignorance among them even who sit in darkness and the shadow of death might be lifted? ... Peter indeed may have belonged to Judea; but what had Paul in common with the gentiles, Luke with Achaia, Andrew with Epirus, John with Ephesus, Thomas with India, Mark with Italy?[7]

St Jerome of Jerusalem (342-420) affirmed:

He (Christ) was indeed at one and the same time with the apostles during the forty days, and with the angels, and in the Father, and in the uttermost ends of the ocean. He dwelt in all places: with Thomas in India, with Peter in Rome, with Paul in Illiricum, with Titus in Crete, with Andrew in Achaia, with each apostolic man in each and all countries[8].

Isidore of Seville in Spain (599-638) wrote:

Thomas preached the Gospel of Christ to the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, the Hyrcanians and the Bactrians, and to the Indians of the Oriental region and penetrating the innermost regions and sealing his preaching by his passion he died transfixed with a lance at Calamina, a city of India, and there was buried with honour[9].

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[7] Gregory Nazianzen, Contra Arianos et de seipso. Oratio 23.11; MG 36.228; AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 56.

[8] Jerome, Epist. 59 Ad Marcellam; ML 22.589; AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 60.

[9] Isidore of Seville, De Ortu et Obitu Patrum, 74.132; ML 83.152; AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 61.

St Ambrose of Milan (333-397) wrote, "Even those kingdoms which were shut out by rugged mountains became accessible to them, as India to Thomas"[10]. Likewise, St Ephrem of Syria (306-373), St Paulinus of Nola (353-431), St John Chrysostom (+407), St Gaudentius of Brescia (?410), and Gregory of Tours in France (538-593) bore witness to the belief that St Thomas the Apostle preached in India.

Many apocryphal writings give evidences regarding the apostolate of St Thomas in India. Among them the most important source book is the Syriac work of the early third century AD, called *Acts of St Thomas*. The Liturgical Texts such as the East Syrian liturgy, the Antiochian liturgy, the Byzantine liturgy as well as several ecclesiastical calendars, and martyrologies provide substantial indications about St Thomas' mission in India.

In the Syro-Malabar Holy Qurbana (Mass), which uses the anaphora of the Apostles Mar Addai and Mari, the Thomas Christians pray, "Let us recall at this altar the memory of St Thomas our father, together with the remembrance of the just who have been victorious and the holy martyrs who have been crowned[11]".

Historians such as JS Assemani, Raulin, Medlycott, Father Bernard, Clodius Bukanen, Vincent Smith, Mingana, Placid Podipara, and Xavier Koodapuzha undoubtedly assert the mission of St Thomas in India.

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[10] Ambrose, In Psalmum enarratio, 21; ML 14.1143; AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 57.

[11] For a theological study on the Anaphora of the Apostles Mar Addai and Mari, see Thomas Elavanal, *The Memorial Celebration*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1989.

Nicolo de Conti an Italian merchant who visited India several times between 1415 and 1438 stated that there were a thousand Christians then living in Mylapore[12]. In the same way, narrations by the world renowned travellers such as Panthaenus (190), David (295), Theophilus (354), Daniel (425), Mana (470), Cosmos (6th Century), John of Monte Corvino (1291), and Marco Polo (1293) prove the apostolate of St Thomas in India.

His Holiness Pope Paul VI, in his message for the 19th death centenary of St Thomas, affirmed that St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, preached the Gospel in India and died a martyr there[13]. Pope John Paul II recognises the significant role played by St Thomas in Asian evangelisation in his Apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* when he affirms:

> As far as Asia is concerned, the Jubilee will remind us of the Apostle Thomas, who, according to tradition, brought the proclamation of the Gospel at the very beginning of the Christian era to India, where missionaries from Portugal would not arrive until about the Year 1500 (TMA 25).

Above all, the undeniable living tradition – a living community of Thomas Christians bears witness to the fact that St Thomas the Apostle preached the Word of God to the people of India.

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[12] AE Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, London 1905, 95.

[13] St Thomas Souvenir, Ernakulam 1972.

Apostolic Origin

From the above mentioned evidences we come to the conclusion that the Church of the St Thomas Christians in India, which was later named the Syro-Malabar Church, is an apostolic Church. The oral and living traditions, the writings of the Latin, Greek and Syriac Fathers of the Church, the apocryphal writings, the liturgical texts, ecclesiastical calendars, martyrologies, declarations of Popes, statements of historians, traders and travellers prove that St Thomas the apostle, commissioned by Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations, travelled to India and gave birth to a Christian community. All the above cited references taken together confirm the traditional belief that St Thomas the Apostle is the Father of faith and the Founder of the Church of the Thomas Christians in India.

Martyrdom

After his mission in Kerala St Thomas crossed over to the East Coast and reached Chennai (Madras). It is the place where his mission was brought to completion and where he was crowned with martyrdom. He preached the Gospel and organized Christian communities under the leadership of priests chosen from among the leading families that had received faith. A few miles away from Chennai there is a small cave in which the apostle was accustomed to pray. His preaching aroused great unrest and jealousy among the servants of King Mahadevan. On 3rd July 72 AD while St Thomas was praying at the Little Mount (*Chinnamala*) he was stabbed in the back with a lance, by stealth, by religious fanatics. In great agony due to the wound he

received, St Thomas crawled to the Great Mount (*Periyamala*). There while praying he suffered martyrdom.

St Thomas Cross

According to an ancient local tradition, St Thomas' followers took and kept the sacred granite stone on which St Thomas shed blood and fell dead a martyr. At a later stage his disciples engraved a cross with blooming buds called St Thomas cross (*Mar Thomma Sliba*) on it.

St Thomas Cross, which symbolises the death and resurrection of Jesus, proclaims the Christological, Pneumatological and ecclesiological specifications of the Thomas Christians. The empty cross, without the dying figure of Jesus Christ, represents the resurrection of Jesus. The four tips of the blooming buds symbolise the new life which springs from Jesus' resurrection. The descending dove is another symbol of resurrection. As St Paul teaches, Holy Spirit transforms Jesus' flesh-body into spirit-body and thus vivifies the dead Jesus Christ (Rom 8,11).

The lotus, being the symbol of Buddhism, is today India's own symbol. The cross erected on lotus is a symbol of faith in the risen Jesus, established in India. The three steps at the bottom of the cross signify Calvary and remind the death of Jesus[14].

In the 16th century when the Portuguese missionaries were digging the ground to reconstruct the chapel on Periyamala they found this special cross. They fixed it

[14] Varghese Pathikulangara, *Marthomma Margam*, Denha Services, Kottayam 1993, 11-13.

to the rear wall of the main altar, which remains there to the present day.

On 11 December 1557 during the Gospel reading at the Holy Qurbana, this cross sweated blood. The miracle had been repeated for many years on the same date and in the same manner. They informed the Pope of this miracle and obtained permission to celebrate 18 December as the feast of Mylapore Cross's apparition. Today the Syro Malabar Church solemnly celebrates this feast.

The Indian postal department issued a postal stamp of St Thomas Cross on the occasion of the 19th centenary of the martyrdom of St Thomas.

The St Thomas Christians celebrate July 3 as a great feast. They call it *Dukrana* in Syriac which means *anamnesis*, remembrance. It is the remembrance of his bloodshed and martyrdom. "Do this in memory of me" (1 Cor 11,24) is significant to Indian Christians today as they continue to undergo persecution at the hands of religious fundamentalists whose forefathers martyred St Thomas 1930 years ago.

The Tomb

The body of St Thomas was brought to the town of Mylapore near Chennai and was buried there by his followers. They built a small church on the spot. Today the tomb of St Thomas the Apostle is found under the main altar of the St Thomas Cathedral, Mylapore. Christians from Kerala, the Near East and even from China used to go on pilgrimage to Mylapore to venerate the tomb of St Thomas. Mylapore has been for the Thomas Christians as Kashi (Benares) for the Hindus,

or Mecca for the Moslems, or Palestine for the Christians.

The Venetian traveller Marco Polo who was in South India in 1288 and in 1292 visited the tomb of St Thomas. Similarly, the Portuguese documents of the 16th and 17th centuries refer to the traditions of the St Thomas Christians and describe the pilgrimage to the tomb of St Thomas. In 1515 Duarte Barbosa who visited the tomb stated:

Going yet further and leaving behind Charamandal and the lands, there is on the sea strand a city, which is right ancient called Mylapore, which erewhile was very great and fair, pertaining to the kingdom of Narasyngua. Here lies buried the body of the Blessed Saint Thomas in a little church near the sea[15].

In the same way, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of 888 AD testified that King Alfred of England had sent offerings to St Thomas in India. It reads, "And in the same year, Sighelm and Aesthalstan conveyed to Rome the alms which the King had vowed to send thither, and also to India to St Thomas"[16].

The recent archaeological excavations conducted at the tomb of St Thomas reveal that the tomb existed there from the first century of the Christian era[17]. According to Paulinus, "The belief that St Thomas was killed and buried in India (at Mylapore) is as strong as

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[15] AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 72.

[16] AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 74-75.

[17] ER Hambye, "Excavation at S. Tome, Mylapore" in *Indian Church History Review*, 6 (1972) 91-99; 7 (1973) 29-48.

the belief of the Europeans that Peter was killed and buried in Rome"[18].

RELICS

According to the tradition on 3 July 230 St Thomas' relics were transferred to the city of Edessa in Mesopotamia. It was housed in the burial place of the Kings, to the West of the city. On 22 August 394, when Cyrus was bishop of Edessa, it was removed to a newly built church within the city walls, dedicated to St Thomas[19]. St Ephrem had surely the translation of the relics in mind when he wrote in one of his hymns: "Whence is thy origin O, Thomas that so illustrious thou shouldst become. A merchant has conveyed thy bones, a (priest) Pontiff has made a celebration for thee; and a king has erected a shrine (for Thee)"[20].

During the second crusade (1144), the remains of the Apostle were transported to a Greek island called Chios, (Scio, Kios) in the Aegean Sea, off the coast of Asia Minor, to protect them from Moslem desecration where they remained until 1258. Captain Leone Acciaivoli during the military expedition organised by Prince Manfred of Taranto took the relics of St Thomas and brought to Ortona in Italy. On 6th September 1258 he handed over the box containing the relics of

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[18] Cited by Andrews Thazhath, *The Law of Thomas*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1987, 3.

[19] J Puthenkalam – A Mampra, *Sanctity In India*, Yercaud 2000, 31.

[20] Placid, "St Thomas in Syriac Writings and Liturgies", in *St Thomas the Apostle*, Centenary Celebrations Central committee, Ernakulam 1952, 68-80.

St Thomas, and the tomb-stone taken from the isle of Chios to the Abbot Jacobus, the Archpriest of St Mary, Queen of the Angels Church at Ortona on the shores of Adriatic Sea in Italy.

Today most of the relics of St Thomas are kept at the St Thomas the Apostle's Cathedral in Ortona, in Abruzzo, Italy. The relics are kept in two places. One containing the bones of the body is kept inside a golden copper urn and is placed in the crypt of the cathedral. The other one, the relics from St Thomas' skull is kept in a silver case shaped in the form of a skull and is placed on the altar at the right side of the Cathedral. The relic of the finger of St Thomas with which he touched the wound of Jesus is now kept at the Holy Cross of Jerusalem Basilica in Rome.

In 1953 His Eminence Eugene Cardinal Tisserant brought a piece of the relic from St Thomas Cathedral in Ortona to Kerala and is kept now at the St Thomas shrine at Kodungallur.

In the Jubilee Year 2000 His Excellency Dr Thomas Elavanal mcbs, the second bishop of Kalyan brought another piece of the relic from St Thomas Cathedral, Ortona which is kept now for the public veneration at the St Thomas pilgrim Centre, Kalyan.

In 1523 when the Portuguese examined the grave of St Thomas they discovered only a few pieces of bones, the earthen pot and the point of the lance with which the apostle had been martyred. These are kept at the St Thomas Cathedral, Chennai.

New Sunday

The St Thomas Christians solemnly celebrate a feast called the Octave of Easter or New Sunday, that is, the

first Sunday after Easter, in honour of St Thomas' proclamation of faith in the risen Lord, "My Lord and my God". On that day they go in pilgrimage to Malayattoor, a mountain on the banks of the Periyar River, about eight miles northeast of Kalady, the birthplace of Sri Sankaracharya. According to tradition, St Thomas is believed to have prayed on this mountain. Thus Mylapore on the East coast and Malayatoor on the West stand as two famous pilgrim centres dedicated to the memory of St Thomas the Apostle.

Conclusion

St Thomas the Apostle is the Father of faith and the Founder of the Thomas Christians in India. Christianity in India owes its apostolic origin to St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. Hence the consciousness of their Apostolic origin is the most important aspect of the identity of the Thomas Christians. The living testimony of the community of the St Thomas Christians and the existence of St Thomas' tomb at Mylapore firmly stand as great evidences for the Indian mission of St Thomas. Thus the historicity of St Thomas' apostolate in India is asserted by ancient and modern traditions, both living and oral, Indian and non-Indian sources.

Questions

- What are the personality traits of St Thomas the Apostle?
- Was it possible for St Thomas to come to India in 52 AD? If yes, how?
- Which are the seven churches established by St Thomas?
- How can we historically prove the apostolate of St Thomas in India?
- Where do we find the relics of St Thomas today?

Chapter Two

The Chaldean And Latin Rule Over The Thomas Christians

Introduction

The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, one of the most ancient and Apostolic Churches in the 21st century has a heart-rending story to tell. Throughout its extensive history she stood for her identity and loyalty to the Holy See but had to severely fight against the colonial powers especially against the latinization. In the first chapter, we have seen the missionary apostolate of St Thomas in India and the genesis of the Thomas Christians. In this chapter we focus on the Chaldean and the Latin rule over the Thomas Christians, which can be summarised as their struggle for native bishops, identity, and independence.

Early History

The early history of St Thomas Christians begins from the arrival of St Thomas and ends with the arrival of the East Syrians on the scene. This is called the Indian period and spans more than three hundred years. It is presumed that the Church founded by St Thomas flourished as a genuinely Indian Church. One should keep in mind that the Indian Church of this period was not one transplanted from a foreign country but was born out of the proclamation of the Gospel by St Thomas the Apostle himself.

Different Names

The Christians of Kerala, the southwest coast of India, who trace the origin of their faith to St Thomas, are known by different names such as St Thomas Christians *(Mar Thoma Christianikal),* Christians of St Thomas, or Thomas Christians. The St Thomas Christians were addressed by their compatriots as *Nazrani Mapilas.* 'Nazrani' is an Arabic derivation of Nazarene (from Jesus of Nazareth) and probably it is the Arab traders who began calling the Kerala Christians *Nazrani Mapilas* to distinguish them from the *Jonaka Mapilas* (Muslims) and *Juda Mapila* (Jews). Their name Nazrani, a name by which the first followers of Christ were called, points out their antiquity going back to the apostolic times[1] . The name Syrian Christians was also given to St Thomas Christians. This was because Syriac was their liturgical language and was also to distinguish them from the Latin Christians. Today, they are known as Syro-Malabar Christians about which we will discuss later.

The Chaldean Church

The Church founded by St Thomas came under the influence of the Persian or East Syrian Church (the present day Iran and Iraq) in the 4th century. The Thomas Christians faced a crisis on account of the need for successors to bishops. Providentially, at that time, Thomas of Cana (*Knai Thomman*), a Persian merchant, together with 72 families migrated to Kerala in 345 AD from Syria. They were refugees fleeing from the

[1] Andrews Thazhath, *The Law of Thomas*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1987, 23.

persecution in their homeland by Sapor II of Persia. Their arrival in Kerala was a blessing and they saved the St Thomas Christians from a crisis situation[2]. For Thomas of Cana united the Christians who were scattered and obtained many privileges for the Christians from the local ruler. Moreover, after studying the situation in Kerala, he returned to his homeland in Persia and reported his findings to his bishops. He served as a liaison between the East Syrian Church and the St Thomas Christians in India. From fifth century onwards the St Thomas Christians received their bishops from the East Syrian Church and eventually they began to preside over the Church in India[3].

In a letter, Patriarch Iso 'Yahb II of Selucia (650-660) speaks of the need for priestly succession in India. Patriarch Sliba Zka (714-728) raised the Indian Church to Metropolitan dignity. According to Abdiso, the Metropolitan of India held the tenth place before that of China. In the ninth century, Patriarch Theodosius (852-855) granted the Indian Church a kind of exemption but said that the Metropolitan should send letters of communion every six years[4].

The Persian bishops helped the Indian Church to retain Episcopal succession. However, they do not seem to have allowed Indian priests to become bishops and

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[2] Cana in Persia is not to be confused with Cana in Galilee where Jesus changed water into wine.

[3] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995.

[4] James Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore 2001, 20-21.

thus stunted the organic growth of the Indian Church. This relationship, however, made the St Thomas Christians share the liturgical, spiritual, and other ecclesiastical traditions with the East Syrian Church.

Communion With Rome

In the early centuries, communication between the Thomas Christians and Rome was rather impossible due to geographical and political reasons. The St Thomas Christians' communion with Rome was through their communion with the Assyrian Church of the East which regularly sent bishops to ordain priests and deacons. In the course of time, they had a clear idea of the Roman primacy. This is quite evident as Bishop Roz SJ testifies from the explicit statements in their books about the divinely instituted primacy of Rome over the whole Christendom[5]. They received the Papal Legate John Marigoli, who stayed at Quilon for sixteen months (1348-1350), with due respect and love, and paid him monthly 100 gold fanams (Malabar money) as perquisite of his office as the Pope's Legate and a thousand fanams when he left[6].

In the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese came to India, the St Thomas Christians wholeheartedly welcomed them and entered into direct relation with Rome and very spontaneously put themselves in touch with the Pope as his children. This is evident from

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[5] J Placid, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay 1970, 113.

