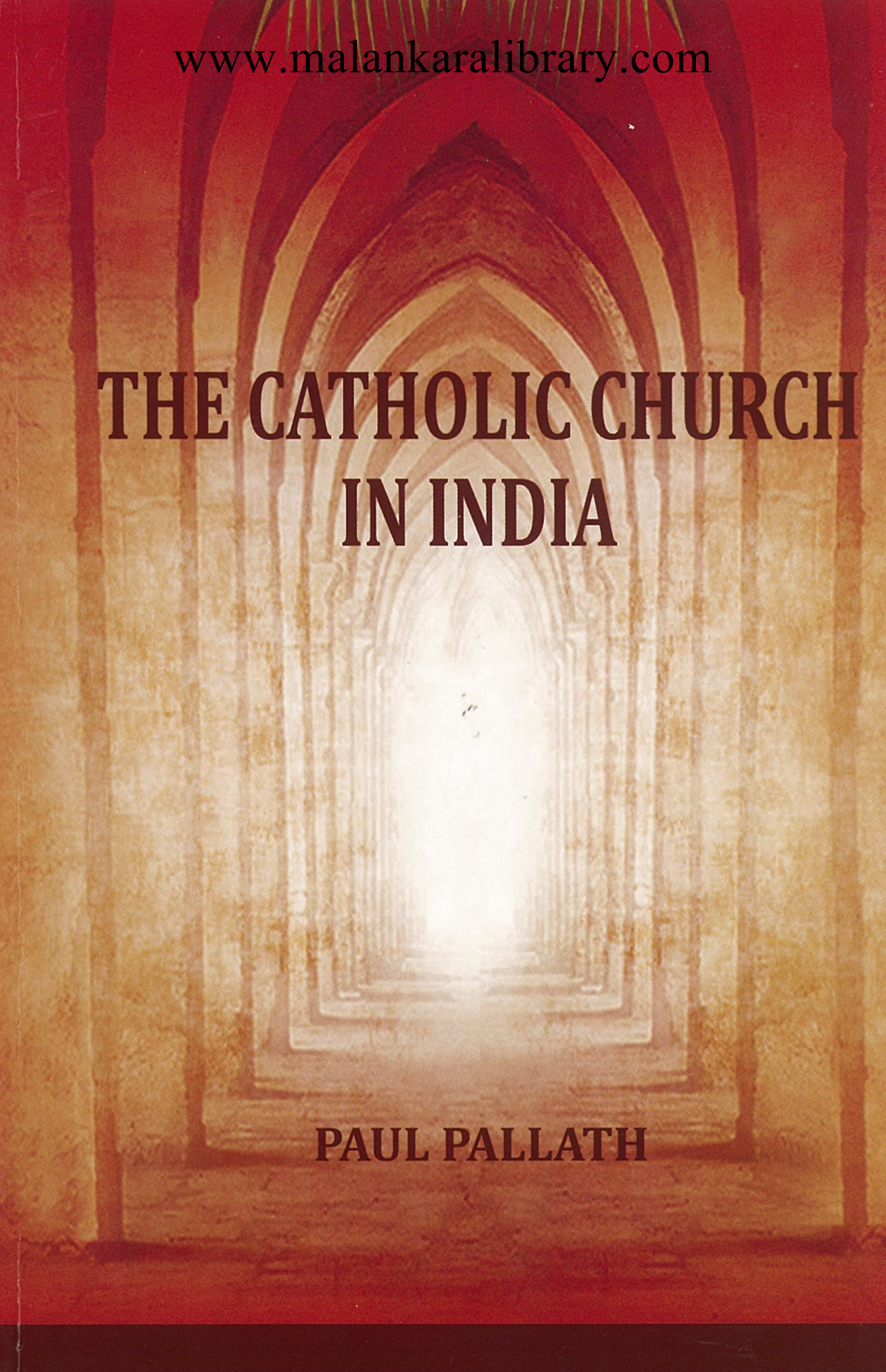


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**THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
IN INDIA**

**PAUL PALLATH**

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# THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN INDIA

PAUL PALLATH



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## FOREWORD TO THE FOURTH EDITION

When I published the first edition of this work in 2003 at the invitation of Mar Thoma Yogam, the St Thomas Christian Fellowship in Rome, my intention was simply to prepare a small book for providing essential information concerning the Catholic Church in India for “foreign readers”. In the General Introduction I indicated that “our scope is obviously not to produce a strictly scientific work, but to collect information concerning the Catholic Church in India in a handy and easily accessible volume”. In 2003 itself a revised Italian edition of the book came into light. Then in 2005 an updated and elaborated second edition was published in English. Subsequently in 2008 a further revised version appeared in German language. The third English (Indian) edition was published in 2010 from Kottayam. In the course of time the book was translated also into Hungarian and Malayalam.

I am pleased to state that the present edition, the crowning of all the aforementioned versions, is the fruit of many years of study, research and teaching at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. I am confident that this work provides a continuous, precise and coherent history of the Catholic Church in India until the present day in a succinct and synoptic manner. In fact, this book also integrates the findings and conclusions of my own other source-studies published during the course of these years.

I express my indebtedness to Rev. Dr. Joseph Kollara, Director of HIRS Publications (Mar Thoma Vidyanikethan, Changanacherry) for accepting the fourth English edition of this work for publication. I remember with gratitude all my friends and students who have constantly encouraged and supported me with their prayers and creative proposals. I am thankful to the manager and staff of St Joseph’s Orphanage Press, Changanacherry for the beautiful printing.

Rome, 3 July 2019

Feast of Apostle St Thomas

Paul Pallath

ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
AAT	Archives of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum
ACO	Archivum Congregationis pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus
Ap. Const.	Apostolic Constitution
APF	Archivum Congregationis de Propaganda Fide
ARSI	Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu
ASS	<i>Acta Sanctae Sedis</i>
ASV	Archivum Secretum Vaticanum
BPP	<i>Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae</i>
CCEO	<i>Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches)</i>
CO	<i>Christian Orient</i>
DISM	<i>Delegazione India, Soriani del Malabar or Soriani Malabar</i>
ETJ	<i>Ephrem's Theological Journal</i>
IPPF	<i>Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide</i>
OCA	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
PIO	Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Roma
SC	<i>Scritture riferite nei Congressi</i>
SOCG	<i>Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali</i>
SOCP	<i>Scritture Originali della Congregazione Particolare dell'Indie e Cina</i>
UDD	Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation
CS	<i>Cleri sanctitati, De ritibus orientalibus, de personis pro Ecclesiis orientalibus, AAS 49 (1957) 433-558.</i>
Fonti, II-VIII	S. Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale, Codificazione Canonica Orientale (Prot. N. 410/37), Fonti, Serie II, Fascicolo VIII, <i>De Fontibus Juris Ecclesiastici Syro-Malankarensium</i> , a cura di P. J. Podipara, Vaticano 1937.

- Fonti*, II-IX S. Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale, Codificazione Canonica Orientale (Prot. N. 494/37), *Fonti*, Serie II, Fascicolo IX, *Fontes Juribus Canonici Syro-Malankarensium*, a cura di P. J. Podipara, Vaticano 1940.
- IRD* P. Pallath, *Important Roman Documents concerning the Catholic Church in India*, Kottayam 2004.
- Malankara* Synodal Acts and Voice of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, published from the major archiepiscopal curia.
- Synodal News* Official bulletin of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church.
- TheVartha-Manappusthakam* An account of the history of the Malabar Church between the years 1773 and 1786 with special emphasis on the events connected with the journey from Malabar to Rome via Lisbon and back undertaken by Mar Joseph Cariattil and Father Thomas Paremmakkal, written by Father Thomas Paremmakkal, translated into English with an introduction and notes by P. J. Podipara, *OCA* 190, Rome 1971.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Memory is an important faculty in human beings. If one loses one's memory, one can neither recognize one's parents, relatives and friends, nor locate one's home, city and country. This natural principle is valid even for ecclesial life. If one loses the ecclesial memories, one cannot recognize one's own Church, its venerable heritage and specific identity.