[6] G Goluavich, *Biblioteca bibliografica della Terra Santa,* Quarachi 1923, 274; GT Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travencore*, Trivandrum 1901, 9.

Fr Dionisio's writing from Cochin on 4 January 1570:

> Commonly these Christians profess all the articles of the Nicene Creed, (it was the Nicene Creed that they recited everyday in the Mass) and the equality of the Divine Persons and the two natures in Christ and the One Person, as the Archbishop and Archdeacon admit. About the Pope, they consider him as the Vicar of Christ, our Redeemer, on earth; they consider the Patriarch as subject to the Pope from whom he receives his power[7].

In short, as Fr Schurhammer has proved in his book, *The Malabar Church and Rome*, The Thomas Christians were in full communion with Rome before and after the arrival of the Portuguese[8].

Indigenous

In spite of the ecclesiastical influence of the East Syrian Church, the St Thomas Christians of this period sustained their individuality, uniqueness, and lifestyle suitable to the political and socio-cultural world of India in general and of Kerala in particular. It was this pre-16th century identity of St Thomas Christians which came to be known as the "Law of Thomas" that was distinct from the "Law of Peter". George Nedungatt explains it better:

> It resumed the whole of their Christian patrimony of faith, liturgy, Church discipline, customs, usages and laws. It referred to their specific mode of living

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[7] Archivum Societatis Jesu, Lisnon, lib. No. 28, 34-38 as cited by J Thaliath, *The Synod of Diamper*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 152, Roma 1958, 13, note 29.

[8] G Schurhammer, *The Malabar Church and Rome*, Trichinopoly, 1934.

> a Church community with a spirituality and an identity of its own, distinct from the "Law of Peter", followed by the Latin missionaries. It stood for the whole ethos of their Church life[9].

It was this identity of St Thomas Christians that conflicted with the identity of the Portuguese Christians who represented the Christianity of the West. We will discuss more on the "Law of Thomas" when we discuss on the identity of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Under The Latin Rule

On 21 May 1498 Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese explorer, landed in Calicut (Kozhikode) and thereby opened the way for the Europeans to trade with India. For the St Thomas Christians it was the beginning of a new era of their encounter with the Western Christians. Though in the beginning this encounter was cordial, in the course of time, the European missionaries in general failed to accept a Christian life different from theirs. Hence, they launched a policy of systematically making to conform the St Thomas Christians to the Western pattern of Christian life. They attributed heresies and schisms to the St Thomas Christians and tried hard to introduce the Latin customs and manners of ecclesiastical administration.

The Synod Of Diamper

The Portuguese blocked the arrival of Persian bishops and prepared the way for the final takeover of

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[9] George Nedungatt, "The Spirituality of the Syro Malabar Church", in Augustine Thottakkara, *East Syrian Spirituality*, CIIS, Rome 1990, 162.

the Church in India. In order to bring the St Thomas Christians under the jurisdiction of the Portuguese Church the latter found it convenient to point out the Nestorian heresy of the Church of St Thomas Christians on the evidence of certain expressions in their liturgical texts.

Though certain theological expressions and formulas peculiar to Nestorianism had found their way into the Chaldean liturgical books in use in Malabar, this had not affected the true faith in Jesus Christ, true God, and true man, of either Church. In 1980 Pope John Paul II declared that "it has never been severed from the communion with the Church of Rome"[10]. The Apostolic Delegate to India wrote in a letter to Father Placid J Podippara in 1938 affirming that the Malabar Church was not a branch of the Nestorian Church:

> The Malabar Church was not a branch or offshoot of the Nestorian one, as was the early Christianity in China, but it became and long remained a voluntary associate member of the Syro-Chaldean Patriarchate for practical, not for doctrinal, reasons. Their mutual relations were the outcome not of organic development of one moral body but of historical intercourse between two moral bodies, each retaining separate corporate responsibility.[11]

On 20-26 June 1599 the Portuguese convened the well-known Synod of Diamper (*Udayamperur*

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[10] Cited by Xavier Koodapuzha, *Faith and Communion of the Indian Church of the Saint Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 1982, 150-153.

[11] Leo P Kierkels in a letter addressed to Father Placid Podipara, reproduced in *Christian Orient*, 2 (1981) 120-129.

Soonahados). Historians have repeatedly proved that the very manner in which the synod was convoked and its decrees were passed by Archbishop Menezes of Goa and his colleagues was a clear show of naked power and in violation of all the ecclesiastical laws of that time. As a result the long-standing relations of the Indian Church with the East-Syrian Church of Persia were ended and the St Thomas Christians were forcibly brought under the Latin jurisdiction of the Portuguese *Padroado*. Practically, the Church of St Thomas Christians became a colonial Church of the Portuguese, and a period of massive latinization of the liturgy and the ecclesial life of the St Thomas Christians began[12]. George Nedungatt describes it well in his article on the "spirituality of the Syro Malabar Church":

> This was the beginning of a massive latinization of their liturgy and ecclesial life, according to a cunningly thought out plan, executed with artful jesuitry and consummate dissemblance – for the greater glory of God and of Portugal. The colonial Church was sowing the wind of reform, and would reap shortly the whirlwind of revolution. Exasperated, the people would rise up in revolt against the colonial Church

[12] Gregory Karotemprel, "The Apostolic Origin & Development of Syro-Malabar Church", *Journal of St Thomas Christians*, 11/1 (2000) 9-10; Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 26-27; Bosco Puthur, "Synod of Diamper: Reformation or Domination", *Journal of St Thomas Christians,* 11/1 (2000) 58-69.

dictatorship in what is known as the Coonan Cross Oath of 1653[13].

Coonan Cross Oath

The St Thomas Christians were one in heart and one in mind for more than sixteen hundred years. From the beginning until the arrival of the Portuguese unity was their hallmark. The latinization of the St Thomas Christians by the Portuguese generated a spirit of protest and division which culminated in what is known as the *Coonan* Cross Oath (Bent Cross Oath). On 3rd January 1653, a group of priests and lay people led by the Archdeacon Thomas Parambil, swore on the Bible kept on the high altar in the Church of Our Lady of Life at Mattanchery and took an Oath that they would not be subject to the Portuguese Archbishop of Goa, Francis Garcia. According to tradition, the crowd shared in the oath by holding on to a rope tied to a cross in the churchyard. As they held on to the cross to take the oath, the cross bent. Therefore, the oath is known as the *Coonan* (bent) Cross Oath.

The intention of the demonstrators of the *Coonan* Cross Oath was of preserving their authority which they thought was under attack by the Portuguese missionaries. They were declaring their allegiance to the Pope by rejecting the foreign missionaries who, they thought, were acting against the order of the Pope[14].

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[13] George Nedungatt, "The Spirituality of the Syro Malabar Church", in Augustine Thottakara, *East Syrian Spirituality*, CIIS, Rome 1990, 149-150.

[14] Gregory Karotemprel, "The Apostolic Origin & Development of Syro-Malabar Church", *Journal of St Thomas Christians*, 11/1 (2000) 10; Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 27-28.

Divisions

The *Coonan* Cross revolt eventually split the one ancient Church of India first into two groups. While one group continued to recognize the prelates appointed by Rome, the other broke away from Rome and entered into communion with the West-Syrian Jacobite Church and came to be known as Jacobites, *Puthankootukar* (the New Sect). The Jacobites were further divided into two groups; the *Methran Kakshi* or the Bishop's party, calling itself the Orthodox Syrian Church of India, whose catholicos or supreme head resides at Devalokam, Kottayam, and the *Bava Kakshi* or the Patriarch's Party calling itself the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church (of India) which acknowledges the Antiochence Jacobite patriarch as its head[15].

Developments After The *Coonan* Cross Oath

The rejection of the Latin rule by the St Thomas Christians was so thorough that it demanded Rome's intervention. The Propaganda Congregation acted promptly and sent immediately two batches of Discalced Carmelite monks with full powers to deal with the situation. The first batch arrived in Kerala in 1657. Joseph Sebastiani OCD was their leader. He went back to report to Rome and returned as vicar apostolic of Malabar in 1661. Meanwhile, the Dutch came to the field and were in competition with the Portuguese.

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[15] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 28.

As a result of an agreement between Rome and the Dutch, the Holy See appointed an Italian Carmelite as the vicar apostolic of Malabar in 1700. In due course, the Carmelite took up residence at Varapuzha. These vicars apostolic were under the Propaganda Congregation of Rome. Besides the Carmelite vicars apostolic, there were archbishops or administrators for Malabar, appointed by the Portuguese *Padroado*, who resided at Kodungallur. Thus, the Catholic Christians were under two jurisdictions: the Propaganda represented by the vicar apostolic of Malabar who resided at Varapuzha and the *Padroado* represented by the archbishop of Kodungallur[16].

PADROADO

The term *Padroado* stands for patronage. By an agreement with Rome, the Church had the patronage of the Portuguese king. In return Rome conceded to the King certain privileges, one of which was nominating archbishops in the territories newly discovered by the Portuguese. Thus the archbishops of Goa and Kodungallur came under the *Padroado*. The king of Portugal nominated them; their appointment however was reserved to Rome.

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[16] Gregory Karotemprel, "The Apostolic Origin & Development of Syro-Malabar Church", *Journal of St Thomas Christians*, 11/1 (2000) 10-11; Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 29.

Joseph Cariattil And Thomas Paremmakkal

Mar Joseph Cariattil, the first St Thomas Christian to acquire a doctorate degree from a European university, is the Herald of Asian Ecumenism. He took a double doctorate in philosophy and theology from the Pontifical Urbanian University in Rome.

His selfless love for the Church gained him the confidence of the whole Thomas Christian community. Father Joseph Cariattil together with Father Thomas Paremmakkal[17] was unanimously delegated by the General Assembly of the 72 Thomas Christian units held in 1778 at Angamaly to present the cause of their Church before the Holy See and the *Padroado* authorities in Lisbon. Their journey to Rome and Lisbon had two purposes: to reconcile the Jacobites and the Catholics and to get an archbishop for the vacant see of Kodungallur. In 1782 Cariattil was consecrated archbishop of Kodungallur in Lisbon, but on his way back, before he could reach Kerala, he died in Goa in 1786.

Their historic journey to Rome and Lisbon (1778-1786) for the cause of unity is brilliantly depicted in the *Varthamanapusthakam*, written by Father Thomas Paremmakkal. It is said to be the first travel account in any of the Indian languages and is a masterpiece in the Indian literature. Following the death of his companion, Paremmackal was made the administrator (*Govarnador*) of Kodungallur.

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[17] He was born in 1736 at Kadanad near Palai and was ordained priest at the age of 25.

Struggle For Native Bishops

The agitation against foreign vicars apostolic continued to gain momentum. In 1787 representatives of 84 churches assembled at Angamaly and drew up a document known as the *Angamaly Padiyola* which, besides listing the sins of commission and omission of the foreign missionaries, made a strong demand for native bishops.

Rokkos And Melus Schism

The situation was further worsened by the schism created by the arrival in Kerala of Rokkos and Melus. Thomas Rokkos was a Chaldean Catholic bishop sent by the Chaldean patriarch. The Carmelite vicar apostolic of Varapuzha did not welcome him in Kerala in 1861. He was considered an intruder and was excommunicated. This brought forth the Rokkos schism in Kerala. Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara, who was the vicar general of the St Thomas community, was in the forefront to fight against this schism.

Elias Melus was another Chaldean Catholic bishop who came to Kerala in 1874. He too was not accepted by the vicar apostolic of Varapuzha. The Syrians, popularly known as *surais*, in and around Thrissur who owe allegiance to the East-Syrian Nestorian patriarch are the followers of the schism Melus generated. Rome took these developments seriously and sent delegates to India to study the situation which led to the final separation of the St Thomas Christians from the Latins[18].

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[18] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 31.

Among the European missionaries, two personalities still live in the hearts of millions of Indians, St Francis Xavier and Roberto De Nobili. Without a reference to these missionaries this account on the history of St Thomas Christians would be imperfect, especially when the Indian Church commemorates this year the 450 death anniversary of St Francis Xavier.

St Francis Xavier (1506-1552)

Francis Xavier, a Spanish nobleman, wealthy and intelligent, was born on 7 April 1506 as the sixth child of Don Juan de Jassu and Dona Maria. After his studies in Master of Arts, while teaching at the Paris university, Professor Francis Xavier joined the Society of Jesus, founded by St Ignatius of Loyola. On 24 June 1537 he was ordained priest and on 6 May 1542 landed in Goa. He visited the hospitals and prisons and took interest in serving the most wretched.

Francis went to the island of Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu and announced the Gospel to the fishermen of Karaya caste. So many of them asked to be baptised that his arm ached and his voice became hoarse performing the baptismal rites and reciting over and over the articles of faith. He made the lessons in Tamil to teach them in easily memorable rhymes. He taught them the songs he had composed. The children easily learned these songs and thus began to learn the ten commandments and other Bible stories. His preaching effected large scale conversions along the Western and Eastern Coasts of South India.

Francis also preached in Malacca and in Japan where many embraced Christianity. He wanted to go to China to proclaim the good news but on 3 December 1552 on his way to China at the island of Sancian, he breathed

his last repeating, "In you, O Lord, have I hoped, let me not be confounded for ever".

His body, first buried at Sancian, then in Malacca, was taken to Goa in the middle of March 1554 and is kept at the St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Goa. Francis Xavier was beatified on 25 October 1619 and declared a saint on 12 March 1622. He is known as the second Apostle of India, and is one of the mission Patrons.

Roberto De Nobili (1577-1656)

Robert de Nobili, an Italian Jesuit missionary and pioneer of inculturation, was wealthy, intelligent and aristocratic. One of his ancestors had been Emperor Otto III. Despite the strong opposition from his family, he insisted to become a Jesuit.

On 20 May 1605 he arrived at Cochin and began to learn Tamil. In 1606 he went to Madurai, a city rich in history, tradition and wealth. De Nobili understood that the only way to win the high caste Hindus for Jesus was inculturation. He was convinced that the nearest thing to a Catholic priest in Hinduism was the Sanyasi, one who had renounced the world, lived a very austere life, ate vegetarian meals, living entirely on alms. His dress would be simple ochre-coloured cloth wound round his waist and thrown over his shoulder. With this intention of adaptation and inculturation he went on to master Tamil, classical and colloquial, as well as Telugu and Sanskrit. Eventually, he was accepted by the exclusive South Indian Brahmins as a fellow, equal if not superior to them in disputation, and even worthy of admission to this most exclusive caste system. He was among the first Europeans to know and appreciate Indian culture, and who was able to read the Vedas. As

a result many high caste Hindus, including Brahmins, came forward to accept Christianity.

De Nobili proved that Christianity is not a Western religion, but a universal religion, which can take root anywhere and adopt any language and custom of any country. On 16 January 1656 he died at Mylapore, the resting place of St Thomas the Apostle.

Conclusion

St Thomas Christians had to fight with many colonial and ecclesiastical powers to keep their identity and individuality. It was the divine providence that kept the Thomas Christians in the communion of the Catholic Church by keeping its oriental nature and overcoming the strong persuasions of Latinisation and the temptations to break away from the Catholic communion.

We conclude this chapter on the history of the Thomas Christians under the Chaldean and Latin Rule with the words of Pope Pius XII on the occasion of the nineteenth Centenary celebrations (1952) of the coming of St Thomas in India:

> During the centuries that India was cut off from the West and despite many trying vicissitudes, the Christian community formed by St Thomas conserved intact the legacy he left for them; and as soon as the sea-passage at the close of the fifteenth century offered a link with their fellow Christians of the West, their union with them was spontaneous. This Apostolic lineage, beloved sons and daughters, is the proud privilege of many among you who glory in the name Thomas Christians and we are happy

on this occasion to acknowledge and bear witness to it[19].

QUESTIONS

- What are the different names of Syro-Malabar Church?
- What was the goal and background of the Diamper Synod?
- What are the circumstances that led to the Coonan Cross Oath?
- What do you mean by Padroado and Propaganada?

[19] *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1953, 56-57.

Chapter Three

The Hierarchical Restoration Of The Syro-Malabar Church

Introduction

The Thomas Christians of India could not develop their own full-fledged and independent ecclesiastical organisation. The socio-cultural relations with the Persian Church prompted the Thomas Christians to form part of the ecclesiastical organisation of the Seleucian Church. In spite of the attempts of the European missionaries to Latinise the St Thomas Christians, they succeeded in maintaining their own identity and individuality throughout the past twenty centuries. We study in this chapter the restoration of the hierarchical structure of the Syro-Malabar Church as well as its growth into a Major Archiepiscopal Church having its own administrative system.

Hierarchy

According to Mathias Mundadan, hierarchy means church government based on a system of grades of authority from the lowest to the highest. Bishops are the chief pastors or the shepherds of the faithful. They share their "shepherding" responsibility with their priests. The Pope is the highest authority in the Catholic Church. He is the bishop of the church of Rome which is the See of St Peter. As the successor of Peter, the

Pope is advised and assisted by a college of Cardinals. Cardinalship is a dignity conferred usually on certain archbishops and bishops to assist the Pope in administering the Universal Church.

Patriarch And Patriarchal Churches

The Eastern Catholic Churches are in communion with the Church of Rome and recognize the Pope as the successor of Peter. The hierarchical constitution of the Eastern Churches is different from that of the Latin Church. The Eastern Churches, for instance, have Patriarchs, Major Archbishops, and Episcopal Synods, which the Latin Church does not have[1].

A patriarch is the head of a patriarchal Church. Patriarchal churches have been existing since ancient times. Rome has been the centre of the Western or Latin Church. In the East, there were many such centres: Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Constantinople. These centres were recognized as the most important Sees in the East by first ecumenical councils (Nicea - 325, Constantinople - 383, Chalcedon - 451). Eventually they came to be known as patriarchal Sees.

There are 21 autonomous (*sui juris*) Eastern Churches[2]. Among them six are patriarchal. They are Coptic, Syrian, Maronite, Armenian, Chaldean and Melkite. Accordingly, there are six patriarchs. An

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[1] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 36.

[2] Canon 27 of the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches defines an autonomous (*sui juris*) Church as "a group of Christian faithful united by a hierarchy according to the norm of law which the supreme authority of the Church expressly or tacitly recognises as autonomous (*sui juris*).

Eastern Church is patriarchal not on account of the number of adherents it has, but on account of its antiquity. The largest Eastern Church, the Ukrainian Church, which has four million people is not patriarchal, but the Coptic Church with only 170 thousand Catholics is patriarchal. For a better understanding on the 21 *sui juris* Churches see the Chart on Eastern Catholic Churches in the appendix.

The patriarch and the bishops in his Church form the Episcopal Synod which has supreme authority in that Church. The Second Vatican Council states: "The patriarchs with their synod are to be the highest authority for all business of the patriarchal Church, including the erection of new eparchies and appointment of bishops" (OE 9). It should be noted that the authority resides not in the patriarch but in the synod. The patriarch with the consent of the synod has legislative, judicial and administrative powers.

The national conferences of the Latin bishops, by contrast, do not have such powers. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Latin Church in India, for example, cannot erect new dioceses and appoint bishops; nor does it have legislative powers.

The Episcopal Synod elects a patriarch for life. The legislative, judicial and administrative self-sufficiency of the patriarchal Churches does not in any way deny the primacy of the Roman See (CCEO c.1059).

There are titular patriarchs in the Western Church such as the Latin patriarchal sees of Jerusalem, Venice, Lisbon and Goa. However, the patriarchates of the Western Church are mere titles. They do not have

juridical powers as the patriarchates of the Eastern Churches[3].

The Latin Hierarchy In India

In 1534 Goa was made a suffragan See of the Funchal Archdiocese in the Madeira Island under the jurisdiction of Padroado. Goa was raised to the Archdiocese in 1557 with its suffragan See as Cochin and later Cranganore. But in 1838 the Holy See suppressing Cochin and Cranganore established the Vicar Apostolic of Malabar under the Propaganda. In 1845 this was divided into the Vicariates of Quilon, Verapoly and Mangalore. Finally on 1st September 1886, Pope Leo XIII constituted the Latin Hierarchy in India through the promulgation of the Bull "Humanae Salutis". As a result of this Papal Decree six units such as Agra, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Pondicherry and Verapoly were created as Archdioceses. Ten units such as Allehabad, Kochi, Coimbatore, Hydrabad, Krishnagar, Mysore, Pune, Quilon, Tiruchirapalli and Visakapatanam were created as dioceses. Patna continued to function as a Vicariate. Besides these 17 ecclesiastical units under the Propaganda, there were two units, the Archdiocese of Goa and the diocese of Mylopore under Padroado.

The Syro-Malabar Hierarchy

On 20 May 1887 Pope Leo XIII separated the St Thomas Christians from the Latin hierarchy and

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[3] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 37-38.

initiated the process to form a new hierarchy under the title Syro-Malabar for the Catholic Thomas Christians. He erected two vicariates apostolic for them, Thrissur and Kottayam; however, the Pope appointed two Latin bishops, Bishop Adolf Medlycott an Anglo-Indian and Bishop Charles Levigne, a French Jesuit, as their vicars apostolic. Therefore, the plea for native Indian bishops continued. In 1896 the Pope decreed the reconstitution of these two into three vicariates for the St Thomas Catholics: Thrissur, Ernakulam and Changanachery. This time the vicariates were entrusted to the care of native Indian bishops: John Menachery, Louis Pazheparambil and Mathew Makil respectively.

Pope Pius X erected a fourth vicariate in 1911 the vicariate of Kottayam for the Southists or Knanites, an endogamous community among the St Thomas Christians. They claim to be the descendants of the East-Syrian Christians who migrated from Persia along with Knai Thomman. The descendants of the original community of Thomas Christians are known as the Northists[4].

Finally, on 21 December 1923, Pope Pius XI formally reconstituted the Syro-Malabar hierarchy with Ernakulam as the Metropolitan See and Thrissur, Changanacherry and Kottayam as suffragan Sees. In 1956 Changanacherry was raised to a Metropoly.

The growth of the Syro-Malabar Church after the restoration of its hierarchy has been phenomenal. The

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[4] Gregory Karotemprel, "The Apostolic Origin & Development of Syro-Malabar Church", *Journal of St Thomas Christians*, 11/1 (2000) 11-12.

installation of Archbishop Joseph Parecattil as its first Cardinal in 1969, the establishment of 11 mission dioceses outside its proper territory, erecting ten more new dioceses in Kerala, and the upgrading of the eparchies of Thrissur and Thalassery to Metroplitan Sees in 1995 are some major events in the course of its development. Today, the Syro-Malabar Church is one of the most vibrant Catholic communities in the world.

What Does Syro-Malabar Mean?

Mathias Mundadan explains why is the Church of the St Thomas Christians called the Syro-Malabar Church? When the Syro-Malabar vicariates apostolic of Thrissùr and Kottayam were erected in1887, there were St Thomas Christian communities that were not in communion with Rome. The non-Catholic community, for example, which owed allegiance to the East-Syrian Nestorian Patriarch, following the Melus schism, and the Jacobites and Marthomites were also known as St Thomas Christians. In order to distinguish the St Thomas Catholic Christians from these non-Catholic St Thomas Christians and from the Latin Catholics, the name Syro-Malabar was given to the St Thomas Catholic Christians.

The liturgical language of the time was East Syriac. The first part of the hyphenated word, 'Syro', refers to both Syriac, the liturgical language and to the East-Syrian connection of the Syro-Malabar Church. The St Thomas Christians are known as Syrians because of their East-Syrian connection and the Syriac language they use in liturgy. Syrian does not mean that the Syro-Malabar Catholics came from Syria! The East-Syrian Church with which the Syro-Malabar Church had

connections was not in Syria but in Persia which is today's Iran and Iraq. The second part 'Malabar', does not refer to the British Malabar, which is the Northern end of Kerala, but to the southwest coast of India, the home of St Thomas Christians which today is known as Kerala[5].

Changing The Name "Syro-Malabar"

There is a strong move today to change 'Syro-Malabar' into the Church of St Thomas Christians, or something similar, for obvious reasons. In the past, Malabar stood for the southwest coast of India, which is known as Kerala today. Even if Malabar is used in the old sense to mean Kerala, the name Syro-Malabar does not suit the St Thomas Christians because they are not confined to Kerala. The territory of the Syro-Malabar Church was extended beyond the boundaries of Kerala in 1955 to include the adjacent districts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Besides, there are eleven Syro-Malabar dioceses outside its territory. Since 1962, the vernacular has become the liturgical language. Syriac is no longer in use. In short, the hyphenated name Syro-Malabar does not completely represent the most important aspect of the St Thomas Christians which is its apostolic origin[6].

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[5] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 33.

[6] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 55-56.

Migrations

As population increased, the St Thomas Christians who were agriculturists found it difficult to have sufficient arable land in their traditional habitat in Kerala. The famine that followed the second world war also compelled many to look for better and more land for cultivation. Thus the St Thomas Christians began to migrate to the northern part of the present state of Kerala in the late forties and early fifties of last century. They also migrated to the southern parts of Karnataka and South Western parts of Tamil Nadu.

The spiritual needs of these migrants, who often lived in very remote areas, were not looked after properly in the beginning. Later, the local Latin bishops took care of their pastoral needs. Yet they were not satisfied as they were not accustomed to the Latin liturgy and customs[7].

New Dioceses

Taking into consideration the spiritual needs of the Syro Malabar migrants the diocese of Thalassery was established in 1953. The new diocese covered a very extensive area including some districts in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. In the South it bordered Thrissur while in the North the territories extended up to Shimoga in Karnataka. In the East the entire districts of Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu was under the new diocese. In the meantime the territories of Changanacherry and Thrissur were extended to the southern district of Kanyakumari and to Coimbatore in the Southeast in Tamil Nadu

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[7] Gregory Karotemprel, "The Apostolic Origin & Development of Syro-Malabar Church", *Journal of St Thomas Christians*, 11/1 (2000) 12.

respectively because the Syro-Malabarians were settling in those areas also. In the course of time, many more new dioceses were established for the migrants. Thalassery was divided into Mananthawady, Thamrassery and Belthangady. Ernakulam was divided into Kothamangalam. Thrissur was divided into Palakkad and Irinjalakuda and Changanacherry into Kottayam, Palai, Kanjirappally, and Thuckalay

Mission Dioceses

There was also an increased missionary consciousness in the Syro-Malabar Church and about the equality of all the churches in the Catholic communion. However, until 1962 the Syro-Malabar Church had no mission territory. It may be recalled that the absence of Syro-Malabar missions was not due to any lack of interest on the part of the Syro-Malabarians but because the policy of the Holy See was not in favour of Syro-Malabar Missions. For the first time, a mission excarchate in the Syro-Malabar rite was established in 1962 in Chanda. Later nine more Syro-Malabar mission dioceses were established in central and North India. They are Bijnor, Rajkot, Jagadalpur, Sagar, Satna, Ujjain, Gorakhpur, Kalyan, and Adilabad. A eleventh Syro Malabar mission diocese was established on 13 March 2001 for those St Thomas Christians who live in America and Canada. It is called the St Thomas diocese and its See is in Chicago, USA. For further clarity on the different Syro-Malabar dioceses in and outside Kerala consult the charts given in the Appendix.

Today there are altogether 25 Syro-Malabar dioceses all over the world. Twelve of these are in Kerala, the home of the Syro-Malabar Catholics. Dioceses of Belthangady and Thuckalay though outside Kerala are

under the proper Syro-Malabar territory. Eleven mission dioceses are outside the proper territory of the Syro-Malabar Church. For a detailed information about the 25 Syro-Malabar dioceses see the chart given in the Appendix.

Social And Charitable Works

With the establishment of new dioceses there was also an increase in the activities of the Syro-Malabar Church in various fields. The church began to establish educational institutions, houses for the aged, the handicapped, the mentally retarded, rehabilitation centres for prisoners, prostitutes, street children, and beggars, centres for the alcoholics, orphans, non-formal education centres, etc. Printing presses and publishing houses also were established. In the field of healthcare more and more hospitals, clinics and dispensaries were started. The vital role played by the Catholic institutions in placing Kerala in the forefront of other Indian states, specially in the fields of education and healthcare is a well known fact.

Religious Congregations

In the Syro-Malabar Church there are 5 religious congregations for men, and 16 for women. There are 3 societies without public vows for men and 3 for women, 3 secular institutes and 13 pious unions for women. Including those religious congregations of Latin origin altogether there are more than 40 congregations for men and 130 for women in the Syro-Malabar Church. Many of these congregations of Latin origin got established in the Syro-Malabar Church because of the particular history of this Church. Many others came in search of candidates as the membership in these congregations in Europe dwindled. In that process

many have established their houses in the Syro-Malabar dioceses. A few of them established even Syro-Malabar provinces. There are a couple of them who were in Kerala for decades but remained as Latin congregations with a large number of Syro-Malabarians as members[8].

Missionary Growth

The Syro-Malabar Church plays a very important role in the missionary activity in India. The bishops, priests, and religious have been very earnest in promoting vocations. At present 16 bishops, thousands of priests, brothers and sisters of the Syro-Malabar Church are engaged in evangelical work in the Latin dioceses of India. 73% of the priests and religious working in the Latin dioceses of North India hail from the Syro-Malabar Church. Bishop Gregory Karotemprel recently published the current statistics of the missionaries from the Syro-Malabar Church actually engaged in or preparing for missionary work in the Latin dioceses.

Bishops	20
Priests	1954
Major Seminarians	925
Minor Seminarians	615
Religious Brothers	705
Religious Sisters	8035

The Syro-Malabar Church admits every year nearly 2000 candidates for priesthood or religious life, of

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[8] Gregory Karotemprel, "The Apostolic Origin & Development of Syro-Malabar Church", *Journal of St Thomas Christians*, 11/1 (2000) 14.

whom about 1000 join the Latin dioceses in India and abroad and sisters' congregations in Europe[9].

The Syro Malankara Hierarchy

The Syro Malankara Church belongs to the ancient Apostolic Church of St Thomas Christians in India. Due to the forced latinisation of the Portuguese ecclesiastical authorities a group of St Thomas Christians broke away and placed themselves under the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch.

On 20 September 1930 Archbishop Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilus of the Jacobite Church with thousands of people returned to the Catholic communion. On 11 June 1932 Pope Pius XI instituted a new hierarchical structure under the designation "Syro Malankara Catholic Church" for these reunited Catholics. Mar Ivanios was appointed Archbishop of Thiruvananthapuram and Mar Theophilus Bishop of Thiruvalla.

The Malankara Church, which follows the Antiochene ecclesiastical traditions and West Syrian liturgy, is an individual Church. The Holy See declared that the Archbishop of Thiruvananthapuram and the Bishop of Thiruvalla will at present depend directly on the Holy See without any dependence on the Syrian Patriarch of Antioch.

At present the Malankara Catholic hierarchy has four Eparchies such as Thiruvananthapuram, Thiruvalla, Battery and Marthandam which form one ecclesiastical province. The Syro Malankara Church is headed by the

[9] Gregory Karotemprel, "The Apostolic Origin & Development of Syro-Malabar Church", *Journal of St Thomas Christians*, 11/1 (2000) 17.

Metropolitan, His Grace Cyril Mar Baselios, the Archbishop of Thiruvananthapuram. He is the Head of the entire Rite, and his powers include the consecration of bishops, presiding over the Episcopal Conferences, declaration of its decisions and implementing them and consecration of the Holy Mooron (Chrism for confirmation).

On 18 June 2001 His Holiness Pope John Paul II appointed Mar Issac Thottungal auxiliary bishop of Thiruvananthapuram Archdiocese and the apostolic visitor to the Syro Malankara people in America and Europe.

There are four religious congregations in the Malankara Catholic Church. They are: Order of the Imitation of Christ (OIC; 1919), Kristiya Sanyasa Samaj (KSS; 1955), Bethany Sisters of the Imitation of Christ (SIC; 1925), and Daughters of Mary (DM; 1938).

The Catholic Bishops' Conference Of India

In 1944 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) was constituted. Today, it consists of the bishops' conferences of the three individual Catholic Churches in India such as the Latin, the Syro-Malabar and the Syro Malankara.

The Apostolic Nunciature

The Apostolic Delegation of the East Indies was established in 1884 for India and Ceylon which became Apostolic inter-nunciature on 12 June 1948. On 22 August 1967 it was raised to the level of Apostolic Nunciature and is situated in New Delhi. His Grace Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri is the present Apostolic Nuncio.

Other Churches Of St Thomas Christians

The public protest in 1653 by a section of St Thomas Christians provided a favourable atmosphere for Antiochian Church to sow the first seeds of Jacobitism in Kerala. In 1975 the Jacobite Church of Kerala was divided into two groups such as the Syrian Orthodox Church (Jacobite) and the Orthodox Syrian Church. The Anglican influence in the Jacobite Church of Kerala gave rise to the Marthoma Church in India. There are also some splinter groups such as the independent Syrian Church of Malankara, St Thomas Evangelical Church, Thozhiyoor Syrian, and Church of the East[10].

The Major Archiepiscopate

The patriarchal Churches have the highest hierarchical rank among the Eastern Churches. The major archiepiscopal Churches come next. A major archbishop and his bishops form the Episcopal Synod which has all the powers of the synod of a patriarchal Church. A major archiepiscopal Church has the same structure and the same autonomy as a patriarchal Church. Both are the same except that the election of a major archbishop needs the confirmation by the Pope, while the Pope and the other patriarchs are only notified of an election of a new patriarch, and a patriarch has precedence over a major archbishop.

Among the 21 Eastern Catholic Churches two are major archiepiscopal Churches. They are the Ukrainian Church, and the Syro-Malabar Church. The Ukrainian church is headed by a metropolitan archbishop since

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[10] G Chediath, *Keralathile Christhava Sabhakal*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1989.

1807. Pope John XXIII raised it as a major archiepiscopate in 1963. On 16 December 1992 Pope John Paul II elevated the Syro-Malabar Church to the rank of a major archiepiscopal Church, with the title Ernakulam-Angamaly and its residential See in Ernakulam[11].

ERNAKULAM-ANGAMALY

Mathias Mundadan analyses the significance of the title Ernakulam-Angamaly in his book *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*. Cranganore (Kodungallur) was the "Holy See of Thomas" and it was the official residence of the archbishop of the St Thomas Christians. By 1524, the Portuguese presence in Cranganore became so strong that Mar Abraham, the last of the East-Syrian bishops, had to leave that city in 1570. He took up residence at Angamaly, where he died and was buried. The first *Padroado* bishop, Francis Roz SJ transferred his residence back to Cranganore. Angamaly became the epicentre of St Thomas Christians' struggle against the Latin rule. Many conventions (*pothuyogams*) were held there. It was from his residence at Angamaly that Thomas Paremmakkal governed the archdiocese of Cranganore until his death in 1799.

By the turn of the 20th century, Ernakulam became the principal city of the St Thomas Christians. When the Syro-Malabar hierarchy was established in 1923, Ernakulam was selected as the Metropolitan See. Thus by choosing the title *Ernakulam-Angamaly* for the Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal Church, Rome recognized the importance of the See of Angamaly, which was for many years the residence of the Archbishop of the St Thomas Christians and Ernakulam which is the first Metropolitan See of the Syro-Malabar Church. As the "principal city" in terms of CCEO c.57:3, Ernakulam

has been fixed by the Pope as the "stable residence of the Major Archbishop."