History, the recording of the collective memory of previous generations, permits the people of the present age to participate in the experiences of the past, which enable them to recognize their roots and to build the future, based on solid foundations as part of an organic process. Similarly the study of church-history emboldens the unprejudiced Christian faithful to recognize the truth, purify their memories, acknowledge the mistakes of the past, make reparation for injustices and master the challenges of the future.

Truth is the soul of history. Without truth, history is simple story or fiction. Historical facts cannot be obliterated or altered, but can be reinterpreted according to the wisdom, socio-cultural ethos and religious tradition of the historian. The pages of the history of a community may not only be composed of splendid achievements, exhilarating episodes and glorious triumphs, but also of despicable failures, horrendous crimes, aching tragedies and blunt errors. The humility to accept the truth and the ability to learn lessons from history are signs of courage and greatness. In this book, on the basis of available documents, historical facts concerning many Churches and communities are narrated as objectively as possible. However, the facts described in this work can be explicated, manipulated and propagated by each community according to its own point of view, but without eliminating the soul of history, namely the truth.

The first chapter of this book is entitled "The Catholic Church in India until the Sixteenth Century: the Church of St Thomas Christians", because until that time only the "apostolic see" of St Thomas existed in India and the Catholic Church there could be simply identified with the Church of the St Thomas Christians. In

spite of the difficulties stemming from the lack of exact historical data, in this chapter we provide a brief account of the apostolic origin, hierarchical structure, canonical status, administrative system, liturgical tradition and sacramental discipline as well as the faith and communion of the Church of St Thomas Christians until the sixteenth century.

In the second chapter we introduce the Latin Church in India, which had its real inception at the beginning of the sixteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries. An attempt is made to highlight the origin, nature and functioning of the two institutes, the Portuguese Padroado and the Roman Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, which were responsible for the evangelising ministry in India at that epoch. We consider the origin and growth of the Latin Church in India in the midst of jurisdictional conflicts and power struggles between the aforementioned two missionary agencies, which led to the gradual elimination of the Portuguese Padroado and the erection of the present Latin hierarchy under the Propaganda Fide, stimulating the rapid advancement of this Church.

The arrival of the Portuguese missionaries at the beginning of the sixteenth century opened a new chapter in the history of the Church of St Thomas Christians in India. The initially friendly relationship between the missionaries and the native Christians gradually transmuted into a contrast and collision of cultures, ecclesial traditions, theological visions and canonical institutes. In this struggle the Western missionaries always emerged as the victors because they had the Roman, royal, military and political support. In the third chapter we consider the activities of the Western missionaries in relation to the Church of St Thomas Christians and the main events that led to the division of this Church, which remained one and united until 1653, into Catholic and non-Catholic groups as well as the gradual decline of this Church until its final suppression in 1886 and the enrolment of the Catholic St Thomas Christians in the Latin archdiocese of Verapoly.

The fourth chapter deals with the re-birth of the Catholic section of the Church of St Thomas Christians under the new name Syro-Malabar Church. We describe the circumstances of the

separation of the Catholic St Thomas Christians from the Latin archdiocese of Verapoly and the erection of separate vicariates, the appointment of autochthonous bishops, the constitution of the Syro-Malabar hierarchy, the stupendous growth of the Syro-Malabar Church under the governance of indigenous bishops, the erection of different dioceses and ecclesiastical provinces, the elevation of the Syro-Malabar Church to the rank and dignity of a major archiepiscopal Church as well as the present juridical status of this Church.

The fifth chapter, which provides information concerning the origin of the Churches of Antiochene tradition in India, is mainly dedicated to the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. First of all we demonstrate how a section of the St Thomas Christians, after the Coonan Cross Oath in 1653, gradually abandoned the Catholic Church and entered into communion with the Syrian Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, embracing the "Jacobite monophysite" doctrines, the Antiochene liturgy and canonical discipline, and finally forming the Malankara Church. Then we consider the splintering of the Malankara Church into different Orthodox Churches of Antiochene tradition and the full communion of one group with the Roman Pontiff, forming a new Eastern particular Church under the name Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. We also highlight the nature and identity of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, the constitution of Syro-Malankara hierarchy, the growth and advancement of this Church, its elevation to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church and its present canonical status.

The book ends with a selected bibliography and three indexes. The author is confident that the present work will offer objective and well documented information concerning the Catholic Church in India and hence contribute to the better concord and collaboration of the three Indian Catholic Churches: Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara, based on truth, justice and charity, in mutual recognition and respect of fundamental rights, distinctive individuality, spiritual heritage and ecclesial identity.



## Chapter One

# THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN INDIA UNTIL THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY: THE CHURCH OF ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS

### Introduction

Until the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries in the sixteenth century the Catholic Church in India could be identified with the Church of St Thomas Christians. Since the Christians in India were not an exception to the general nature of the Indian population, which in ancient times did not cultivate the habit of recording even important occurrences or keeping historical documents, many aspects of the early history of the Church in India are shrouded in mystery. However it is possible to shed some light on the important aspects of the life and nature of the Indian Christians at that epoch. For the St Thomas Christians, Christianity was not simply a set of doctrines, concepts or dogmas, but a way of life (*margam*) to reach God the Father and to obtain salvation, which was realized by Jesus Christ, “the way, and the truth, and the life” (*Jn* 14: 6), through his paschal Mysteries and which was introduced into India by the Apostle Thomas (*Thoma margam*). The way or law of Thomas contained the faith, liturgy, spiritual life, discipline, traditions and customs, as well as the whole socio-political and cultural mode of life and activities of the St Thomas Christians. In this chapter an attempt is made to provide essential information concerning the apostolic origin and important aspects of the way of Thomas, including the hierarchical structure, territorial extension, mode of governance, liturgy and sacramental life, as well as the faith and communion of the St Thomas Christians up until their encounter with the Portuguese missionaries.

## 1. The Apostolic Origin of the Catholic Church in India

According to the vigorous, living and constant tradition, the Apostle Thomas, who confirmed his faith in the Risen Lord proclaiming him Lord and God (*Jn* 20: 28), reached South India in the middle of the first century and disseminated the Christian faith there. Tradition holds that the Apostle landed on the Malabar Coast near the ancient port of Muzaris (Cranganore) in 52 AD. He converted several thousands to Christ and founded seven Christian communities, namely in Cranganore, Palayur, Kottakkavu near Paravur, Kokkamangalam in south Pallippuram, Niranam near Tiruvalla, Quilon and Chayal near Nilackal. In 72 AD Thomas died a martyr at Mylapore near Madras in what is now the federal state of Tamilnadu, where his tomb is venerated even today. Since it is beyond the scope of this present work to attempt a comprehensive study of the apostolate of St Thomas in India, we shall only be concerned with certain relevant facts and circumstances, all of which are not evidently of equal importance.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1. Physical Possibility

The apostolate of St Thomas in South India would have been unthinkable if India had not been accessible to the inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world at that epoch. In fact, abundant documental historical evidence demonstrates that travel back and forth between India and the ancient Roman Empire via the sea route was very common even before the birth of Christ. There existed socio-cultural, commercial and political relationships between the two areas. The city Muzaris (modern Cranganore) on the Malabar Coast (South India) was one of world's principal ports and trade centres, from whence various spices were exported to the Greco-Roman world. Roman coins unearthed in large numbers in

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive analysis, B. Vadakkekara, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians: A Historiographical Critique*, Delhi 1995, revised edition, *Origin of Christianity in India: A Historiographical Critique*, Delhi 2007; G. Nedungatt, *Quest for the Historical Thomas Apostle of India: A Re-reading of the Evidence*, Bangalore 2008.

different parts of South India confirm such contacts.<sup>2</sup> In brief, Thomas could have reached South India in the first century AD without much difficulty.

## 1.2. Patristic Tradition

The Fathers of the Church like Origen (186-255), St Ephrem (306-373), St Gregory Nazianzen (329-390), Cyrillonia (d. 396), St Ambrose of Milan (c. 333-397), St John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), St Jerome (342-420), St Gaudentius of Brescia (410-427), St Paulinus of Nola (353-431), Jacob of Sarug (451-521), St Bede the Venerable (673-735), St Gregory of Tours (538-593), Gregory the Great (590-604) and St Isidore of Seville (c.560-636) refer directly or indirectly to the apostolate, martyrdom or burial of St Thomas in India.<sup>3</sup> Such testimonies reveal the early ecclesial consciousness of the Eastern and Western Fathers, who are neutral and qualified witnesses of a common tradition concerning the mission and death of St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Christ. Often the Fathers speak about the apostolate of St Thomas without providing specific topographical indications or other particulars, since in the early centuries of the Christian era his mission in India, the cradle of religions and the matrix of a rich civilization, was a known and indisputable fact.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. C. Dognini-I. Ramelli, *Gli Apostoli in India nella patristica e nella letteratura sanscrita*, Milano 2001, 13-43; S. H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, Volume I: Beginnings to 1500*, New York 1998, 31-32; S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, Cambridge 1984, 30-32; L. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, Cambridge 1982, 59-62; A. C. Perumalil, *The Apostles in India, Fact or Fiction?* Patna 1971, 3-33; P. Malekandathil, "St. Thomas Christians: A Historical Analysis of Their Origin and Development up to the 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD", in B. Puthur (ed.), *St. Thomas Christians and Nambudiris, Jews and Sangam Literature*, Kochi 2003, 20-25.

<sup>3</sup> For more than thirty patristic texts and their authoritative critical hermeneutics, see G. Nedungatt, *Quest for the Historical Thomas Apostle of India*, 177-253; for patristic tradition see also, X. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, Kottayam 1998, 33-37; C. Dognini-I. Ramelli, *Gli Apostoli in India*, 61-66; L. Zaleski, *Apostle Thomas in India: History, Tradition and Legend*, Mangalore 1912, 39-45; A. C. Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, 43-51; J. Pulurumpil, *St Thomas in India: Patristic Evidences*, Kottayam 2012, 216-315.

### 1.3. Liturgical Traditions

The liturgy of the Church preserves and transmits from generation to generation the faith and early traditions of the Church. The liturgies of both the East and the West directly or indirectly confirm the apostolate and martyrdom of the Apostle Thomas in India. The ancient Martyrologies and liturgical calendars associate Apostle Thomas with the Church in India. In fact, there is no ancient liturgical tradition in Christendom which does not have a celebration in honour of the Apostle who preached and embraced martyrdom in India.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.4. Apocryphal Writings

Ancient writings, such as the *Acts of Thomas* (early 3rd century), the *Doctrine of the Apostles* (3rd century) and *Passio Thomae* (4th century) refer to the mission and death of the Apostle Thomas in India. Considering the importance of the *Acts of Thomas*, originally written in Syriac in the third century, we present its essential content. The *Acts of Thomas* portrays the Apostle Thomas as a missionary, who reached India accompanied by an agent of the Indian king Gundapher (Gundaphorus). After his mission in the Kingdom of Gundapher, he travelled on to his final mission and death in the Kingdom of Misdeus (Mazdai) which tradition locates in Madras. In spite of the legendary and fictional nature of the *Acts of Thomas*, one can find in it a historical kernel, namely the preaching and death of the Apostle in India. Contemporary research has proved that a king named Gundapher lived in India in the first half of the first century, which proves that the *Acts of Thomas* is built around a substantial historical nucleus.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. E. Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas, An Inquiry with a Critical Analysis of the Acta Thomae*, London 1905, 18-68; L. Zaleski, *Apostle Thomas in India*, 27-29; X. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 38-40; cf. also *Martyrologium Romanum ad formam editionis typicae, scholiis Historicis instructum (Propylaeum ad acta Sanctorum)*, Bruxellis 1940, 349 & 658-659; *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, vol. 12 (1969) 538-539.

<sup>5</sup> For details, see S. H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 26-30; B. Vadakkekara, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians*, 162-177; for a critical

### 1.5. Local Traditions

Distinct memories concerning the arrival of Apostle Thomas and the foundation of the aforementioned seven Churches are still kept alive in the communities of those places. Moreover, the details of the mission, death and burial of the Apostle were preserved as folksongs and ballads already in very early ancient times. These were later committed to writing and are extant even today. Popular ballads like *Margamkalipattu* (the song-dance of the Way), *Rambanpattu* (Song of the Ramban) or *Thomaparvam* (ballad of Thomas) and *Veeradiansongs* (recited by a particular Hindu caste) which narrate the apostolate of St Thomas were sung and acted out on occasions such as the marriages or special feast days of the St Thomas Christians. Such testimonies, faithfully preserved and uninterruptedly transmitted from generation to generation, encompass the essential historical nucleus concerning the apostolate of St Thomas enshrined in the hearts of millions of people and not obliterated by the course of centuries. It is noteworthy that those who doubt the apostolate of Thomas in India because of the lack of contemporary historical evidence have failed to produce any documentary or archaeological proof demonstrating that the Apostle did not go to India.

### 1.6. The Tomb of the Apostle

According to tradition Thomas died a martyr at Mylapore and was buried there. After the death of St Thomas, Mylapore was an ancient centre of St Thomas Christians and the seat of their bishop for several years. The ancient tomb of Mylapore is the only tomb unanimously and consistently ascribed by the entire community of St Thomas Christians – both Catholics and non-Catholics – and even by non-Christians to the Apostle Thomas for more than 1938 years. The Carmelite missionary Paulino da S. Bartolomeo, who resided in Malabar from 14 November 1776 to 10 March 1789 and who declared that he had had “an opportunity of being better

acquainted with that country than my own", after his return to Italy, wrote:

All the Indians, both the Christians and the gentiles, affirmed that the mountain (of Mylapore) was the site where St Thomas the Apostle was killed. Their faith that St Thomas died at Mylapore, is as constant and vigorous as that of the Catholics in Europe, that St Peter died in Rome.<sup>6</sup>

The ancient tomb in Mylapore is the only known tomb on the whole globe qualified as having held the body of the Apostle Thomas. The uniqueness of the tomb of the Apostle at Mylapore and the manifest absence of rival tombs in India or anywhere else in the world confirm its genuineness.<sup>7</sup> If the tomb were not real and historical, but only a fabrication of the human imagination, the St Thomas Christians could have placed it in Kerala, not in an alien and distant location such as Mylapore in the present federal state of Tamilnadu. The tomb played a vital role in the spiritual life of the St Thomas Christians. There were regular pilgrimages to the tomb of the Apostle and before the Synod of Diamper (1599) the St Thomas Christian pilgrims used to take soil from the tomb for devotion and for blessing holy water.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.7. Jewish Presence

Even as early as the tenth century B.C. the Jews had considerable intercourse with South India. The language of the Jews at that epoch was Aramaic, the commercial language throughout the East and later the language of Our Lord. There were Jewish colonies in Cranganore, Paravur, Quilon, Muttam, Chenot,

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<sup>6</sup> Paulino da S. Bartolomeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, Roma 1796, 59-60.