On 29 January 1993 the Holy Father, His Holiness Pope John Paul II made Cardinal Antony Padiyara the first Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. He also appointed Archbishop Abraham Kattumana, the Pontifical Delegate for the Syro-Malabar Church with all the powers of the Major Archbishop so as to help the Syro-Malabar Episcopal Synod to draft and adopt the statutes of the Synod and other particular laws for the Syro-Malabar Church. When the Papal Delegate Archbishop Abraham Kattumana expired on 4 April 1995 in Rome Cardinal Antony Padiyara was conferred upon full powers of his status except those matters reserved to Rome earlier.

In 1997 when Mar Antony Cardinal Padiayara resigned, Archbishop Mar Varkey Vithayathil was appointed Apostolic Administrator of Ernakulam-Angamaly and in 1999 as the Major Archbishop of the Church of St Thomas Christians[12].

Eastern Churches' Hierarchical Status

Besides the Patriarchal and the Major Archiepiscopal Churches, there are 13 Eastern Catholic Churches. Among these 13 Churches, four are Metropolitan Churches and are presided over by Metropolitans

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[11]Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 38-39.

[12] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 39-40.

(Archbishops). They are different from an ecclesiastical province whose head also is an Archbishop. An ecclesiastical province is not an autonomous (*sui juris*) Church but a part of either a patriarchate or a major archiepiscopate, whereas a Metropolitan Church is autonomous (*sui juris*). The province of Changanacherry, for example, is part of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopate, whereas the Syro-Malankara Church is a Metropolitan Church *sui juirs.*

The Metropolitan of a Metropolitan Church consists of either a single eparchy (diocese) or its equivalent, an exarchate. The eparch who heads such a Church is immediately subject to Rome like a Latin diocesan bishop. He has no other superior, such as a Patriarch, a Major Archbishop, or a Metropolitan[13] .

Conclusion

The Catholic Church in India consists of three individual Churches such as the Latin, the Syro-Malabar and the Syro Malanakara. Though the St Thomas Christians existed in India since the first century, it was the Latin hierarchy which was erected first in India due to its influence of colonial powers. Only after centuries-long struggle for native bishops that the St Thomas Christians succeeded completely to have their own hierarchy. The restoration of the hierarchy is significant in fostering the spiritual, liturgical and theological heritages of various individual Churches, which belong

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[13] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 40-41.

to the full Catholic and Apostolic character of the Church (UR 17). The progress of the Syro-Malabar Church after the formation of an independent hierarchy has been phenomenal. Today, the Syro-Malabar Church, a Major Archiepiscopal Church, one of the most flourishing Catholic Churches in the world with an abundance of priestly and religious vocations, is the second largest Oriental Church in the Catholic communion.

Questions

- Elaborate the important events that led to the restoration of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy?
- What are the differences between patriarchal and major archiepiscopal churches?
- What does "Syro Malabar" mean?
- What are the significances of Ernakulam-Angamaly?
- Explain the history and development of the Syro Malankara Church?

Chapter Four

The Ecclesial Identity Of The Syro-Malabar Church

Introduction

As is evident from the first three chapters, the history of the Thomas Christians can be divided into four distinct periods such as the Indian, Chaldean, Latin and Syro-Malabar[1]. These different periods with its diverse ecclesiastical, socio-cultural and liturgical influences led the Syro-Malabar Church to an eclectic hybrid. Conscious of this hybridism, she has launched now a search after her true identity. The findings of these researches bring to light the "Law of Thomas", which is the sum and substance of the ecclesial identity of the Syro-Malabar Church. In this chapter we focus on some aspects of the "Law of Thomas" such as the apostolic faith, and the ecclesiastical and socio-cultural structures of the St Thomas Christians.

The Ecclesial Identity

Identity is a set of characteristics by which a thing is definitely recognizable and known. The ecclesial identity of any Church can be found in its theology, spirituality, discipline, worship, ecclesiastical, socio-cultural, and organisational structures. The Second Vatican Council declares that the ecclesial identity of a Church forms

part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the Universal Church, "For distinguished as they are by their venerable antiquity, they are bright with that tradition which was handed down from the apostles through the Fathers, and which forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church" (OE 1).

The Second Vatican Council adds that the identity of an Individual Church is not restricted to the liturgical practice alone. Decree on Ecumenism through the numbers of 15-17 illustrates that it is expressed by the particularities in liturgical worship, canon law, spirituality, and theological system.

The "Law Of Thomas" (Mar Thomma Margam)

The "Law of Thomas", the sum total of the theological, liturgical, ecclesiastical, social, cultural and political life of the Thomas Christians, is the most important characteristic of their ecclesial identity[2]. The ecclesial life of St Thomas Christians was conditioned by the socio-cultural, political and religious context of that period. Meanwhile its liturgical and hierarchical relations with the Church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon are

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[1] George Nedungatt, "The Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church", in Augustine Thottakkara, *East Syrian Spirituality*, CIIS, Rome 1990, 143-202.

[2] Varghese Pathikulangara, "The Uniat Church of St Thomas – Fact of Fiction?" in *Die Einheit der Kirche. Dimensionen ihrer Heiligkeit, Katholizität und Apostolizität*, ed. Lorenz Hein, Wiesbaden 1977, 351.

based on their Thomistic, linguistic, cultural and commercial affinities[3]. The existence of the Church of the Thomas Christians outside the Graeco-Roman world prepared the background to develop her own ecclesial style which is generally called the "Law of Thomas".

Placid Podipara enlarges the concept of the "Law of Thomas" in the following words:

> The individuality of the Malabar Church as expressed in its autonomy ..., the East Syriac Liturgy, the christianised Hindu customs, etc, were all the *Law of Thomas* for the Malabarians. The *Law of Thomas* made the Malabar Church fully at home in the Indian soil both from the religious and the cultural points of view[4].

In other words, the sum total of the Thomite heritage is known as *Thommayude Margam* – the "Law of Thomas". It means the customs and laws they had inherited since the time of the apostle Thomas. The Law of Thomas governed the See of Thomas. They considered it as a great patrimony and it was the warp and woof of their spiritual life. The remarkable feature of this Law of Thomas was that it was thoroughly Christian, Oriental, and Malabarian at the same time, being well adapted to the socio-cultural life of Malabar[5].

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[3] Xavier koodapuzha, "The Ecclesiology of the Thomas Christians of India", in Thomas Vellilamthadam et al, *Ecclesial Identity of the Thomas Christians,* OIRSI, Kottayam 1985, 61-92.

[4] Placid Podipara, *The Individuality of the Malabar Church*, 3. Cited by Andrews Thazhath, *The Law of Thomas*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1987, 11.

[5] Decree VII of Session III of the Synod of Diamper.

Hence, the *Thoma Margam*, like the Torah for Jews, was the sum-total of the religious discipline of the Thomas Christians[6].

In short, the "Law of Thomas" has to be an incarnation of the "Law of Christ" in the socio-cultural environment of India. It was St Thomas the Apostle who showed this "Way" which is Christ to the Thomas Christians in India.

Apostolic Faith

St Thomas laid the foundation of the church of Thomas Christians by sharing his authentic Christ-experience with the people of India. The most important aspect of the identity of the St Thomas Christians has been this consciousness of the apostolic origin of their faith, which is a very ancient, continuous and strong tradition shared by all the Churches[7]. Thus one of the most significant distinguishing mark of St Thomas Christians is that they feel proud of being members of the family of St Thomas Christians and in rendering homage to the apostle Thomas as their father of faith in Jesus Christ.

By the grace of God, the Syro-Malabar Church grew and flourished entirely uninfluenced and unaffected by the schisms and evolutions of the Mediterranean

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[6] Joseph Kallarangatt, "St Thomas Christians of India. Ecclesiological Heritages and Perspectives before the Seventeenth Century" *Christian Orient*, 21/1 (2000) 37.

[7] Mathias Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, Bagalore 1984, 21-64.

churches. St Thomas Christians consider that their centuries-old tradition entitles them to call themselves the first-born Indian Christians and feel that they have specially deep links with all Indian peoples. Moreover, many believe that the St Thomas Christians' forms of worship and socio-cultural lifestyle are better suited to the Indian mentalities[8].

The Ecclesiastical Structure

The ancient ecclesiastical structures such as the Metropolitan, Archdeacon, Bishop, Clergy, Malpanate system, Palliyogam, etc of the Thomas Christians point out some of the unique characteristics of the identity of the Thomas Christians.

Metropolitan

There are evidences of the existence of a Metropolitan dignitary among the Thomas Christians at least from the eighth century. During the time of the Chaldean Patriarch Timothy I (780-823) we see indications of the elections of the Metropolitan. The people elected the Metropolitan of India in the presence of the suffragan bishops. However, they were expected to get the Patriarch's approbation before referring the matter to the local king[9].

The title of the Metropolitan of India was *The Metropolitan and the Gate of All-India.* This metropolitan,

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[8] FA Plattner, *Christian India*, Thames and Hudson, London-New York 1957, 35.

[9] Xavier Koodapuzha, "The Ecclesiology of the Thomas Christians of India", Thomas Vellilamthadam, ed., *Ecclesial Identity of Thomas Christians,* 73.

from the East Syrian Church, being the principle of communion, had a privileged status. He was designated as Metropolitan Bishop, Prelate, and the Ruler of the Holy See of St Thomas the Apostle and the entire Holy Church of the Christians of India. Vatican Codex XXII written in Scengala (Cranganore) in 1301 by a deacon Zacharias, one of the disciples of the prelate Mar Jacob designates this Mar Jacob as, "Mar Jacob, being Metropolitan, prelate, and ruler of the Holy See of the Apostle St Thomas, namely our ruler and ruler of the entire Holy Church of the Christians of India"[10]. In 1567 the Chaldean Patriarch Abdiso used the title "Superior of all the bishops and the metropolitans" for the Metropolitan Mar Abraham of the Thomas Christians.

Archdeacon

Etymologically, the term archdeacon means "chief minister". A St Thomas Christian priest with the title "Archdeacon of all India" played the role of the effective leader of the community *Jathikku Karthavvian* (Leader or Lord of the community). This title gradually began to be used for the chief assistant of the bishop in the administration of the diocese. Among the St Thomas Christians, the office 'archdeacon' had a special function and significance. He was the unifying, co-ordinating and organising factor. The Archdeacon was the head of the entire community and was solemnly and formally recognised as such by the civil authorities.

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[10] Placid Podipara, *Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 1979, 15.

The Archdeacon governed the whole people who were isolated in several kingdoms that were ruled over by non-Christian kings. It was he who presented to the bishop the candidates for priestly ordination. He supervised the collection of tithes from the local communities for the maintenance of the bishop and the patriarch. He transacted business with the princes, in whose territories the St Thomas Christians lived. When moving from place to place he had an armed escort and was accompanied by the community leadership. This office is seen as being hereditary. Those who held the office belonged to the Pakalomattam family who were believed to have been baptised by St Thomas the Apostle himself[11].

The head of the Church of St Thomas Christians assumed the title "Archdeacon of all India" just as the metropolitan who used to be invited from the East Syrian Church bore the title "The Metropolitan of all India". There is no other indigenous dignity neither secular nor religious, greater than the Archdeacon who is considered to be the prince and Head of the St Thomas Christians. The Metropolitan was mainly concerned with the liturgical worship while the Archdeacon was responsible for the effective leadership of the Church.

Bishops

The bishop of the Thomas Christians was the spiritual head of the people, wholly occupied with the Word of God and liturgical celebrations. He did not

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[11] Placid Podipara, *The Thomas Christians,* London-Bombay, 1970, 85.

interfere in the organisational aspects of the church and not at all in the temporal administration. He was the spiritual leader very like a Guru or the Acharya of a Hindu mutt or the head of a Buddhist vihara.

Clergy

Like the bishops, the priests of the St Thomas Christians were not rulers but spiritual men or gurus. They were men of deep spiritual experience who were well-versed in Sacred Scripture, teachings of the Fathers and Sacred Liturgy. They were the faithful transmitters of the entire ecclesial heritage from generation to generation. Among the St Thomas Christians there were many instances where priesthood is seen handed down hereditarily. The priests were ordained for parishes and not for the diocese. Often they were married and were promoted to orders before the canonical age. The assembly of the parishioners presented the candidates to the bishop through a letter called *desakkuri*. This letter gave the candidates the title to be maintained by the parish.

The Malpanate System

The malpanate system, closely resembling to the *gurukula* system of education that existed in India, is a church centred style of priestly formation. The Syriac word 'malpan' means 'guru', 'teacher' or one who is learned. Learned priests called Malpans were the instructors of the candidates to the priesthood[12]. Malpanante System, being the original form of priestly

[12] Placid Podipara, *The Thomas Christians,* London-Bombay, 1970, 89.

training among the St Thomas Christians, was deeply rooted in the consciousness of the community. The candidate for priesthood was staying with the elderly and scholarly malpan. The bishop gives ordination to a priest candidate in the light of the recommendation of the Palliyogam, Archdeacon, and Malpan.

PALLIYOGAM

The Archdeacon carried out the administration through general and local assemblies called *Palliyogams*. A yogam consisted of the representatives of the families and the clergy of the parish. It was presided over by the parish priest. Every church had more than four *kaikkarans* or church wardens, who were elected from the body of parishioners known as *yogam*. It discussed the problems connected with the life and activities of the parish such as the approval of the candidates to priesthood, spiritual welfare of the parish, the financial administration, punishment for public sinners, reconciliation in time of conflict, maintenance of the clergy, upkeep of the church and other issues of local importance. The local assembly was responsible for the construction and maintenance of the places of worship.

Matters of wider importance were discussed in the General Yogam which consisted of representatives of all parishes. In the general yogam the Archdeacon had a very decisive role.

Palliyogam was an expression of the collegiality and communion of churches. They were effective means of maintaining the integrity and communion aspect of the Church. It was also an effective means of decentralization and co-responsibility. Cooperation and

equality were its main motto. It was a check to the one-sided monarchical and authoritarian aspect of the Church[13].

The Socio-Cultural Structure

The socio-cultural life of the St Thomas Christians was fully Indian. They were well established and integrated in the fabric of the society at large. The Second Vatican Council's Decree on the missionary activity states, "From the custom and traditions of their people (people of different nations), from their art and science, these Churches (particular missionary Churches) borrow all those things which can contribute to the glory of their creator, the revelation of the Saviour's grace, or the proper arrangement of Christian life" (AG 22).

Military Service

In the early centuries one of the main occupations of the Thomas Christians was military services to the local kings. They were respected and acknowledged as a martial class. When they came to the church they brought their weapons along with them and left them in the porch of the church during the service. Their military strength, agricultural background, and commercial undertakings made them a privileged community.

Nicolas Pimenta SJ wrote at the close of the sixteenth century that the Thomas Christians could

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[13] Joseph Kallarangatt, "St Thomas Christians of India. Ecclesiological Heritages and Perspectives Before the Seventeenth Century", *Christian Orient*, 21/1 (2000) 33.

place in array 30,000 armed men at any time. They could supply the Raja of Cochin with an army of 50,000 gunmen. A renowned Hindu anthropologist, Anantakrishna Ayyar observes:

> The Syrian Christians were trained in the use of these weapons at the early age of eight years, and continued to exercise them till twenty-five which accounted for their using them with much dexterity. ... They were very expert huntsmen, soldiers, and they were, therefore held in much estimation by the rulers of the country[14].

Social Status

The St Thomas Christians were very influential in the society. The rajahs granted them substantial rights. They had their place in the Hindu social order as one of the upper castes. The Thomas Christians were a separate community with high social privileges equal to those of the highest Hindu nobility[15]. They were brave and wanted to be indigenous. During the early centuries when they were the only Christians in India and had scant connection with the rest of the Christian world, they became thoroughly Indian.

St Thomas Christians had a ritualistic role to perform in the Hindu society. For removing conventional or ceremonial pollution from oil, ghee, honey, molasses,

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[14] Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, Ernakulam 1926, 56.

[15] Abraham Mattam, *The Indian Church of St Thomas Christians And Her Missionary enterprises Before the Sixteenth Century*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1985, 2.

and other provisions taken to a temple, it was enjoined by Malabar custom that a St Thomas Christian should touch them[16].

Patriarchal System

The St Thomas Christians formed an integral part of the pattern of the socio-cultural life of Kerala. They followed the patriarchal system (*makkathayam*) unlike the nairs who followed the matriarchal system (*marumakkathayam*).The father was supreme in family. Even grown-up children considered it a sign of disrespect to take a seat in the presence of the father of the family and elders. They had their homes built around the church but arranged in rows with well-laid out streets in between them (angadis).

Dress And Ornaments

Men wore ear lobes, had the same hair style as the Hindus though they had a cross inserted into the tuft (*kudumbi*) of hair arranged on top of the head. Bridegrooms had the privilege of wearing a flower made of gold on the tuft. Women had several kinds of ornaments for the ears, arms, neck, and feet. When they went out, they carried palm-leaf umbrellas to cover their faces[17].

S G Pothen of the Orthodox Syrian Church in his *Syrian Christians of Kerala*, wrote in 1963: "Syrian

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[16] TK Joseph, "Malabar Miscellany", in *Indian Antiquary*, 51 (1923) 29.

[17] AM Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy,* Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore 1984, 22-23.

Christians were Christians in faith only, but in all else they were assimilated to the society and environment in which they lived, speaking the same language, wearing the same dress and observing the same customs"[18].

INCULTURATION

The Christians of Malabar who were fundamentally of the Dravidian stock were heirs of the pre-Aryan and ancient Dravidian culture. Malayalam, their everyday language was Dravidian. Christianity has accepted many elements from India especially from Buddhism. In the day-to-day life, social and religious ceremonies, educational system, occupation etc, St Thomas Christians systematically conformed to the native customs so much so that they were hardly distinguishable from their compatriots of other religions.