<sup>7</sup> For more about the tomb and its significance, see A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. 1, Bangalore 1984, 49-60; B. Vadakkekara, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians*, 149-157 & 282-286; G. Nedungatt, *Quest for the Historical Thomas Apostle of India*, 304-333; cf also, A. E. Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, 69-100; L. Zaleski, *Apostle Thomas in India*, 71-86; A. C. Perumalil, *The Apostles in India*, 58-64.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Paulino da S. Bartolomeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, 60; Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 17.

etc. Such colonies might have represented an additional attraction for St Thomas to travel to India. The seven Churches founded by the Apostle on the Malabar Coast were situated in or near the Jewish colonies. It is reasonable to think that, as a Jew bound to announce the message of salvation primarily to the Jews (*Mt* 10: 6), St Thomas came and preached the Gospel first to the Jews of India in Aramaic and established churches in Jewish colonies.<sup>9</sup> Then he turned to the indigenous communities, consisting of Buddhists and Hindus, among whom were also some Brahmins. Hence the primitive St Thomas Christian community of India might have consisted of a Jewish Christian nucleus and a majority of those who had embraced the Christian faith from different sections of the native population.

As indicated above, current scholarship attests that there were Jewish settlements in South India at least at the dawn of Christian era. Even if in the future it is incontrovertibly proved that Jews were not present in South India in the early centuries, this will not affect the tradition concerning the mission of Apostle Thomas in any manner, because the Jewish presence was proposed by a few authors only as a hypothetical circumstance for his apostolate, but not as a necessary condition.

### 1.8. Ancient Christian Community

The existence, from the very first century itself, of a Christian community in South India later designated "St Thomas Christians", who have maintained the Christian faith amidst a vast majority of enticing non-Christian populations for more than nineteen centuries surmounting innumerable difficulties and enduring indescribable sufferings, is almost incontrovertible proof of the apostolate of St Thomas in South India. These Christians faithfully preserved and diligently observed throughout the centuries the

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. T. Puthiakunnel "Jewish Colonies of India Paved the Way for St Thomas", in J. Vellian (ed.) *The Malabar Church, OCA* 186, Rome 1970, 187-191; L. Zaleski, *Apostle Thomas in India*, 200-202; L. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 62-63; for the early presence of Jews in Kerala, see also the article of P. M. Jussay, "The Jews in Kerala", in B. Puthur (ed.), *St. Thomas Christians and Nambudiris, Jews and Sangam Literature*, Kochi 2003, 126-137.

“way or law of Thomas”, because they were fully convinced that this way had been taught to their forefathers by the Apostle Thomas himself. It is no wonder that Pantaeus, a distinguished scholar of Alexandria who visited India in 189-190, attested to the presence of Christians in India already in the second century.<sup>10</sup> The existence of a Christian community in India from the earliest centuries is a historical fact that can be proved beyond all shadow of a doubt. Even many of those who doubt the apostolate of St Thomas do not deny the existence of a Christian community in India from this early period onwards, whatever the precise name of the community may have been.

### **1.9. Solemn Ecclesiastical Confirmation by the Supreme Authority of the Church**

Although the statements of the supreme authority of the Church cannot be considered as historical proofs for the apostolate of St Thomas in India, they have great relevance, since the said authority freely makes its own even the constant tradition of a Christian community, not in a blind manner, but only if it is historically founded and objectively credible. The tradition concerning the apostolic origin of the Church of St Thomas Christians has obtained the solemn ecclesiastical confirmation of the supreme authority only because it is very impelling and reliable. From the fifteenth century onwards one can find several papal letters, decrees and constitutions, addressed to the bishops, archdeacons or the Christian faithful of the Indian Church, that refer to the apostolate of St Thomas in India. Here we present only a few of these important statements of the popes and the Holy See on the apostolic origin of the Catholic Church in India.

Pope Leo XIII erected the Latin hierarchy in India under the authority of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, with the apostolic letter *Humanae salutis auctor* of 1 September 1886.

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<sup>10</sup> Pantaeus left behind nothing in writing, but we know about his visit from the reports of Eusebius of Caesarea and St. Jerome. See *PG* 20, 456 and *PL* 22, 667 respectively. For a correct interpretation of these texts, see G. Nedungatt, *Quest for the Historical Thomas Apostle of India*, 181-182.



Referring to the universal evangelizing mission of the apostles, the Pope stated:

It has been handed down to memory that this task of apostolic ministry in the vast regions of India fell on Thomas. As ancient literary monuments testify, after Christ's ascension into heaven, Thomas travelled first to Ethiopia, Persia, Hyrcania and then finally to the peninsula beyond the Indus, and after undertaking a very arduous journey, attended with most serious hardships, was the first to enlighten those peoples with the light of Christian truth, and after having rendered the testimony of his blood to the supreme Pastor of souls, he was called away to his everlasting reward in heaven. It is quite evident that from that time onwards India never altogether ceased to honour this deserving Apostle: the name and praises of Thomas were wont to be celebrated in the most ancient books of liturgical prayers as well as in other monuments of those Churches [...].<sup>11</sup>

In the apostolic constitution *Romani Pontifices* of 21 December 1923, by which the Syro-Malabar hierarchy was erected, Pope Pius XI affirmed that Syro-Malabar Church "holds a noble position among the Oriental Churches because it traces its origin back to the most ancient Christian communities which received the light of the Gospel from the Apostle Thomas". After citing the aforementioned statement of Leo XIII, the Pope declared:

The fame of the preaching and martyrdom of Thomas has particularly been related to the Syro-Malabar region. The Christian faithful who inhabit that region have always been called "the Christians of Saint Thomas", by which appellation, it is worth noting that, only in India they (the faithful) have been distinguished, and there exist among them many ancient temples (churches) dedicated to the same Apostle, and very many Christian faithful are found who bestow the name Thomas upon their children at Baptism.<sup>12</sup>

On 31 December 1952, on the occasion of the nineteenth centenary celebration of the arrival St Thomas in India, Pope Pius XII stated:

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<sup>11</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Humanae salutis auctor*, in *Leonis XIII, Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. 5, Romae 1886, 165; *IRD*, 152-155.

<sup>12</sup> Pius XI, Ap. Const. *Romani pontifices*, *AAS* 7 (1924) 258; *IRD*, 208-209.

Nineteen hundred years have passed since the Apostle came to India and in word and deed and utter self-sacrifice bore witness to Christ in your land. Mighty was the power of God working in him. During the centuries that India was cut off from the West and despite many trying vicissitudes, the Christian communities formed by the Apostle conserved intact the legacy he left them, and as soon as the sea-passage – at the close of the 15<sup>th</sup> 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 of St. Thomas Christians, and We are happy on this occasion to acknowledge and bear witness to it. It is our hope that their vigorous activity, fruitful in so many good works, and their apostolic spirit, to which the Catholic India is indebted for so many ministers of Christ's Kingdom and consecrated virgins, may continue to characterize you and advance the growth of religious life.<sup>13</sup>

As we have seen, the tomb of St Thomas in Madras-Mylapore, to which no Christian community in the world has made any claim, furnishes incontrovertible evidence for the apostolate and martyrdom of the Apostle in South India. During his stay in India Pope John Paul II visited the tomb on 5 February 1986, where he also made a brief discourse. Quoting the words of the Apostle, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (*Jn* 11: 16), the Pope asserted:

According to tradition, at this very place, which is now called Saint Thomas Mount, the great Apostle of India fulfilled his own exhortation. Out of love for Jesus, here in Madras, Saint Thomas died for Christ. He gave his life as a martyr for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.<sup>14</sup>

After a historical, theological and canonical study conducted by a Pontifical Commission presided over by the then Secretary of State Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, on 28 May 1987 Pope John Paul II wrote a letter to the bishops of India in order "to ensure a just

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<sup>13</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Nuntius Radiophonicus*, AAS 45 (1953) 96-97.

<sup>14</sup> *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX, 1, Città del Vaticano 1986, 325.

and fair settlement” of the inter-Church problems. In this letter the Pope confirmed the apostolic origin of the St Thomas Christians:

Since very ancient times a considerable community of Christians, known as the “St Thomas Christians”, has existed in southern India. Indeed, there is a very strong tradition that St Thomas the Apostle himself visited and laboured in India, both in the extreme south and in what is known today as the Madras-Mylapore area. There is even a tomb in Mylapore which is venerated as his resting place. Later on, at various times, the Church in India was strengthened by other groups of Christians from the Middle East who became assimilated into the Church already there.<sup>15</sup>

In the discourse on the occasion of the *ad limina* visit of the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara bishops on 25 August 1990, the Pope employed a poetic, yet theologically and biblically rich expression to indicate the apostolic origin of the St Thomas Christians. The Holy Father affirmed: “Truly it may be said that, through you, your father in the faith, Thomas, meets Peter and exchanges with him the “holy kiss” (2 Cor 13: 12), so as to be comforted and confirmed in the service of the Gospel”.<sup>16</sup> In Catholic theology there is no doubt about the fact that the Bishop of Rome is the successor of the Apostle Peter. Although bishops are successors of the apostles in a general manner, it is impossible to deny the special relationship of the Indian Eastern bishops to the Apostle Thomas, their Father in the faith. So the Pope rightly compared the meeting between himself and the Indian Eastern bishops to an encounter between St Peter and St Thomas.

In the apostolic constitution *Quae maiori*, by which on 16 December 1992 the Syro-Malabar Church was elevated to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church, the Pope acknowledged that this Church “as the constant tradition holds, owed its origin to the preaching of the Apostle, St Thomas [...]”.<sup>17</sup> It is remarkable that Pope John Paul II ratified the Indian tradition in an apostolic

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<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, *Letter*, IRD, 246. This letter has not been published in any of the official organs of the Holy See.

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Discourse*, AAS 83 (1991) 198; see also *L'Osservatore Romano*, 26 August 1990.

<sup>17</sup> John Paul II, Ap. Const. *Quae maiori*, AAS 85 (1993) 398-399.

letter, written for the universal Church. In *Tertio millennio adveniente*, published on 10 November 1994 in preparation for the Great Jubilee of 2000, the Pope stated:

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.<sup>18</sup>

Again on 8 January 1996, in the discourse to the Syro-Malabar bishops on the occasion of the opening of their special synod held in Rome, the Pope declared: "The Syro-Malabar Church, born into the faith from the preaching of the Apostle Thomas, is one of the ecclesial families in which the variety of the Christian East is articulated".<sup>19</sup> After the conclusion of the synod, on 18 January 1996, when the bishops of the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches met the Pope for the official audience of the *ad limina* visit, he reiterated: "Your common origins go back to the very origins of Christianity, to the preaching of the glorious Apostle Thomas".<sup>20</sup> Similarly in the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* published on 6 November 1999 the Pope asserted:

From Jerusalem, the Church spread to Antioch, to Rome and beyond. It reached Ethiopia in the South, Scythia in the North and India in the East, where tradition has it that Saint Thomas the Apostle went in the year 52 A.D. and founded Churches in South India.<sup>21</sup>

Such constant and coherent statements not only in discourses and speeches, but also in apostolic letters and authoritative constitutions demonstrate that, as far as the Holy See is concerned, the apostolic origin of the Church of St Thomas Christians is a reliable and recognized fact.

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<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 10 November 1994, no. 25, *AAS* 87 (1995) 21.

<sup>19</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, lunedì-martedì 8-9 gennaio 1996, 4.

<sup>20</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, venerdì 19 gennaio 1996, 5.

<sup>21</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 9, *AAS* 92 (2000) 460.

As a conclusion of this section it is possible to state that the accessibility of the Greco-Roman world to South India in the first century, the common testimony of both the Western and the Eastern Fathers of the Church, the ancient liturgical traditions of the whole of Christendom, the apocryphal writings, the tomb of the Apostle at Mylapore, the constant and uninterrupted Indian tradition, local literary and art forms, different archaeological and epigraphic elements, the presence of Jewish colonies and the indubitable presence of a Christian community in South India from the very first century itself, concur and converge in affirming the essential historical core of the mission, martyrdom and burial of the Apostle Thomas in India. The supreme authority of the Catholic Church could not but recognize and confirm such an impelling, coherent, constant and historically founded tradition concerning the mission of St Thomas in India.

## 2. Hierarchical Structure and Juridical Status

In the early Church the apostles appointed deacons, presbyters and other sacred ministers to continue the ministry of Christ in the Christian communities they founded. The “apostolic see” of St Thomas existed in India from the very first century on. Like the other apostles, St Thomas, who had disseminated the Christian faith in South India, also ordained sacred ministers to succeed him in the Christian communities that he had established.<sup>22</sup> Later, however, for various historical, ecclesiastical and canonical reasons and for centuries on end, the St Thomas Christians had to depend on the patriarch of the Church of the East

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal, (St Thomas Christians)*, 2nd edition, Kottayam 1992, 62, 121-123 & 147-149; *The Travancore State Manual*, edited by V. Nagam Aiya, vol. 2, New Delhi-Madras 1989, 122 & 137 (pages 135-223 contain the contribution of T. Mackenzie, “History of Christianity in Travancore”); P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Alleppey 1976, 24; *The Thomas Christians*, London-Bombay 1970, 30; J. Kollaparambil, “Sources on the Hierarchical Structure of the St Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period”, in B. Puthur (ed.), *The Life and Nature of the St. Thomas Christian Church in the Pre-Diamper Period*, Kochi 2000, 161-163; J. Kollaparambil, *The Sources of the Syro-Malabar Law*, edited by S. Kokkaravalayil, Kottayam 2015, 447-453.

in the Persian Empire for the appointment and consecration of bishops.

### **2.1. Hierarchical Relationship with the Persian Church**

Cultural and commercial relations existed between South India and Persia from very early times, even before the dawn of the Christian era. Until the rise of Islam, Aramaic or Chaldean (Syriac) was the commercial language of the East, including South India. In addition to such commercial relationships, there emerged a spiritual bond between the Churches in the Persian Empire and those in South India due to the direct or indirect apostolate of St Thomas. According to ancient tradition, Addai, the disciple of St Thomas, founded the Church in Edessa and Addai's disciple Mari evangelised Seleucia-Ctesiphon. The Church in Persia holds that St Thomas visited Persia on his way to India and founded the first Christian community there. Thus from the apostolic period there emerged a spiritual relationship between the Church in South India and the Churches in the Persian Empire, all of which began to venerate St Thomas as their direct or indirect Apostle and common patron.