BIRTH-RITE

According to the tradition, in Thomas Christian families when a child is born, "*Moron Yesu Masiha*" (Jesus Christ is Lord) and the child's name are uttered into the ears of the new-born baby. The baby is also given a few drops of honey in which some powdered gold is mixed as a symbol of good fortune and good life. This is done by the grandmother or presiding lady, rubbing a ring or the other gold ornament on a stone on which some drops of honey have been smeared. This custom, shared

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[18] SG Pothen, *The Syrian Christians of Kerala*, Asia Publishing House, New York 1963, 91; Andrews Thazhath, *The Law of Thomas*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1987, 29-30.

with Nambudri Brahmins, is claimed to ensure prosperity[19]. Though the Brahmins have a separate ceremony called Namakarana (naming ceremony) the Christians name their children only at the time of Baptism. Infants were given a name either from the Old Testament or from the New Testament. But a child gets also a 'call-name' or pet name, which is quite indigenous.

Rite Of Initiation In Learning

St Thomas Christians adopted, with necessary modifications, the Hindu rite of initiation in learning. When a Christian child is aged enough to begin his/her education, instead of the Hindu system of *Hari Sri*, they recited 'thamburan thunaka', 'Guruve saranam', or 'Sarveswaraya nama' (Let God help; I depend on you, teacher; Hail, O, God of all). After this initiation at home, the children were sent to the guru's home or the local school for studies. The gurus, often Hindus, taught them Christian prayers and catechism.

Marriage Ceremonies

There are many traditional ceremonies in connection with marriage of Thomas Christians. We mention only some of them. During the night previous to the marriage, it is necessary that the couple should bathe. Before the bath the bridegroom has to be ceremoniously shaved by a barber. Songs commemorating the origin

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[19] SG Pothen, *The Syrian Christians of Kerala*, Asia Publishing House, New York 1963, 61-62; See also Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding the Church in India*, Gospel Literature Service, Bombay1979, 47-60.

and the privileges of the Syrian Christians are sung before and after the bath. The nails of the toes and the fingers of the bride and the bridegroom must be painted with the juice of the shrub Mailanchi. Then a close female relative has to greet the couple and give them sweets. The next morning after receiving the blessing of the teacher (asan), the parties go to the church. They go to the church with great solemnity either on palanquins or on elephants, accompanied by Indian musicians and shouting kurava (lingual cheers). Royal umbrellas (muthukuda) are used by the Syrian Christians on these occasions.

In the church the bridegroom ties the tali (Minnu) which is blessed by the priest, round the neck of the bride. Then the boy presents the girl with a veil (manthrakodi).

Upon reaching home, the boy's mother receives them holding paddy and water in one hand and a lighted lamp in the other. The mother places her hands on the heads of the couple and blesses them. At the banquet a low-caste Hindu called *panan* sings the origin and privileges of the Syrian Christians[20].

Ceremonies In Connection With Death

Though the East Syrian Rite was followed for the burial of the dead, the local customs in connection with death, burial and commemoration of the dead were also adopted by the Thomas Christians. When death was imminent, the dying person was laid on the floor,

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[20] James Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore 2001, 46-48.

and short prayers were whispered into his ears so that the parting soul might quit the world with the name and remembrance of God. After the death the body was washed in warm water. No food is prepared or served in the house until the dead body was buried.

After the burial, the priest and the people had returned home and as soon as the priest came back, he was given a tender coconut (kariku) water to drink. He blessed and drank a little bit from it and would pass it round to be tasted by other people. Then a vegetarian meal was served to all those who were assembled. With prayers for the dead and almsgiving to the poor, the ceremonies were concluded.

Even today some of these ancient rituals are practised among the Thomas Christians. Either the 7th, or 28th, or the 41st day after death is observed as a prayer day for the departed one. The anniversary of death called *chatham* is commemorated as a feast to which all the close relatives are invited. The priest officiates it with special prayers and blessings. On these occasions they do not forget to give alms and food to the poor[21].

Privileges

The economic power of the St Thomas Christians created a powerful and comfortable position for themselves in the society. They were regarded as equals to the Brahmans and enjoyed many privileges and prerogatives from local kings[22].

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[21] James Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore 2001, 49-50.
[22] George Mark Moraes, *A History Christianity in India,* Bombay 1964, *293.*

In 340-360 Special Privileges to the leaders of the St Thomas Christians were given by the order of *Thazhekad Sasanam*. In 849 the local rulers (Ayyanadikal) granted a number of privileges and 72 stately positions to the St Thomas Christians by the *Thareesappalli* (St Theresa church) Copperplates. These were given to them first of all, as a symbol of mutual recognition and secondly, because of their loyalty and strength. Records of these official concessions to Christians, engraved on copper plates are preserved to this day in the churches of Kothurutti and Muttam.

Of all the various Christian communities, old and new, now in Kerala, the ancient Thomas Christians alone had the high privileges of using silk umbrellas, (kottakuda), day-lamps (pakal vilaku), walking clothes (pavada), palanquin (antholam), band (pancha-vadyam), lingual cheers (kurava), body-guards and fore-runners to clear the way, elephants to ride on, festal sheds (pandal), ornaments, slaves, the title of mappila, gate houses (padipura), etc. Otherwise, only the Brahmins and princes of the royal houses could use these privileges. As privileges the Syrian Christians were entitled to use them[23].

Conclusion

The ecclesial identity of the St Thomas Christians can be summarised in the "Law of Thomas". Father Placid expressed this in a phrase, "Indian in culture,

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[23] Alexander Cherukarakunnel, "Character and Life Style of Thomas Christians" in G Menachery ed., *St Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, Vol 2, Trichur 1973, 131; Andrews Thazhath, *The Law of Thomas*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1987, 27-28.

Christian in religion, and Oriental in worship". The Apostolic faith of St Thomas shared with the people of India is the pivotal point of the identity of the Thomas Christians. The ecclesiastical structures such as the Metropolitan of all India, the Archdeacon, palliyogam, malpanate system, etc are some other significant features of the identity of Thomas Christians.

It is true that the Thomas Christians resembled their Hindu neighbours in certain customs and social usages such as dress, food, ornaments, manners, marriage rites, family code of behaviour, church architecture, etc. But what about the rich Indian cultural heritage of philosophy, theology, asceticism, mysticism, and fine arts? Was the inculturation of the Syro-Malabar Church limited to some external customs and left out the basics?[24]. Certain Indian virtues like renunciation and simplicity in lifestyle, which are the sine qua non elements of Indian spirituality could be cultivated and upheld by St Thomas Christians.

Questions

- What are the significant characteristics of the ecclesial identity of St Thomas Christians?
- What does the "Law of Thomas" mean?
- What were the unique ecclesiastical structures of the St Thomas Christians?
- What were the socio-cultural heritages of the Thomas Christians?

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[24] Joseph Cardinal Parecattil, "Adaptation and the Future of Christianity in India", in G Menacherry (ed), *The St Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, Vol 2, Trichur 1973, 186-191.

Chapter Five

The Spirituality Of The Syro-Malabar Church

Introduction

From the second half of the first century after Christ theological discussions, liturgical prayers, spiritual exercises and ascetical practises of the St Thomas Christians began to flow from their families, liturgical assemblies, monasteries, and educational centres (*gurukulams*) which in the course of time became the rich Christian spiritual traditions of the Indian Church as well as of the universal Church. The decree on ecumenism declares that this entire heritage of spirituality and liturgy, of discipline and theology, in their various traditions, belongs to the full catholic and apostolic character of the Church (UR 17).

The spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church has many significant features such as the apostolic, liturgical, biblical, ascetical, monastic, missionary, etc. These characteristics constitute the very uniqueness and identity of their Church, the "Law of Thomas". This chapter on the *Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church* highlights some of the most important and unique features of the Syro-Malabar Spirituality.

Syro-Malabar Spirituality

We cannot but agree with the scholars that there are

no sufficient source materials to write on the Syro-Malabar Spirituality. Whereas, the East Syrian Church, as P. Yousif states, has enough materials to study on their spirituality:

> Our tradition (East Syrian) has a complete vision of Christian spirituality. It possess an immense spiritual heritage, provided by liturgical prayer books, rites, liturgical commentaries, collections of sources of Synods, institutions and living practices, such as monasticism, the organisation of the community, manuals, of biblical teachings, and commentaries, theological synthesis and works of spiritual life[1].

Though the Syro-Malabar Church belongs to the East Syrian family, we do not have much sources to develop the Syro-Malabar spirituality except the sacred Scripture and liturgical texts. It may be because the spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church has always been 'living the Gospel', rather than reflecting on it and articulating it.

Apostolic Spirituality

The spirituality of the Thomas Christians is based on the apostolic experience of St Thomas, the Father of their faith. What does apostolic experience mean? The faith of the Church rests on the Christ-experience of the apostles. Each apostle's Christ-experience had a personal colouring. Thus, for example, St Peter had an intense experience of the forgiving love of Christ. St John experienced God as love. Each of the four

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[1] P. Yousif, "An Introduction to East Syrian Spirituality", in Thottakkara A, *East Syrian Spirituality*, Bangalore 1990, 62.

Gospels presents a unique aspect of Christ. Each apostle transmitted his unique and personal Christ-experience to the Church or Churches founded by him.

The Christ-experience of the Apostle Thomas constitutes an essential part of the heritage of the Thomas Christians. According to Scripture scholars, however, St Thomas is the apostle who made the most candid profession of faith in Christ. In John's Gospel, Thomas' confession, "My Lord and my God" (Jn 21,28), the most explicit Christological profession of faith in all four Gospels, forms the conclusion and climax of a whole series of confessions of faith in Christ. Just as in the Gospel of Mark, the climax is the profession of faith by the centurion at the foot of the cross (Mk 15,39) the *mahavakya*, "My Lord and My God" comprises the climax of the Gospel of John[2].

Liturgical Spirituality

Liturgy, the main constituent of the heritage of a Church and the hallmark of its identity, is a public worship in accordance with a prescribed form. As the Eucharist is the central mystery of the Church, liturgy, in the strict sense, is the celebration of the Eucharist. In the broad sense, it includes the celebration of the sacraments and all other formal worship of the Church[3].

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[2] Varghese Pathikulangara, "The Thomas Christian Spirituality", *Christian Orient*, 17 (1996) 141-163.

[3] A Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro-Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 42.

The liturgical celebration of the Syro-Malabar Church manifests its faith in full communion with the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. The liturgy, which the Syro-Malabar Church celebrates, has the Trinitarian, Christological, Pneumatological foundations. It presents the church typically as a mystery. This mystery of the church is expressed through types, symbols, figures and allegories. The love and fear of the faithful towards God is one of the fundamental features of this liturgy.

The liturgy as well as the spiritual life of the St Thomas Christians is centred on the temporal cycle, which commemorates the mysteries of Jesus Christ unlike that of the Latin liturgy, which is centred on sanctural cycle, that commemorates the saints.

Syriac (Aramaic, the language used by Jesus), was the liturgical language of the St Thomas Christians. The Eucharist and other sacraments were celebrated in Syriac. They regard both their East Syrian liturgy and Syriac language as sacred. Because of their close affinity with Syriac they are widely known as Syrian Christians[4].

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[4] Benedict Vadakkekara, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians*, Media House, Delhi 1995, 27. Aramaic later came to be known as Syriac after Syrus who ruled over Mesopotamia. Later it began to be written in two scripts and pronounced in two ways: East Syriac and West Syriac. The East Syriac (Chaldean) retains the old pronunciation, which is that of Christ's time. Cf. Xavier Koodapuzha, "The Ecclesiology of the Thomas Christians of India", Thomas Vellilamthadam, ed., *Ecclesial Identity of the Thomas Christians*, OIRSI; Kottayam 1985, 68.

Though the Church of the Thomas Christians was apostolic in origin, for more than a millennium its worship-form and discipline were under the influence of the East-Syrian and for many centuries it was dominated by the Latin liturgy. In liturgy, theology, spirituality and church discipline, the Syro-Malabar Church has been influenced both by the Indian, the East-Syrian and the Latin elements. However, there has always been an attempt to keep the in Indian style in the day-to-day running of the Church and the sacraments.

The Term 'Qurbana'

Qurbana is a Syriac word. It means offering and refers to the celebration of the Eucharist. Because of the close association of the St Thomas Christians with the East Syrians for many centuries, many Syriac words, such as *qurbana*, *maamodisa* (baptism), *qudasa* (sacrament) *sleeha* (apostle), *sah'da* (martyr) *mad'baha* (sanctuary) and *Mar* (my Lord) have become part of their Christian vocabulary[5].

East Syrian Liturgy

We do not have any evidence to claim that the St Thomas Christians had developed a liturgy of their own on the basis of the primitive liturgy performed by St Thomas the Apostle.

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[5] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 42.

The only liturgy found in Malabar was the East Syrian Liturgy of the Chaldean Church. The Chaldean bishops brought with them the well defined anaphora of Addai and Mari, one of the earliest eucharistic prayers[6]. We cannot say with certainty when or how it came to be used in Malabar. The Synod of Seleusia (Chaldea) in 420 had decreed that all the Churches under Seleusia should follow the Rites of that Church. Therefore, it may be supposed that at least in 410 the East Syrian liturgy came to Malabar, or even before with the arrival of a Syrian merchant, Thomas of Cana[7]. Till the Diamper Synod (1599) the Thomas Christians depended in liturgical and sacramental matters on the East Syrian Patriarchate[8]

Reformation Of The Syro-Malabar Liturgy

In 1954 Pope Pius XII appointed a commission to revise the text of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana and other

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[6] For a theological study of the Anaphora of the Apostles Mar Addai and Mari see, Thomas Elavanal, *The Memorial Celebration*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1989.

[7] James Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore 200, 31-32.

[8] John Madey, *Particular Vocation of the Nazrani Church in Communion with Rome*, Alleppey 1976, 18f. The Syrian liturgical spirituality was influenced deeply by the spirituality of the desert Fathers, who 'intoxicated with God' and impelled by the same Holy Spirit that drove Jesus into desert, sought solitude in the deserts of Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia, "to pray incessantly" (1 Thes 5,17) See Jacob Vellian, "Liturgical Spirituality", in Thomas Vellilamthadam, *Ecclesial Identity of the Thomas Christians*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1985, 183.

sacraments. The commission prepared a Syriac text of the revised Mass in 1960. Its Malayalam translation was introduced in the Syro-Malabar Church on 3rd July 1962. The Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference petitioned Rome to reconsider the text in the light of the objections to the text raised by the clergy and the laity. Rome allowed the Bishops' Conference to make certain corrections. Accordingly, a revised Malayalam text of the Mass was introduced in 1968 on an experimental basis. This remained in use until 1985.

In 1984 a committee was appointed to prepare the most solemn form of the Mass, Raza. Pope John Paul II used this Raza text during the beatification ceremony of Fr Kuriakose Chavara and Sr Alphonsa Muttathupadathu at Kottayam on 8 February 1986.

In 1987 Cardinal Lourdusami, prefect of the Oriental Congregation visited the Syro-Malabar dioceses and gathered firsthand information about the liturgical controversy. In the light of his recommendations, in 1988 the Holy Father issued the "Directives on the Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana in Solemn and Simple Forms". This document took into consideration the principles of liturgical reform as well as the pastoral needs of the Syro-Malabar Church. The document further assured the Syro-Malabar Church that at the end of five years the text of 1985 would be revised. In the light of these directives, a new text of the Solemn and Simple Mass was prepared in 1989 and Rome approved it[9].

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[9] Mathias Mundadan, *The Syro Malabar Church: An Overview*, Compiled and edited by Daniel Thottakkara, The Department of Communications, Kalamassery 1995, 42-44.

Sacraments

In the administration of the sacraments, the Syrian Christians followed the East Syrian liturgy, with necessary adaptations and modifications. From the Portuguese testimonies of the sixteenth century we get the impression that the Thomas Christians did not have all the sacraments as we celebrate today. Like other Eastern Churches, the tradition of St Thomas Christians was to receive the sacraments of initiation such as baptism, communion and confirmation, together. The sacraments of extreme unction and auricular confession were not in the present form. Here we need to remember that the number of Sacraments was declared to be seven for the first time at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274, then at Florence (1438-1445), and finally in Trent (1545-1563)[10].

The Divine Office

The St Thomas Christians are exceptionally blessed with a beautiful liturgy of Hours, centred on the Mystery of Christ and the Church. It expresses a mosaic of thinking and a galaxy of imageries regarding the Church.

The Portuguese missionaries Barbosa, Penteado, Barreto, Monserrate, Carneiro and others testified that the St Thomas Christian clergy recited the Divine Office

[10] Denzinger, *Enchridion Symbolourum*, 844; James Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore 2001, 33.

in the East Syrian Rite. They recited it daily, morning and evening, in the church, together with the people[11].

Canon Law

The St Thomas Christians adopted the Canon Law of the Chaldean Church for its use with necessary modifications, and giving due importance to local customs and traditions. According to the direction of Patriarch Issac, the Chaldean bishops in Malabar had to govern the Church following the canons of the Synods.

Bishop Roz SJ saw in Malabar 50 Canons of the Council of Nice (The Arabic Canons) in a Syriac book written by Mar Ebed Jesus[12]. The Synod of Diamper published a list of 'dangerous books' and ordered them to be destroyed. This list included 'the Book of the Fathers' (Liber Patrum), which was a treasure of the Oriental Churches and the 'Book of the Synods' (Liber Synodorum), and both were the official codes of Chaldean Church. All these facts point out that there was in Malabar the influence of the Chaldean Canon Law, and thereby added an ecclesial structure to the Law of Thomas[13].

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[11] T Puthiakunnel, *Syro-Malabar Clergy and Their General Obligation*, Ernakulam 1964, 134-136; James Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore 2001,34. Andrews Thazhath, *The Law of Thomas*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1987, 51.

[12] Paulinus S Bartholomew, *India Orientalis Christiana*, Romae 1794, 64.