In the early Church, some sees gradually emerged as important ecclesiastical centres because of their apostolic origin, evangelization of other nations (as mother Churches), favourable geographical situation, political, civil and cultural importance as well as flourishing ecclesial life. This process resulted in the groupings of Churches into provinces headed by metropolitans and later into larger circumscriptions like patriarchates administered by patriarchs. Consequently, small Churches became dependent on such great ecclesiastical centres. Within the Roman Empire, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, Jerusalem and Constantinople became first metropolitan sees and then patriarchates. In this context, Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the capital of the Persian Empire, which comprised Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Persia (Iran) emerged as the primatial see and the ecclesiastical centre of the Churches outside the Roman Empire. In the Synod of Seleucia in 410 the metropolitan of Seleucia-Ctesiphon was acknowledged as the head

of all the Churches of the Persian Empire.<sup>23</sup> It seems that during the period of such regional organization the Church in South India, which had a cultural, spiritual and Thomistic relationship with the Churches in the Persian Empire, accepted the primacy of the "Great Metropolitan" or "Catholicos" of Seleucia Ctesiphon.

As a matter of fact the hierarchical communion of the Church of St Thomas Christians with the primate or patriarch of the Churches in the Persian Empire became a necessity because of the legislation of the early ecumenical councils and general synods which exclusively reserved the election of bishops to the provincial synod canonically convoked and presided over by the metropolitan. No episcopal consecration was possible without the presence of the metropolitan and two other bishops or at least three bishops with the written consent of the metropolitan.<sup>24</sup> Similarly the metropolitans had to be ordained by the "catholicos" or patriarch. Therefore in its early years the small Indian Church which did not have a metropolitan and a provincial synod could not have canonically elected and consecrated bishops without depending on its sister Churches.

## 2.2. Chaldean Patriarch as a Figurehead

As a consequence of the aforementioned circumstances, most probably from the fourth century onwards bishops came from the Church of the East, which also shared the same Thomistic liturgical and spiritual heritage.<sup>25</sup> The channel of Persian

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<sup>23</sup> The Synod of Mar Isac (410 AD), c. 12, J. B. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale ou Recueil de Synodes Nestoriens*, Paris 1902, 266; cf. also S. Rassam, *Christianity in Iraq*, new edition, Herefordshire 2010, 35-36.

<sup>24</sup> See Apostolic Canon 1; Council of Nicaea (325) cc. 4, 6; Synod of Antioch (341) cc. 16, 19, 23; Constantinople (394) c. 1; Carthage (419) c. 13, 49; Nicaea II (887) c. 3; Constantinople IV (869-870) c. 22; for detailed analysis, see P. Pallath, *Local Episcopal Bodies in East and West*, Kottayam 1997, 53-60. Practically this was also the discipline of the Assyrian Church of the East, see the Synod of Mar Isac (410 AD) canon 1, J. B. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale ou Recueil de Synodes Nestoriens*, 263.

<sup>25</sup> P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 27-28; *The Thomas Christians*, 63-64; J. Kollaparambil, *The Sources of the Syro-Malabar Law*, 101-110.

ecclesiastical authority in India was through the bishopric of Rewardashir (Fars), which was strategically located on the direct sea route to India. Between 410 and 420 this bishopric was elevated to the status of a metropolitan Church and was given jurisdiction over the Indian Church.<sup>26</sup> Hence, from the beginning of the fifth century the metropolitan of Rewardashir nominated bishops in India. Patriarch Isoyahb III (649-660) terminated the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Rewardashir over the Indian Church which was constituted as an autonomous metropolitan Church, coming directly under the catholicos-patriarch.<sup>27</sup> From that time on the hierarchy of the Indian Church was headed by a metropolitan of all India,<sup>28</sup> who had jurisdiction over the whole of India. Patriarch Timothy I (780-823) confirmed the provision of Isoyahb III and reserved the right to ordain the metropolitan of all India to the patriarch himself.<sup>29</sup>

It is true that the patriarch of the Church of the East was the canonical head of the Church of St Thomas Christians, but he did not intervene in the administration of the Church, nor did he exercise any jurisdictional powers. His role was practically limited to the appointment and consecration of the Indian metropolitan. Even in this respect the St Thomas Christians enjoyed a certain freedom. Normally the Indian metropolitan was not elected by the patriarchal synod but selected by a delegation of St Thomas Christians from among the Chaldean clergy. With regard to the

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. S. H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 267-268.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. S. H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 257 & 269; J. Kollaparambil, "Sources on the Hierarchical Structure of the St Thomas Christian Church", 167-168.

<sup>28</sup> J. Kollaparambil, "Sources on the Hierarchical Structure of the St Thomas Christian Church", 168; *The Sources of the Syro-Malabar Law*, 111-115.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. The letter of the Patriarch to the archdeacon, head of the faithful in India, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 168, Luvain 1957, 121; partial English trans., J. Kollaparambil, "Sources on the Hierarchical Structure of the St Thomas Christian Church", 168; *The Sources of the Syro-Malabar Law*, 120-121; see also P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 31; *The Thomas Christians*, 65-66; S. H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 353.



manner of the selection of Indian bishop Prof. J. Kollaparambil states:

As in the secular life, so too in the ecclesiastical, the Christians of St Thomas had a sort of individuality and autonomy. True, the Church of India had been counted as one of the provinces of the Chaldean Church. Yet, as far as the Indian Church was concerned, the Chaldean patriarch was only a figurehead, functioning as a convenient intermediary in her communion with the other apostolic Churches. From time to time, when episcopal succession happened to be broken in their Church, the Malabarians used to send delegations to the Chaldean patriarch with request for bishops. When the patriarch was disposed to grant the request, he usually allowed the delegates themselves to select the candidates from among the Chaldean clergy.<sup>30</sup>

In truth, the patriarch respected the autonomy of the Indian Church to a certain extent even with regard to the appointment of bishops, by permitting the Indian delegation to select the candidate, instead of electing him in the synod.

### 2.3. Metropolitan as a Spiritual Head

Once appointed, the Indian metropolitan was fully autonomous. The Church of the East had two kinds of metropolitans: electoral metropolitans and autonomous missionary metropolitans. Electoral metropolitans were dominant in the domestic administration of the Church and participated in the patriarchal synod. Missionary metropolitans, who were located in distant regions, were virtually independent of the control of the mother Church in Persia. Missionary metropolitans were empowered even to consecrate new bishops in their territories and were entitled to be assisted by archdeacons chosen from the indigenous clergy.<sup>31</sup> Evidently the metropolitan of India was included in the category of autonomous missionary metropolitans, who had no obligation to participate in the patriarchal synod in Persia. In fact the Chaldean metropolitans of the St Thomas

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<sup>30</sup> J. Kollaparambil, *The St Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653*, Kottayam 1981, 5; *The Sources of the Syro-Malabar Law*, 260.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. S. H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 449-450.

Christians exercised their ministry until their death and never returned to their country.

The St Thomas Christians considered the Chaldean prelates, who knew the East Syrian rite and liturgical language very well, as bishops of “their own nation and rite”.<sup>32</sup> The Chaldean metropolitans, who naturally had a life-long appointment and must have acquired a certain familiarity with the customs, culture and socio-political life of the St Thomas Christians, were chiefly occupied with the *munus sanctificandi*, the celebration of the holy Mysteries. The metropolitan was only the spiritual head of the St Thomas Christians, who like the sages of India led an ascetical and contemplative life, without intervening in the administration and other temporal affairs of the Church.