[13] James Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore 2001, 37.

Biblical Spirituality

The spirituality of St Thomas Christians is a lived spirituality based on the Holy Scriptures. Their Bible was the Syriac Pshitta. Already in the second century, they were able to spare a copy of the Gospel of Mathew in the original Aramaic.

The Syro-Malabar Christians have great devotion to the Bible. This is clear in the high reverence they manifest towards the Holy Bible during the liturgy. The Gospel for liturgical use is kept on the altar in the sanctuary, adorned with gold, silver, and precious stones. It was carried in procession by the clergy during solemn liturgical celebrations.

The theological formation of the clergy was based on the Bible, and the commentary of Isodad of Mary, the ninth century East Syrian synthesis of patristic biblical exegesis, was in use. Biblical commentaries like Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia were followed in their Syriac versions. The candidates to the priesthood were required to copy out the Bible[14].

The biblical spirituality grew to a certain extent with the translation of the Bible into Malayalam. The Gospels were translated into Malayalam by the Protestant missionaries in 1811. The complete Bible was translated in 1841. The Catholics translated the Bible to Malayalam only in the second half of the twentieth century. However, biblical spirituality reached its zenith in the Syro-Malabar Church only recently with the rise of the Charismatic renewal movement in Kerala.

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[14] George Nedungatt, "The Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church", in A Thottakkara, *East Syrian Spirituality*, CIIS, Rome 1990, 176-178.

Ascetical Spirituality

Indian spirituality, culture and society always considered asceticism as one of its inseparable and fundamental aspect. May be influenced by this valuable tradition, the spirituality of St Thomas Christians manifests a very high accent to the ascetical lifestyle and practices.

In addition to almost all Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, the Thomas Christians kept abstinence during the holy seasons which covered almost half of the year and this latter abstinence went along with fasting. Abstinence, especially on fast days, was abstinence from all kinds of food except vegetarian, from intoxicating or alcoholic drinks, from even chewing an aromatic leaf, and from conjugal life. On days of fast they took only one full meal, and that was a little before sunset. Days of fast were days of special prayers and of almsgiving. It was to be observed that the obligation to keep the abstinence and fast was not an obligation under mortal sin.

Besides the obligatory fasting, there were 70 optional fast days. One of these optional fasts was the fast of 'eight days' preceding to the feast of the nativity of Our Lady in September.

The European missionaries in the 16th century had great admiration for the way the Thomas Christians observed fasts and abstinence. They called them 'sons of fast' and confessed their inability to imitate them[15].

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[15] Placid Podipara, *Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 1979, 18.

St Thomas Christians were generous in practising penance, fast, austerity and mortification. Following are the fast days observed by the Thomas Christians:

1. Lent
2. Advent
3. The fifty days' fast of the Apostles
4. The fast of the Assumption
5. The fast of the Ninivites
6. The fast before the Nativity of Our Lady
7. The fast before the feast of the apostles Peter and Paul
8. The fast of Wednesdays and Fridays
9. The fast of 12 Fridays after Christmas
10. The fast of Elias
11. The fast of the Virgins
12. The fast of the Transfiguration
13. The vigil-fasts of the Nativity of Our Lord, Pentecost, Ascension, Assumption, St Hormisdas and the patrons of the respective churches.

The Hesychastic Spirituality

Knowing their dignity as children of God and temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3,16; 1 Cor 6,19) the Syrian Christians thought it was necessary to flee to solitude in view of reaching a state of integration. They worked hard to reach this state of integration of their body, soul, and spirit which they called *hesychia*, meaning rest or tranquillity.

The hesychastic spirituality is called the spirituality of the heart to refer to the whole person - emotions,

body, imaginations, intellect and will in meeting God. Such a spirituality has as its aim a total integration of the human person as one meets God in prayer, and learns completely to surrender to His loving presence. It is a total surrendering of the self like Mary who said, "behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1,38).

The hesychastic spirituality reminds one of being called to pray always. It works out a spirituality of an ever increasing awareness of the indwelling presence of the Holy Trinity. The prayer of the heart is a way of life that is built upon a rigorous asceticism of constant control of the thoughts by vigilant attention to the presence of the indwelling God, by fasting and cultivating an abiding sense of sorrow for sin. This is to say to put one's mind into one's heart, which is the secret to silence one's heart in order to listen to God's word speaking within[16].

Monastic Spirituality

A Mingana in his *The Early Spread of Christianity in India*, affirms that at the end of the fourth century there was a monastery of St Thomas containing two hundred monks somewhere south of Baith Katraye[17]. St Jerome speaks of many Indian Christian monks coming on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 403 AD. From Bethlehem he wrote to his spiritual daughter Laeta in

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[16] Jacob Vellian, "Liturgical Spirituality", in Thomas Vellilamthadam, *Ecclesial Identity of the Thomas Christians*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1985, 184-185.

[17] A Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in India*, The Bullettin of John Rylands Library, Vol 10, 1926, 462.

Rome: "From India, from Persia, from Ethiopia we daily welcome monks in crowds".

In the Chaldean period the monks and nuns in India lived a life of strict monastic rigour. Joseph the Indian, a Portuguese reporter wrote, "They have monasteries of monks, who wear black dress. There are nuns too of the same order. Both monks and nuns live in great observance, honesty, chastity and poverty".[18]

Archbishop Stephen Brito canonically erected the Congregation of St Thomas the Apostle on 5 February 1626 with an initial group of five Thomas Christians. The initiative came from Archdeacon George of the Cross, who had written to Rome in 1624 for Papal permission to found a monastic order following the rule of St Basil. The monastery, built at Edapalli, was known as in Portuguese *Recolhimento* (retreat house), and the inmates were called *Recoletos*[19]. Paulinus of St Bartholomaeus OCD at the end of 18th century found in Malabar ruins of monasteries at Angamaly, Mylacomp and Edappally.

We can believe for certain the above mentioned historical references on the existence of monastic orders among the Thomas Christians, from the existence of the numerous contemporary religious congregations and from today's boom of priestly and religious

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[18] Mathias Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol 1, Bangalore 1984, 187.

[19] ER Hambye, "The Congregation of St Thomas the Apostle", in J Vellian (ed), *The Malabar Church*, (Orientalia Christiana Analaecta, 186) Rome 1970, 113-136.

vocations in the Syro-Malabar Church. While it is true that the Syro-Malabar Church is rich with active religious congregations, it seriously lacks vocations to contemplative and monastic orders, through which the theology and spirituality of the Church will more be enriched.

Marian Spirituality

The St Thomas Christians' devotion to Mary is liturgy centred which is evident from the remembrance of Mary in their Holy Qurbana. Mary is twice remembered as Virgin and Mother of God in their Qurbana. "Upon the sacred altar let there be commemoration of the Virgin Mary"; "O my Lord, in your abundant and ineffable mercies, may there be a good and acceptable memorial of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God".

The fasting before the feasts of Mary, especially from first to eighth September, as a preparation for the Nativity of Mother Mary, proves the great devotion of St Thomas Christians to Mary. Every evening, the Thomas Christian families recite rosary together with all family members. They dedicate in a special way the month of October for the rosary devotion and also manifest much enthusiasm to celebrate the Marian month of May. According to their liturgical tradition Wednesday is the day of remembering Blessed Virgin Mary.

Family Spirituality

St Thomas Christians pray three times a day; morning, noon and evening. The family prayer in the evening in which all members participate concludes with

the beautiful rite of *kasturi,* which was once the rite of *pax* by which the president of the liturgical assembly admitted the faithful to the liturgy of hours. They do this by joining the hands and kissing the palm of the elderly. It is a gesture that serves both to express and to reinforce family unity as well as ecclesial communion[20].

In the evening of the Maundy Thursday, the Thomas Christians celebrate *Pesaha* (Passover) in a unique way. The head of the family breaks the specially prepared bread (*Kurishappam, Indriyappam*) and distributes it together with 'paal' (milk) to all other members of the family to commemorate the Last Supper of Our Lord.

Missionary Spirituality

We cannot agree with those who argue that before the arrival of the European missionaries the Thomas Christians did not have a spontaneous taste and zeal for evangelisation. For, Cosmos, an Alexandrian merchant, who travelled extensively and came to India between 520-525 AD narrates:

> Even in the island of Trapobene (Ceylon) in inner India where the Indian Sea is, there is 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 land of Dioscoris (Socotra), in the same Indian Sea ... And so likewise

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[20] George Nedungatt, "The Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church", in Augustine Tottakkara, *East Syrian* Spirituality, CIIS, Rome 1990, 142-202.

> among the Bactrians and Greeks and Elamittes, and throughout the whole land of Persia, there is a countless number of Churches with bishops, and a large number of Christians, and they have many martyrs and recluses leading a monastic life[21].

There were Christian settlements all along the West Coast up to Mylapore and beyond, long before the arrival of the Portuguese. The Indian Christian missionaries proclaimed the Gospel not only to their countrymen, but also to Central Asia, and other neighbouring countries[22]. History recorded the existence of Christian communities in Sind, Kalyan, Thana, Surat in Gujarat, Goa, Vijayanagar, Malabar, Mylapore, Patna and Orissa[23]. References are available to prove that monks from India went to the Far East, and China. ER Hambye asserts that during the tenth and eleventh centuries Indian Christians tried to spread their faith in the Maldives Islands[24].

In 1579 Monserrate wrote that many *nairs* were daily converted to Christianity. According to Roz SJ (1604) the St Thomas Christians were eager to increase the

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[21] A Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity*, Manchester 1926, 461-462.

[22] Mar Mattam, *The Indian Church of St Thomas Christians and Her Missionary Enterprises*, Kottayam 1985, 15.

[23] Mar Abraham Mattam, "Missionary Consciousness of St Thomas Christians", in Thomas Vellilamthadam, *Ecclesial Identity of Thomas Christians*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1985, 107.

[24] ER Hambye, "Medieval Christianity in India", *Christianity in India,* Part I, Alleppey 1972, 37.

membership of the Church and hence received into their Church many pagans whom they baptised[25].

Canonized Holiness

In the Catholic Church the genuineness of the holiness of a person is proclaimed officially through canonisation. It is in the canonised saints, blesseds, and venerables that the spirituality and holiness of the Church is fully blossomed. They are the most convincing interpreters and models of the spirituality of the Church.

The Saints

The Indian Church has only four canonised saints. We already know the two great Indian saints: Saint Thomas the Apostle, and St Francis Xavier. The other two Indian saints are: Gonzalo Garcia (1557-1597), called the glory of Vasai, and John de Britto (Arulanandar) (1647-1693) known as the "God's Sanyasi", and the Apostle of the Maravas.

In 1947 the Episcopal Synod of the Orthodox Syrian Jocobite Church canonised Mar Gregorius of Perumala (1848-1902). He was a monk at the monastery of Vettikal and then ordained bishop. He was renowned for holiness and miracles even during his lifetime and was widely sought after as the refuge of the afflicted[26].

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[25] M Mundadan, *Traditions of the Thomas Christians*, Bangalore 1970.

[26] George Nedungatt, "The Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church", in Augustine Thottakkara, *East Syrian Spirituality*, CIIS, Rome 1990, 195.

The Blesseds

The number of beatified in the Syro-Malabar Church who are on the way to canonisation has been increasing day by day. Besides two blesseds such as Rudolf Acquaviva (1550-1583), and Joseph Vaz (1651-1711) of the Latin Rite, there are three blesseds in the Syro-Malabar Church.

Kuriakose Elias Chavara CMI (1805-1871)

Kuriakose Elias Chavara, the Co-founder of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), and the Congregation of Mother of Carmel (CMC), was born on 10 February 1805 as the youngest son of Kuriakose Padinjarechavara and Mariam Thottakatt at Chennamkary. He was ordained priest on 28 November 1829 by Msgr Maurilius Stabellini at St Andrews church, Arthumkal. In 1861 he was appointed Vicar General of the Syrian Christians by Archbishop Bernardine. He worked hard to promote Catholic education, fought against schism, strived for unity and encouraged the apostolate of press and publication. He wrote many spiritual books and was the lifetime Prior General of CMI. On 8 February 1986 Pope John Paul II declared Kuriakose Elias blessed at Kottayam along with Sister Alphonsa.

Alphonsa Muttathupadathu FCC (1910-1946)

Alphonsa, "The Little Flower of India", was born as the fourth child of Joseph and Mary on 19 August 1910 at Kudamaloor. About her childhood she herself said, "I took great care to avoid all faults. I had nothing special to mention in my first confession. I zealously aspired to become a saint".

Alphonsa joined the Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC) and on 19 May 1930 received the habit from the bishop of Changanacerry at St Mary's church, Bharananganam. While she was in the novitiate, she had a serious haemorrhage which completely disabled her but was healed miraculously by the intercession of Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara.

Alphonsa prayed for suffering and the Lord abundantly granted it to her. The secret of Alphonsa's holiness was union with Christ in his paschal mystery. At the funeral of Sister Alphonsa, her spiritual director, Father Romulus CMI prophesied, "This place will become another Lisieux". Pope John Paul II beatified Sister Alphonsa on 8 February 1986 at Kottayam during his historic pastoral visit to India.

Mariam Thresia Mankidiyan CHF (1876-1926)

Mariam Thresia Chiramel Mankidiyan, the foundress of the Congregation of the Holy Family (CHF), was born on 26 April 1876 as the daughter of Thomma and Anna at Puthenchira. She practised abstinence at the age of five. Her childhood recollections reveal the intensity of her experience of the agony of the suffering Saviour.

Mariam Thresia had mystical experiences and received gifts of prophecy, healing, aura of light and sweet odour. She also had frequent ecstasies, and levitations. On Fridays people used to see her lifted high and hanging in the form of cross on the wall of her room. She was also blessed with stigmata.

In 1914 Mariam Thresia founded the Congregation of the Holy Family. She laboured hard to establish educational institutions and promote the social and cultural standard of her people. She excelled in devotion

to the Holy Eucharist, and loved the sick and the poor. On 9 April 2000 His Holiness Pope John Paul II beatified Mariam Thresia in Rome.

The Venerables

Bishop Hartman, Mother Mary of the Passion, Agnelo Gustavo Adolfo de Souza, Aurelian Pedro Lanetta Azcueta ocd, Mother Euphrasia and Mother Teresa are the present Venerables of the Indian Church. Among the venerables we will discuss here on Mother Euphrasia as she belongs to the Syro-Malabar Church and on Mother Teresa as so many sons and daughters of the Syro-Malabar Church are members of the Missionaries of Charity founded by Mother Teresa.

Mother Euphrasia (1877-1952)

On 17th October 1877 Euphrasia (Rosa) was born at Edathuruthi parish in the diocese of Thrissur which now comes under the diocese of Irinjalakuda. Antony Elavuthinkal and Kunjenji were her parents. At the age of eleven she joined the CMC boarding at St Tresa's convent, Koonammavu founded by Blessed Chavara Kuriakose.

On 10th January 1898 Euphrasia received religious veil from Bishop John Menachery at the Ambazhakkad convent chapel. She made her profession on 24 May 1898 with the name Euphrasia of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, at Ollur St Mary's convent. As a devout religious she served as Novice Mistress for 13 years and then as mother superior.

Euphrasia led a life of prayer and penance and was gifted with visions, ecstasies and levitation. On 29 August 1952 she died after 75 years of service to God and His people and was buried at St Mary's convent,

Ollur. Today thousands visit her tomb in search of heavenly blessings through her intercession. On 5th July 2002 the Servant of God Euphrasia was declared venerable.

Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

Mother Teresa, Albanian by birth, Indian by citizenship, was born on 26 August 1910 to Nicola Bojaxhiu and Dranafile Bernai. On 6 January 1929 she reached the Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Loretto convent, Calcutta.

Leaving Loretto, in 1948 Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity (MC) to work for the poorest of the poor. They take a fourth vow to work for the poor and destitute freely and willingly. Her first and most important work, whence all her strength derived, was prayer. From the Holy Mass, in which she enthusiastically participated flowed the lifeblood for her activities. Never before had there been an organisation to cater all the needs of the poor, the destitute, the lepers, the neglected, the prisoners, the prostitutes, the street children, the abandoned, and the dying in the city of Calcutta and elsewhere.

On 10 December 1979 Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize for her commitment to the most rejected and neglected of the society. In 1973 she received the Templeton Award. The Government of India conferred on her the highest civilian honour of Bharat Ratna in 1980. Missionary Brothers of Charity was founded on 25 March 1963. On 29 March 1969 the International Association of Co-Workers of Mother Teresa, a lay movement, was affiliated to the Missionaries of Charity.

The Government of India gave her a State funeral at Netaji indoor stadium, Calcutta. The gun-carriage which nad previously carried the bodies of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru carried her body. The President of India, the Prime Minister, several Chief Ministers, ministers, and the opposition leaders came to pay their respect. Kings, Queens, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Potentates, Cardinals, Prelates, and innumerable others from all over the world came to pay respectful farewell to this great hôly lady.

Servants Of God

Father Mathew Kadalikkattil, Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry, Father Augustine Thevarparampil Kunjachan, and Archbishop Mathew Kavukatt are the present servants of God in the Syro-Malabar Church.

Martyrs

Recently, many Indian Christians suffered martyrdom at the hands of hardcore religious fundamentalists. They shed their blood for Jesus Christ and his Church. Readers might remember the brutal murder of the Australian missionary, Graham Stain and his two children in Orissa. How can we forget the heroic martyrdom of Sr Rani Maria in 1995 in Indore? Sr Rani Maria is a symbol of hundreds of Christian martyrs in India. Indeed, Indian Church will flourish from their bloodshed, agony, passion, and death in the name of Jesus Christ and for the establishment of His kingdom.

Rani Maria

Sr Rani Maria was born on 29 January 1954 at

Pulluvazhy in the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly as the second child of Vattalil Paily and Eliswa. On 1 May 1974 she made her first commitment to the Lord by taking religious vows in the Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC) of the Ernakulam Province. On 22 May 1980 she made her final profession. She served the poor and the underprivileged in the dioceses of Bijnor, Satna, and Indore.

On 25 February 1995 while travelling in a public bus from Udainagar to Indore, she was brutally stabbed more than 40 times by some religious fanatics and was killed on the spot. On 27 February her funeral took place in the presence of five bishops, numerous priests, religious and lay people. From the Blood of Rani Maria let hundreds of Rani Marias emerge to continue her mission. What provoked her murderers was her selfless and dedicated work for the promotion of social justice.

Today, martyrdom has become part of the missionary life of the St Thomas Christians. The Syro-Malabar missionaries, inspired by their Father of faith, St Thomas the Apostle, the first Indian martyr, are ever ready to die for Jesus Christ. They rejoice in martyrdom knowing that they share in His paschal mystery. Hence in the midst of crucial pain and martyrdom they sing halleluiah and amen.

Conclusion

The spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church is apostolic in origin, and it was embellished by its East-Syrian and Latin connections. Everybody agrees that the spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Christians is a lived one and not a speculated one. This lived spirituality of the Thomas Christians is more a liturgical spirituality,

centred on the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It is true that more than anywhere in the world St Thomas Christians have a very high percentage of participation in the liturgical celebrations, especially in the Sunday Mass. They try to live the Second Vatican Council's teaching in the constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, "Liturgy is the summit toward the activity of the Church is directed and is at the same time the foundation from which all her power flows" (SC10).

However, comparing to the most ancient and rich spiritual traditions of India, home of millions of rishis, saints, and sages, land of Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, and Mahatma Gandhi, St Thomas Christians need to grow higher and higher in their spiritual pursuit.

Questions

- What are the significant characteristics of the spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church?
- What do you mean by Liturgical Spirituality?
- Explain briefly the ascetical spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church?
- Who are the Saints, Blesseds, Venerables and Servants of God of the Syro-Malabar Church?

Chapter Six

Birth And Growth Of The Kalyan Diocese

Introduction

The decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches declared that all the individual Churches in the Catholic communion have equal right and obligation to provide pastoral care and to undertake missionary activities:

> Such individual Churches whether of the East or of the West, although differ somewhat among themselves in what are called rites are, nevertheless equally entrusted to the pastoral guidance of the Roman Pontiff, and divinely appointed successor of St Peter in supreme governance over the Universal Church. They are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others by reasons of rite. They enjoy the same equal rights and are under the same obligations, even with respect to preaching the Gospel to the whole world (Mk 16,15) under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff (OE 3).

On 30th April 1988 after prolonged studies, consultations, and works of commissions, when His Holiness Pope John Paul II created the diocese of Kalyan, he was implementing what was decided in the Second Vatican Council Documents. In this chapter we will discuss first of all the apostolate of

St Bartholomew in Kalyan and secondly, the background, relevance and the impact of the diocese of Kalyan.

St Bartholomew And Kalyan

Kalyan, situated at the north-east end of the Thana Creek, was an ancient port. It is supposed to be the "Kalliana", mentioned by the traveller Cosmos Indicopleustes in his Christian Typography[1]. Kalyan had a Jewish colony dating from ancient times. Eusebius and St Jerome testify that St Bartholomew, one of the twelve Apostles of Christ, preached the Gospel in the region of Kalyan and established a Christian community. Bartholomew might have first preached to the Jews and then to the local people. Eusebius of Ceasarea writes:

> Pantaenus was constituted a herald of the Gospel of Christ to the nations of the East, and advanced even as far as India ... Pantaenus is said to have come to the land of the Indians; to have found there that the Gospel according to Mathew had anticipated his own arrival among some who knew Christ and to whom Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached and had left them the book of Mathew in Hebrew script, which is also preserved until this time[2].

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[1] EO Windstedt, ed., *The Christian Topography of Cosmos Indicopleustes*, Cambridge 1909, 119.

[2] Eusebius, Hist.Eccl. 5.10 ; MG 20.453-456. Cited by AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 108.

St Jerome narrates more explicitly Pantaenus' mission to India: "Pantaenus ... on account of the renown of his excellent learning was sent to India by Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria, to preach Christ to the Brahmins and to the philosophers of that nation"[3]. On another occasion he writes:

> Pantaenus was a man of such learning both in Sacred Scriptures and in secular knowledge that he was sent to India by Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria at the request of that nation's legates. There he found that the coming of Christ, our Lord, according to the Gospel of Mathew, was preached by Bartholomew, one of the twelve Apostles[4].

In the Hieronymian Martyrology of the fifth century AD we read, "On the 9th Kalends of September the natal day of St Bartholomew the Apostle who was beheaded for Christ in Citerior India, by order of King Astriagis"[5]. The Hieronymian Martyrology though does not specify the exact locality, scholars say that the land evangelised by St Bertholomew must be somewhere in Western India.

The Constantinopolitan tradition codified in the tenth century by order of emperor Basil II, argues in the same line of thought that the Apostle Bartholomew

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[3] Jerome. Epist. 79 Ad Magnum Oratorem, 41; The Latin Patrology, Migne Edition, 22.667; AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 108.

[4] Jerome. De Viris Illustribus, 36; The Latin Patrology, Migne Edition, 23.651; AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 109.

[5] The Latin Patrology, Migne Edition, 30.436.

went to India felix[6]. As the term 'felix' is a translation of the Sanskrit word 'Kalyana', it is probable that the tradition refers to that part of India where the city of Kalyana stood. The very same idea is expressed by Pseudo-Sophronius of seventh century, "The Apostle Bartholomew preached the Gospel of Christ to the Indians who are called the Happy"[7]. The Greek tradition also states that the Apostle went to "India Felix"[8].

We can deduct from the above mentioned descriptions that the Apostle Bartholomew might have come to India at Kalyan in 55 AD during the reign of Aristakarman (Astreges) as King (37-62 AD) and Pulumayi, his brother as Viceroy of Kalyana. Bartholomew was martyred in 62 AD by the order of king Aristakarman of the Satavahana dynasty of Paithan, which comes in the Bombay region.

Kalyan Christians

According to tradition, Pulumayi, brother of Aristakarman, converted to Christianity by the Apostle, became one of the bishops of the place. As time went on difficulties arose for the Christians of Kalyan. They sent their delegates to Alexandria to ask for Pantaenus' help against the doctrinal objections raised by the

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[6] Menology, 2. Feb.17; The Greek Patrology, Migne Edition, 117.317.

[7] De Vitis Apostolorum, 4; The Latin Patrology, Migne Edition, 23.722; AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1952, 111.

[8] HC Perumalil and ER Hambye, *Christianity in India*, Prakasam Publications, Alleppey 1972, 21-22.

Brahmins of Kalyan. In 190 AD Pantaenus was sent to them by Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria. He strengthened the faith of the Kalyan Christians and settled matters with the Brahmins. Out of their gratitude the Christians presented Pantaenus with a copy of St Mathew's Gospel, given them by the Apostle Bartholomew[9].

In the course of time, the Kalyan Christians came under the patriarchate of Babylon and we see them in this condition when Cosmos visited them in the sixth century. We do not know anything about the Kalyan Christians till the fourteenth century when they received Jordanus, the Franciscan missionary at Bassein. We are inclined to think that they continued as a separate Christian community till the coming of the Portuguese and then became one with the Christians of Bombay[10].

Syro-malabar Migrants In Mumbai

Thousands of the Syro-Malabar Christians migrated to different cities world wide seeking employment and better prospect in life. The high literacy rate and the non availability of jobs in Kerala catalysed this type of migration. They were in a totally alien atmosphere with regard to their religious and spiritual life. The priests of the Latin rite were taking care of their spiritual needs. But obviously a formation in accordance with the spiritual, liturgical, and ecclesial traditions of the mother church was lacking.

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[9] J Puthenkalam – A Mampra, *Sanctity In India*, Yercaud 2000, 33. See also Joseph Kallarangatt, *Pantrandu Sleehanmar* (Malayalam) OIRSI, Kottayam 2001, 155-171.

[10] AC Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, Patna 1971, 138-140.

Pastoral Care Of The Migrants

Different Catholic associations, religious congregations, and dioceses took genuine interest to preserve the faith and cultural heritage of the Syro-Malabar Catholics in Mumbai and elsewhere.

Catholic Associations

The Kerala Catholic Association (KCA) founded by Fr Herman OFMcap played a significant role in the pastoral care of the migrant Catholics in Mumbai. In the same way, the St Thomas Catholics of India (STCI) under the guidance of Revd Fr Gabinus Petta CMI served well the Syro-Malabar Christians in Pune region. They held retreats, prayer meetings, Sunday Masses, and Holy Week celebrations inviting Catholic priests from Kerala. They sent memorandums to the bishops and bishops' conferences seeking possibilities to get priests for the pastoral care of the Kerala Catholics in Mubai-Pune-Nashik region.

Religious Congregations

Many priests from the various religious congregations such as the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), the Missionary Society of St Thomas (MST), the Order of Friar Minors (OFM Cap), the Order of the Imitation of Christ (OIC) worked hard to take care of the pastoral needs of the Syro-Malabar migrant Catholics in Maharashtra.

In early eighties, the pastoral care of the people of Mumbai was entrusted to the priests of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate Congregation. When His Excellency Valerian D'Souza, bishop of Pune asked the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference (SMBC) to send

priests for the pastoral care of the Syro-Malabarians in his diocese, SMBC asked the Missionary Society of St Thomas to send sufficient priests for pastoral service in Pune region. In 1984, Revd Fr George Kavukatt MST and Revd Fr Lonappan Arangassery MST took charge as chaplains of the Syro-Malabar Catholics in Pune, Nashik and Ahmednagar region. Later on, more members were added to this team to intensify the pastoral activities in these regions.

Diocesan Priests

Many priests from the Archdioceses of Thrissur and Changanacherry worked for the Syro-Malabar Catholics in this region. Similarly, many priests who came to study at the Papal Atheneum attended to the pastoral and spiritual needs of the Syro-Malabar Catholics in Pune.

On 14 May 1987 a team of four priests, Revd Fr George Vadakethala, Revd Fr Jacob Porathur, and Revd Fr George Edakalathur from the Archdiocese of Thrissur headed by Revd Msgr Paul Chittilapilly took up the pastoral ministry of the Syro-Malabar Christians in Mumbai-Pune-Nashik region.

There were many eminent lay leaders who dedicated their precious time and energy for the organisation of Syro-Malabar Catholics as well as for their pastoral and spiritual assistance.

The diaspora Christians in the Mumbai-Pune-Nashik regions are very much indebted to these priests for their valuable and selfless services, and the pastoral care rendered to them, prior to the erection of the diocese of Kalyan. They gratefully remember those lay leaders who worked hard for the communion and spiritual benefits of the Syro-Malabar Catholics in Maharashtra.

Relevance Of The Diocese Of Kalyan

The diocese of Kalyan was the result of a prolonged process for the implementation of the teachings of Second Vatican Council and the explicit directives of the Holy See. The Catholic Church, that desires the closest collaboration and communion among the Churches, wants that each individual Church should remain faithful to its venerable heritage and ecclesial identity as expressed in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

The Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council, rediscovering the true nature of the Catholic Church as the communion of Churches (OE 2), declares that it protects the legitimate differences in the Church:

> Within the Church particular Churches hold a rightful place. These Churches retain their own traditions without in anyway lessening the primacy of the Chair of Peter. This Chair presides over the whole assembly of charity and protects legitimate differences, while at the same time it sees that such differences do not hinder unity but rather contribute toward it (LG 13, See also LG 23).

This new awareness in the understanding of the nature and mission of the Catholic Church shattered the age-old monarchical and monolithic pattern, and promoted a profound communion of individual Churches in the same faith, sacraments, and hierarchical leadership, each having its own liturgy, spirituality, theology, discipline, etc[11].

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[11] Xavier Koodapuzha, *The Diocese of Kalyan its Background, Nature and Mission*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1988, 12.

It took centuries to understand that the venerable traditions of the Oriental Churches form part of the divine heritage of the Catholic Church and the whole Church has the obligation to preserve and foster this common patrimony (OE 1). The decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches clearly points out that in the same territory more jurisdiction can be introduced; unity in action and not uniformity in jurisdiction should be fostered. Parishes and hierarchy should be established everywhere for the pastoral care of the Oriental Catholics:

> Therefore, attention should everywhere be given to the preservation and growth of each individual Church. For this purpose, parishes and special hierarchy should be established for each where the spiritual good of the faithful so demands (OE 4).

Similarly, the decree on ecumenism stresses the essential need for separate hierarchy with jurisdiction for maintaining the identity and ecclesial heritage of the Oriental Churches:

> The Sacred Synod solemnly declares that the Churches of the East while keeping in mind the necessary unity of the whole Church, have the power to govern themselves according to their own disciplines since they are better suited to the temperament of their faithful and better adapted to foster the good of souls (UR 16).

Regimini Ecclesiae Universae

On 15 August 1967 Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Constitution, *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae* gave certain practical norms to be followed by the Congregation for the Oriental Churches:

> The Oriental Congregation in the very Latin territories, with assiduous care, also through a Visitor, looks after the not-yet organised nuclei of the faithful of the Oriental Rites, and also as far as possible, takes care of the spiritual needs by the creation also of a special hierarchy if the number of the faithful requires it (No 44).

Apostolic Visitor

On 8 September 1978 His Holiness Pope John Paul I appointed Archbishop Mar Antony Padiyara as the Apostolic Visitor to study the pastoral problems of the Syro-Malabar faithful outside Kerala and to propose practical measures. On 5 January 1980 Mar Antony Padiyara, the Apostolic Visitor, submitted the studied report to the Holy See.

CBCI Meetings

The pastoral problems of the Syro-Malabar migrants outside Kerala were discussed in the CBCI meeting held at Trichinopoly from 9-16 January 1982[12]. Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil, Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios, Archbishop Henri D'Souza etc vehemently spoke on the pros and cons of this issue. Moreover, a theological discussion on this subject was organised from 24-28 August 1983 at the Goregaon Seminary, Bombay. The CBCI discussions on this topic were continued in the meetings held at Nagpur in 1984 and at Goa in 1985. Finally the bishops came to a consensus at the CBCI Meeting held at the St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor in April 1988.

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[12] See *Christian Orient*, 1982, 5-70.

Appeal To The Synod Of Bishops

His Eminence Miroslau Cardinal Lubachivsky, Archbishop Mar Antony Padiyara, Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil, and Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios strongly spoke on the rights of the Oriental Churches at the Synod of Bishops held in Rome in October 1985[13].

Papal Visit

On 1st February 1986 when Pope John Paul II addressed the bishops of India in Delhi he assured them of an early settlement of the problem and elicited the co-operation of all concerned. This was followed by the appointment of a high level Pontifical Commission in Rome to study the question. On the basis of this commission's report, on 28 May 1987 His Holiness Pope John Paul II wrote to the bishops of India informing them about the erection of the diocese of Kalyan and requesting them their wholehearted cooperation:

> I have every confidence that it will be given the full support of all the bishops of the country, and that you will do everything possible to educate and form your priests, religious, and faithful to accept and cooperate fully in its implementation.

In this historical document the Holy Father stated that the situation was mature enough for the establishment of a Syro-Malabar diocese in Bombay-Pune region.

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[13] See *Christian Orient*, 1986, 26-50.

Erection Of Kalyan Diocese

Finally, on 30 April 1988 His Holiness Pope John Paul II through the decree entitled *Pro Christifidelibus* erected the diocese of Kalyan. The official inauguration of the diocese took place on 24 August 1988, on the feast of St Bartholomew. Kalyan diocese, in Maharashtra state, has an area of 1,45,663 sq kms, and has jurisdiction over 15 civil districts such as Greater Bombay, Thane, Raigad, Pune, Kolhapur, Satara, Solapur, Sangli, Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri, Nashik, Dhule, Jalgaon, Nandurbar, and Ahmednagar.

Mar Paul Chittilapilly

Mar Paul Chittilapilly, the first bishop of Kalyan diocese, was born at Mattam in the Archdiocese of Thrissur on 7 February 1934 to Chummar and Kunjai. He was ordained priest for the diocese of Thrissur on 18 October 1961 in Rome by Mar Mathew Kavukattu. He took his doctorate in Canon Law in 1966 from the Lateran University in Rome.

After serving the diocese of Thrissur in various capacities such as Chancellor, Judicial Vicar, Vicar General, and his professorship at the Diocesan Minor Seminary and at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, he was appointed in 1987 chaplain to the Syro-Malabar Catholics and the General Director of KCA, Mumbai.

On 30 April 1988 he was nominated bishop of Kalyan and on 24 August 1988 ordained bishop by Mar Antony Cardinal Padiyara. Out of nothing, as the situation of the diocese was at its founding, Bishop Paul through his dedicated and painstaking services and farsighted policies built up the diocese of Kalyan, eliciting praise and admiration from all. On 11

November 1996, he was appointed bishop of Thamarassery and took charge of his office on 13 February 1997.

Mar Thomas Elavanal MCBS

Mar Thomas Elavanal mcbs, the second bishop of Kalyan, was born on 28 March 1950 at Mutholy in the diocese of Palai to Zacharias and Thresia. In 1955 his family migrated to Chathenkottunada in the diocese of Thamarassery.

After completing his high school studies in 1966 at St Mary's High School, Maruthonkara, he joined the Minor Seminary of the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS). He had his first religious profession on 17 May 1968 and was ordained priest by Mar Sebastian Mankuzhikary on 22 December 1975. After his professorship at the MCBS Minor Seminary, Kottayam, in 1978 he went to Rome for higher studies. He did Licentiate in Liturgy at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome and Doctorate in Theology at the Pontifical University of Angelicum, Rome. He did his post doctoral course at the Catholic University, Washington.