#### 2.4. Archdeacon as Real Head and Governor

The effective leader and real governor of the Indian Church was the “archdeacon of all India” who was always a celibate priest from among the St Thomas Christians and who practically governed the Church except in matters that needed the exercise of episcopal Order. He alone headed the Church during the prolonged vacancies of the metropolitan see. Regarding the status of the archdeacon J. Kollaparambil affirms:

Under the foreign metropolitan, the archdeacon of All-India, as the only infra-episcopal dignitary and the royally privileged national head of the St Thomas Christians, was practically governing the Church of India both in ecclesiastical and civil spheres. True, the metropolitan was the spiritual head of the Church. The archdeacon was only participating in the jurisdiction of the metropolitan, but to such a degree that practically nothing except the power of Order remained for the metropolitan. The whole power of jurisdiction was exercised by the archdeacon.<sup>33</sup>

The archdeacon was the “ex-officio teacher” of the St Thomas Christians and enjoyed legislative, judicial and administrative

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 107-108.

<sup>33</sup> J. Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India: A Historico-Juridical Study*, Rome 1972, 253-254; cf. also pp. 15 & 261-262.

powers.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore he had many other rights and privileges such as the administration of the vacant see, presentation of candidates for the holy Orders, appointment of pastors and enthronement of bishops.<sup>35</sup> Prof. A. M. Mundadan is also categorical about the prerogatives of the archdeacon:

As regards the archdeacon of all India, he was vested with even greater authority than the East-Syrian archdeacon, owing to the special organizational structure of the Church of India, namely the East-Syrian metropolitans at the head of the hierarchy were foreigners in a new land quite different from theirs in language, customs, religious beliefs, socio-political set-up and so on. For governing the Church, he had to depend almost fully on his assistant, the indigenous archdeacon. This circumstance gave the archdeacon *a free hand in the government of this Church and enabled him to exercise the whole jurisdiction*. Thus the archdeacons enjoyed very great authority among the Christians of St Thomas in India.<sup>36</sup>

In fact, in India the archdeacon was the royally privileged unifying head of the St Thomas Christians who preserved, protected and promoted the individuality, identity and heritage of this Church, and safeguarded its autonomy, prestige and independence, even though the bishops came from the Church of the East.

As a result of the strenuous efforts of the Western missionaries, the glorious institute of the Indian archdeaconate became extinct with the death of archdeacon Mathew Parampil (Pallil) on 20 March 1706.<sup>37</sup> From what Thomas Paremmakkal, the administrator of the St Thomas Christians from 1787 to 1799, writes about the subsequent tragic situation, the role and importance of the archdeacon becomes evident:

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. J. Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India*, 187-205.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. J. Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India*, 207-235.

<sup>36</sup> A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 181; emphasis is mine.

<sup>37</sup> For the history of the archdiaconate under the Latin prelates until its extinction, J. Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India*, 111-175.

The great defect in our community was the absence of a head. In the ancient days when they had a head and leader from among themselves the community of the *Mapilas* (Christians) remained united and acted in all things with one mind. But now contrary to their ancient practice they are divided and have also suffered the loss of their ancient customs.<sup>38</sup>

Paremmakkal attributes all the troubles in the Malabar community to the liquidation of the archdiaconate: "From this and from other things that take place in Malabar it is clear that the community cannot do anything without its head. Therefore, everyone can understand, as was said above, how strong the community could become if it had a head who himself was of the community".<sup>39</sup> According to the writings of Paremmakkal, which reflect the self-consciousness of the St Thomas Christians, the head and leader of their community was not the Chaldean metropolitan but the archdeacon.

In brief, when the Portuguese arrived at the beginning of the sixteenth century the Church of St Thomas Christians existed as an autonomous metropolitan Church, which was headed by a metropolitan of all India, nominated by the Chaldean patriarch and governed by an archdeacon of all India, who was appointed from among the indigenous clergy. The Chaldean patriarch was considered only as a 'spiritual head', having no direct jurisdiction in India, with the exception of the appointment of bishops. In the particular historical and ecclesiastical context of the time, the metropolitan-archdeacon combination helped to streamline the effective organization and governance of the Indian metropolitan Church.

## 2.5. The Apostolic See of St Thomas

The see of St Thomas Christians was not tied to any particular place until 1565. Since the name, "the Church of St Thomas Christians" was not bound to any particular place and since the title of their metropolitan, the metropolitan of all India, did not derive

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<sup>38</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 35.

<sup>39</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 55.

from any particular city, the metropolitans could have resided in any of the ancient Christian centres in India such as Mylapore, Cranganore, Quilon, Angamaly, etc. It is almost certain that the metropolitan of all India resided for very many years in Mylapore, where St Thomas had embraced martyrdom in 72 AD and where his tomb is venerated even today.<sup>40</sup>

At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century the residence of the metropolitan was in Cranganore. When the Portuguese military erected a fortress in Cranganore around 1536-1537, the St Thomas Christians left the city because they were not only prohibited from observing their own rite and the "law of Thomas" but were also coerced into conforming in everything to the Roman rite and Western culture.<sup>41</sup> Subsequently in 1565, according to the request of Metropolitan Mar Abraham, complying with the directive of Pope Pius IV (1559-1565), the Chaldean Patriarch Mar Abdiso fixed the residence of the principal metropolitan of the St Thomas Christians in Angamaly.<sup>42</sup> From 1568 on, Mar Abraham, the last Chaldean metropolitan of the St Thomas Christians, began to reside in Angamaly. Thus at that epoch the see of St Thomas Christians came to be known as the archdiocese of Angamaly.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. F. Ros, "Relação sobre a Serra", written in 1604, British Library MS Add. 9853, ff. 86-99, original text with English trans., "A Report on the Serra", in G. Nedungatt (ed.), *The Synod of Diamper Revisited*, Rome 2001, 303 and 313; F. Dionysio, "Informação da cristandade de São Thomé que está no Malavar, reino da Índia Oriental", *Documenta Indica*, XI (1970) 134-136; Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, Romae 1794, 125-146.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. F. Ros, "Relação sobre a Serra", 323-325; A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 178-179.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. The letter of Pope Pius IV to Patriarch Abdiso dated 23 February 1565, in ASV, Archiv. de Castello, Armad. VII, Caps. V, n. 9; printed text in S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam*, Romae 1902, 69-71. The letter of the Patriarch in J. Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, vol. XI, Romae 1970, 41\*.

### 3. Territory and Jurisdiction

Until the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries in the sixteenth century, only the Church of St Thomas Christians existed in India. Hence there was no question of any territorial limitation of this Church. In fact the "Metropolitan of All India", whose see was not fixed to any particular place, freely exercised jurisdiction over the St Thomas Christians in *tota India*. According to the custom of the time, which permitted vast territories, even different nations under the same diocese, the Indian Church was not canonically divided into suffragan dioceses, although sometimes the metropolitan of all India was assisted by more than one bishop in the governance of the Church.<sup>43</sup>

#### 3.1. Official Title of Metropolitans and Archdeacons

As indicated above, the official title of the metropolitan of India was "the Metropolitan and Gate of All India". This title was also used in its short forms as the "Gate of India", "Head of India", "Metropolitan of India", "Bishop of India" etc.<sup>44</sup> In the Vatican Syriac Codex XXII we read about Mar Jacob who was the bishop of India from the year 1301:

Mar Jacob, Bishop Metropolitan, Prelate and Ruler of the Holy See of the Apostle Thomas, namely our Ruler and that of the whole Holy Church of the Christians of India.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For example, in 1504 the Metropolitan of India Mar John had Mar Thomas, Mar Jabalaha, Mar Denha and Mar Jacob as his suffragans. Cf. The letter dated India 1504 which the four bishops sent to Mar Elias, their Patriarch, in J. S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino Vaticana*, tom. III, Romae 1725, 589-599; also in S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, 588-603.