In 1984 he was appointed Rector of the MCBS Seminary, Alwaye. He was elected Assistant Superior General of the congregation in 1989, and in 1995, the MCBS Superior General. From 1984 he has been visiting professor at the Pontifical Seminary, Alwaye and at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam. Besides many articles in English and Malayalam, he wrote *The Memorial Celebration*. Since 1984 he has been member of the Syro-Malabar Central Liturgical Committee.

On 8 February 1997 he was ordained bishop by His

Grace Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil, the then Apostolic Administrator of the Syro-Malabar Church and on the same day took charge of the diocese of Kalyan.

Mgr Thomas Thalachira

Right from the very inception of the Eparchy of Kalyan Revd Mgr Thomas Thalachira rendered valuable services to the Eparchy as Proto Synchellus with astonishing dedication, self-sacrifice, unfailing commitment and hardwork . Mgr Thomas Thalachira was born on 13-10-1931 at Elamthottam Palai. Later his family settled at Cherumkuzhy in the Eparchy of Thrissur. He was ordained on11-3-1963 at Thrissur. He served as parish priest at different parishes in the Eparchies of Thrissur and Irinjalakuda. From 1972 to 1988 he served as the director of various pious associations CLC, KCYM, Catholic Union and CLA in the Eparchy of Thrissur. He joined in the Eparchy of Kalyan on 16-11-1988. Besides being the Proto synchellus of the Eparchy of Kalyan he rendered his service as parish priest in various parishes and director of *Kalyan Mathrusangham* and the Kalyan Laity Movemant.

Indult

On 18 September 1993 His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Sodano, the Vatican Secretary of State sent an Indult to the Syro-Malabar rite faithful of the Eparchy of Kalyan allowing them to receive sacraments, if they so wish, in the Latin rite. The translation of the original indult is given below:

> The Holy Father has kindly acceded to the repeated requests made to him by the faithful of the Syro-

Malabar Eparchy of Kalyan, who in consequence of the establishment of the said Eparchy, find it very difficult to give up the Latin rite in which they have been brought up and have been practising their faith. Therefore, in order to promote peace in the community, the Holy Father grants an indult to the above-mentioned faithful, to receive the sacraments in parishes of the Latin rite. This concession does not imply that they lose their Syro-Malabar rite; and it does not apply to Canon 747 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (which refers to ordination to the diaconate and priesthood). The ascription to the Syro-Malabar rite of these faithful must be clearly mentioned in the registers of Baptisms, Confirmations, and Marriages of Latin rite parishes in which they receive these sacraments.

This indult includes the licit and valid reception of the Sacrament of marriage (in a Latin rite parish) provided the norms of the Code of the Eastern Churches are observed in this regard. The legitimate Latin rite Parish Priest must observe the requirements of the Law to establish the free state of the parties. ***This indult applies only to those faithful who actually belonged to the Latin rite parishes till the under mentioned date.***

Given from the Vatican Palace on 18 September 1993.

Sd/
+ Angelo Cardinal Sodano
Secretary of State

Clarifications On The Indult

On 25 January 1994 the Apostolic Nunciature in India, New Delhi sent some clarifications regarding the indult, which are given below

Apostolic Nunziature in India
N. 10898

Clarifications from the Apostolic Nunciature Regarding the Indult

Clarifications regarding the Papal Indult issued for the Syro-Malabar faithful of the Eparchy of Kalyan who want to continue to receive the sacraments in the parishes of the Latin Rite which they have been frequenting hitherto:

1. The beneficiaries of the indult are the Syro-Malabar faithful who were parishioners of the Latin parish before the establishment of the Eparchy of Kalyan and who have continued to reside there and to receive there the sacraments.

2. Beneficiaries of the indult are not only the said Syro-Malabar faithful in the Archdiocese of Bombay but also those in the dioceses of Pune and Nashik.

3. The Latin "Parochus legitimus" competent for preparing the marriage (status liber), is the "parochus proprius" of the faithful, taking the term in its obvious meaning.

4. The respective Latin Rite Bishop has the faculty, if the need arises, to grant the dispensation of impediments to the Syro-Malabar faithful who ask to be married in the Latin Parish.

The clarifications have been seen and approved by the Holy Father (n. 4 specifically).
New Delhi, 25th January

Implications Of The Indult

1) The indult does not apply to those Syro-Malabar faithful who came to Maharashtra after the establishment of the Eparchy of Kalyan.
2) The indult does not apply to the Syro-Malabar faithful who are at present members of the Kalyan diocese.
3) The Indult applies only to those Syro-Malabar faithful who actually belonged to the Latin rite parishes till the under mentioned date, that is, 18 September 1993.
4) The indult applies only to those Syro-Malabar faithful who continued to be members of the Latin parish and to receive there the sacraments.
5. The Syro-Malabar faithful who receive sacraments in the Latin rite as per the indult do not lose their Syro-Malabar rite and may revert to practising it fully if they overcome their present difficulties.
6. When the Syro-Malabar rite faithful receive sacraments in the Latin rite, their ascription to the Syro-Malabar rite must be clearly mentioned in the registers of Baptisms, Confirmations, and

Marriages of the Latin rite parishes in which they receive these sacraments.

7. The indult does not apply to ordination of deacons and priests.

Current Statistics

Bishop	Mar Thomas Elavanal mcbs
Former Bishop	Mar Paul Chittilapilly
Patron	St Thomas the Apostle
Area	1,45,663 sq kms
State	Maharashtra
Civil Districts	Greater Bombay, Thane, Raigad, Pune, Kolhapur, Satara, Solapur, Sangli, Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri, Nashik, Dhule, Jalgaon, Nandurbar, and Ahmednagar.
Languages	Marathi, Hindi, Malayalam, and English.
Population	4,85,70,844
Syro-Malabar Catholics	1,00,000 C
Diocesan Centres	101
Mission Centres	41
Sub Centres	22
Priests	131 34 priests ascribed 12 priests from other dioceses 85 religious priests
Convents	58
Sisters	247

Major Seminarians	62
Minor Seminarian	25
Missions	Sangli Mission entrusted to MST Satara-Solapur Mission entrusted to MCBS Ahmadnagar Mission entrusted to VC Chavara Mission entrusted to CMI
Churches/Prayer Halls	37
Church Office/Priests' Res.	12
Plots for Churches	14
Schools	33
Nursery Schools	26
Hospital/Dispensaries	12
Other Social Centres	18

Impact Of Kalyan Diocese

Within the last 14 years the diocese of Kalyan has brought forth remarkable achievements both in the pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar faithful and in the mission territories. One of the most significant achievements of the diocese would be the 34 priests ascribed to the diocese. The bishop, priests, religious and lay leaders of the Kalyan diocese are to be highly appreciated for the establishment of 101 diocesan centres, 41 mission centres, and 22 sub centres together with family units and palliyogams.

The different diocesan committees such as the catechetical, liturgical, youth, etc enthusiastically work for the integral development of the diocese. Within a short span the catechetical committee could prepare

and publish its own catechetical texts. Pius associations such as Kalyan Youth Movement, Kalyan Laity Movement, Mothers Union, Christeen, Jesus Youth, Charismatic renewal movement, etc are established and function excellently.

The social security schemes and Karunya trust for social welfare activities, which endeavour for the uplift of the poorest of the poor irrespective of caste and creed, are significant steps in the right path of progress. The four missions, Sangli, Satara-Solapur, Dhule-Jalgaon and Amednagar have made significant progress due to the relentless work of the missionaries.

Conclusion

Kalyan, where St Bartholomew lit the lamp of Jesus Christ in the first century, where Pantaenus' visit strengthened the faith of the Christians, slowly comes to its faith-revival by the erection of the diocese of Kalyan. The birth and growth of Kalyan diocese is a great hope for thousands of the Syro-Malabar Catholics in other Metropolitan cities that one day they will also be able to get the opportunities to participate in the liturgical celebrations of their mother Church.

The Syro-Malabar faithful in Maharashtra who ardently thirsted for the living water rejoice in the young blood of their shepherds who enthusiastically shepherd them along green pastures. The non-Christians who live in the mission territories of the Kalyan diocese delight with great hope that soon rays of the Light of the World will come to illumine their lives. Indeed, the presence of Jesus, intercessions of St Thomas and

St Bartholomew, and the protection of Virgin Mother of God will always be with the priests and people of Kalyan.

Questions

- What are the historical evidences for the apostolate of St Bartholomew in India?
- What are the theological and ecclesial reasons to erect the diocese of Kalyan?
- What are the implications of the Indult?
- What are the impacts of the erection of Kalyan diocese?

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The Syro-Malabar Church At A Glance

The Province Of Ernakulam

See	Rank	Hierarch	Faithful
01. Ernakulam-Angamaly	Major Arch bishopric	Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil	445,377
02. Kothamang.	Eparchy	George Punnakottil	475,000

The Province Of Changanacherry

03. Changanac.	Metropoly	Joseph Powathil	345,000
04. Kottayam	Eparchy	Kuriakose Kunnassery	129,790
05. Palai	Eparchy	Joseph Pallickaparambil	281,041
06. Kanjirappally	Eparchy	Mathew Arackal	158,000
07. Thuckalay	Eparchy	George Alencherry	30,000

The Province Of Thrissur

08. Thrissur	Metropoly	Jacob Thoonkuzhy	410,208
09. Palakkad	Eparchy	Jacob Manathodath	64,446
10. Irinjalakuda	Eparchy	James Pazhayattil	245,000

The Province Of Thalassery

11. Thalassery	Metropoly	George Valiamattam	273,826
12. Manantha.	Eparchy	E. Pothanamuzhy	156,500
13. Thamaras.	Eparchy	Paul Chittilapilly	115,356
14. Belthangad.	Eparchy	Lawrence Mukkuzhy	20,000

Extraterritorial Eparchies

See	**State**	**Hierarch**	**Faithful**
15. Chanda	Maharashtra	Vijay Anand	21,283
16. Sagar	Madya Pradesh	Pastor Neelankavil cmi	5,000
17. Satna	Madya Pradesh	Mathew Vaniakizhakkel	2,493
18. Ujjain	Madya Pradesh	Sebastian Vadakel	2,603
19. Bijnor	Uttar Pradesh	Gratian Mundadan cmi	810
20. Jagdalpur	Madya Pradesh	Simon Stock Palathra cmi	5,000
21. Rajkot	Gujarat	Gregory Karot. cmi	10,000
22. Gorakpur	Madya Pradesh	Dominc Kokkat cst	1,586
23. Kalyan	Maharashtra	Thomas Elavanal mcbs	100,000
24. Adilabad	Andra Pradesh	Joseph Kunnath	10,500
25. Chicago	USA	Jacob Angadiath	

OTHER HIERARCHS IN SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH:

- Joseph Chennoth, Apostolic Nuncio in Chad
- George Panikulam, Apostolic Nuncio in Honduras
- George Kocheri, Apostolic Nuncio in Ghana
- Thomas Chakiath, Auxiliary Bishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly
- Sebastian Adayanthrath, Auxiliary Bishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly
- Mathew Moolakkatt, Auxiliary Bishop of Kottayam
- Joseph Perunthottam, Auxiliary Bishop of Changanacherry
- Sebastian Valloppilly, Emeritus of Thalassery
- Abraham Mattam, Emeritus of Satna
- John Perumattam, Emeritus of Ujjain
- Mathew Vattakuzhy, Emeritus of Kanjirappally

THE EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES

TRADITION	CHURCH	STATUS	MEMBERS
I Alexandrian	1. Coptic	Patriarchate	166,953
	2. Ethiopian	Metropolitan	132,697
II Antiochene	3. Syrian	Patriarchate	185,870
	4. Maronite	Patriarchate	2,176,152
	5. Syro-Malank.	Metropolitan	295,467
III Armenian	6. Armenian	Patriarchate	142,853
IV Chaldean	7. Chaldean	Patriarchate	628,250
	8. Syro-Malabar	Major Archiepiscop.	34,61,466
V Constanti-nopolitan (Byzantine)	9. Byelorussian	Exarch Apostolic	30,000
	10. Bulgarian	Exarch Apostolic	15,000
	11. Greek	Exarch Apostolic	2,300
	12. Hungarian	Eparchy	252,840
	13. Italo-Alban.	2 Eparchies	61,597
	14. Melkite	Patriarchate	1,146,778
	15. Romanian	Metropolitan	1,562,979
	16. Ruthenian	Metropolitan	461,555
	17. Slovak	Eparchy	400,000
	18. Ukrainian	Major Archiepiscop.	4,194,900
	19. Krizevci	Eparchy	48,770
	20. Albanian	Administrator Apostolic	?
	21. Russian	2 Exarchates	?

Significant Dates

52 AD	Arrival of St Thomas the Apostle at Kodungallur, Kerala, India.
03 July 72	Martyrdom of St Thomas at Mylapore.
345	Arrival of Thomas of Cana at Kodungallur.
340-360	Special privileges to the leaders of the Syrian Christians by the order of *Thazhekad Sasanam.*
849	By the Thareesappalli Copperplates Ayyanadikal granted a number of privileges and 72 stately positions to the Church and churchmen of Kerala.
1498	Arrival of Vasco da Gama at Kozhikode.
1502	Arrival of Vasco da Gama at Kochi.
1523	The Portuguese excavation of St Thomas' tomb at Mylapore.
1542	Arrival of St Francis Xavier in India
1597	Mar Abraham, the last of the East Syrian bishops, dies at Angamaly.
20-26 June 1599	Synod of Diamper
4 August 1600	The supremacy of the Portuguese King (Padroado) over St Thomas Christians is imposed.

3 Jan. 1653	Coonan Cross Oath at Mattamchery.
1658	Joseph Sebastiani, OCD made vicar apostolic of Malabar.
31 Jan. 1663	Bishop Chandy Parambil appointed Vicar Apostolic of Malabar.
1700	St Thomas Christians come under double jurisdiction: the *Propoganda* represented by the Carmelite vicar apostolic of Varapuzha and the *Padroado* represented by the archbishop of Kodungallur.
1778	Angamaly convention decides to send a delegation to Rome; historic journey of Cariattil and Paremmackal to Rome and Lisbon. Composition of *Varthamanapusthakam*.
1782	Cariattil consecrated in Lisbon as Archbishop of Kodungallur.
1786	Cariattil dies in Goa.
1861	Kuriakose Elias Chavara appointed vicar general of the Thomas Christians.
20 May 1887	Pope Leo XIII decrees the separation of the Syro-Malabar Rite from the Latin Rite; erects two Syro-Malabar Vicariates, Thrissur and Kottayam but appoints Latin bishops as vicars apostolic. The name Syro-Malabar is given to St Thomas Catholic community in India.
28 July 1896	The two Syrian Vicariates are reconstituted into Thrissur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry Vicariates; appointment of Indian bishops as Vicars Apostolic.

1911	Pope Pius X erects a fourth vicariate, Kottayam for the Southists, (Knanites)
21 Dec. 1923	Pope Pius XI establishes the Syro- Malabar Hierarchy with Ernakulam as the Metropolitan See and Thrissur, Changanacherry and Kottayam as suffragan Sees.
1956	Changanacherry raised to a Metropoly.
1962	Malayalam translation of the Qurbana introduced. Chanda, the first exarchate outside Kerala, entrusted to the Syro- Malabar Church.
1969	Archbishop Joseph Parecattil installed as the first cardinal of the Syro-Malabar Church.
1986	Pope John Paul II beatifies Fr Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Sr Alphonsa Muttathupadathu at Kottayam.
12 May 1987	A team of four priests under the leadership of Msgr Paul Chittilapilly came to Bombay to take up the pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar Migrants.
30 April 1988	H.H. Pope John Paul II establishes Kalyan diocese for the Syro- Malabar Catholics in Bombay, Pune, and Nashik and appoints Msgr Paul Chittilapilly as its first Bishop.
28 August 1988	The inauguration of Kalyan diocese and the consecration of Mar Paul Chittilapilly.
1990	Code of Canons (Canon Law) for the Eastern Churches promulgated.
04-25 Sept. 1992	A Pontifical Commission from Rome came to study the problems of the Syro- Malabar Church, and visited all the Syro-Malabar dioceses.

29 Jan. 1993	Syro-Malabar Church elevated to the rank of Major Archbishopric with the title Ernakulam-Angamaly. Mar Antony Cardinal Padiyara appointed first Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. Archbishop Mar Abraham Kattumana, appointed Pontifical Delegate to the Syro-Malabar Church with all powers of a Major Archbishop.
20 May 1993	Enthronement of the Major Archbishop
20-25 May 1993	The first Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church.
1995	Thrissur and Thalassery are raised to Archdioceses.
8 Feb. 1997	Consecration of Mar Thomas Elavanal mcbs as the Bishop of Kalyan.
2000	Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil appointed as the Second Major Archbishop.
2000	Beatification of Mariam Thresia in Rome.

Syro-Malabar Faithful Living Outside The Proper Territory Of The Church

IN INDIA

New Delhi	**52,000**
Bangalore	26,000
Madras	20,000
Calcutta	15,000
Ahmedbad	12,000
Baroda	6,000
Surat	4,000
Bhilai	500
Durgapur	500
Jamshedpur	1,000
Hyderabad	2,000
Ajmir	500
Lucknow	500
Allahabad	500
Jaipur	500
Patna	500
Bhopal	3,000
Nagpur	1,000
Jabalpur	1,500
Indore	2,000
Raipur	1,000

In Europe

Rome	1,500
Köln/Bonn	850
Dusseldorf	320
Dortmund/Bochum	170
Essen	350
Duisburg	120
Frankfurt/M	450
Mainz/Wiesbaden	100
Heidelberg	200
Stuttgart	160
Berlin	110
Hamburg	120
Paderborn	180
Münster	160
Hagen	120
München/Würzburg	s320

EPARCHY OF KALYAN