<sup>44</sup> P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church* 32; *The Thomas Christians*, 69-70; E. R. Hambye, "Medieval Christianity in India: the Eastern Church", in H. C. Perumalil & E. R. Hambye (eds.), *Christianity in India*, Alleppey 1972, 33.

<sup>45</sup> "Mar Jacobus Episcopus Metropolita, praesul, & rector Sanctae Sedis Divi Thomae Apostoli; id est, rector noster, ac totius Sanctae Ecclesiae Christianorum Indiae". Vatican Syriac Codex 22, in J. S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Apostolicae Vaticanae Codicum Manuscriptorum catalogus*, pars 1, tom. 2, Romae 1758, 187-188.

Even Mar Abraham, the last Chaldean metropolitan of the St Thomas Christians, sometimes used the titles “Metropolitan of the ancient Christianity of St Thomas in East India” and “Metropolitan of All India”,<sup>46</sup> and the native Bishop Alexander Parampil, vicar apostolic of the Catholic St Thomas Christians from 1663 to 1687, used the ancient titles like “Bishop of All India”, “Bishop, Gate of All India”, “Metropolitan of All India”.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly the title of the archdeacon of the St Thomas Christians also indicated the Indian dimension of his jurisdiction. In the Chaldean tradition each bishop had an archdeacon, but in India there was only one archdeacon, namely the archdeacon of the metropolitan of all India, even when there was more than one bishop. His official titles were “archdeacon of India”, “archdeacon of all India” and “archdeacon N., gate of all India”.<sup>48</sup> Even in the Portuguese period the archdeacons used their official title, the archdeacon of all India. For example, archdeacon George of the Cross (1593-1640) in his letters used the titles “George Archdeacon of India”, “Archdeacon George of All India”, “Humble George Archdeacon son of Your Holiness, Governor of India”. The signature of archdeacon Thomas Parampil (1640-1656, excommunicated) appears constantly as “Thomas Archdeacon of All India”. The signature of the last Catholic archdeacon Mathew Parampil (1678-1706) was “Mathew Archdeacon of All India” or “Mathew Archdeacon, Gate of All India”.<sup>49</sup> In brief, the very titles of the Indian metropolitans and archdeacons clearly indicate the all India dimension of their jurisdiction.

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<sup>46</sup> G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, *Orientalia Christiana* XXIX, Roma 1933, 194; J. Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India*, 225.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, 88; J. Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India*, 225.

<sup>48</sup> J. Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India*, 223; E. R. Hambye, “Medieval Christianity in India”, 34.

<sup>49</sup> These titles of Archdeacons with their Syriac original can be found in J. Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India*, 223-224.

### 3.2. The Self-awareness of Chaldean Patriarchs

The Chaldean patriarchs were also aware of the all India jurisdiction of the Indian metropolitan. In the profession of faith made by the patriarch elect John (Simon) Sulaqa on 15 February 1553 he presented himself as the successor of the Patriarch Simon Bar Mama, who had jurisdiction in the whole of India. In the bull of confirmation, *Divina disponente clementia*, Pope Julius III (1550-1555) acknowledged the all India jurisdiction of the Chaldean patriarch. In fact Sulaqa was confirmed as the patriarch of

Mosul, the Islands of Tigris and of other cities and oriental countries which are subject to the same Patriarch, as well as the monasteries of the same nation existing in Sin, Masin and Calicut and also all India which also are subject to the same Patriarch.<sup>50</sup>

In the bull, *Cum nos nuper* of 28 April 1553 with which Pope Julius III imposed the pallium on the patriarch, his all India jurisdiction was again recognized.<sup>51</sup> Thus in both these documents the Roman Pontiff at least indirectly confirmed the all India jurisdiction of the St Thomas Christian Church.

Patriarch Mar Abdiso, also called Ebediesus (1555-1567), successor of Sulaqa also personally went to Rome and obtained confirmation from Pope Pius IV (1559-1565) on 7 March 1562. In his profession of faith made in Rome, "Ebediesus [...] now by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See the Primate or Patriarch of the city of Mosul in East-Assyria, under whose jurisdiction are included many metropolitans and diocesan bishops" enumerates the metropolitan and episcopal sees in Ottoman Empire, other sees in the kingdom of Persia and finally the cities of India, not even

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<sup>50</sup> "Postmodum vero ecclesia patriarchali de Muzal in Syria orientali cui bonae memoriae Simon Maria (Bar-Mama) Patriarcha de Muzal et insulae Tigris ac caeterarum civitatum et terrarum orientalium eidem Patriarchae subjectarum, necnon monasteriorum ejusdem nationis in Sin, Massin et Calicuth ac *tota India* existentium eidem etiam Patriarchae subditorum dum viveret praesidebat [...]" S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, 17-18; *Subsidium ad Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, Alleppey 1903, 4.

<sup>51</sup> S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, 24-27.



excepting the territories under Portuguese dominion, Cochin, Cannur, Goa, Calicut and Cranganore.<sup>52</sup>

Since the Patriarch could not remain in Rome for participating in the council of Trent, on 23 July 1562 he made a pledge that he would accept and observe all the decisions of the same Council.<sup>53</sup> While the profession of faith of the Patriarch asserting jurisdiction in India was read in the Council of Trent between the session XXI and XXII, the Portuguese ambassador to the Council protested, while the Pope or Roman authorities made no objection.<sup>54</sup> As Cardinal Alexander Barnabò, Prefect of Propaganda Fide later admitted, all these facts “demonstrate that at that epoch not only the Holy See did not contest the right which the said Patriarch affirmed to have in India, but also recognized it.”<sup>55</sup>

### 3.3. Testimonies of Some Prominent Western Missionaries

Until the sixteenth century only the Church of St Thomas Christians existed in India and hence the metropolitan of all India and the archdeacon of all India freely exercised jurisdiction over the St Thomas Christians in the whole of India without any limitation or impediment, irrespective of the place of their residence. In a letter written in defence of his jurisdiction in 1607, Francis Ros SJ, the first Latin bishop (1599-1624) of the St Thomas Christians, clearly pointed out that although the different metropolitans had to change their residence due to adverse circumstances, they had always kept up their all India jurisdiction and title. He stated:

It is certain that the metropolitan of India had his see at Mylapore, where it continued for many years. Afterwards, wars, plagues and other troubles intervening, and paganism and Islam (Mourama) prevailing in the region of Mylapore, the Christians with their

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, 65; cf. also Rome, Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Ponenze 1865*, 274.

<sup>53</sup> G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'Unione*, 62-63.

<sup>54</sup> G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'Unione*, 39, footnote 7.

<sup>55</sup> Rome, Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Ponenze 1865*, 275.

prelates left the ancient Seat, and went to various parts [...]. Those who came to Malabar joined the descendants of those who had been made Christians there by the Apostle St Thomas [...]. And as the Patriarch of Babylon used to send bishops and archbishops, they continued to our own times [...].

But the bishops [...] always kept their ancient title of metropolitan of India as is clear from many books, and many signed documents of Mar Abraham which are in my possession [...].

Just as the prelates of the Serra from ancient time had metropolitan rights in the whole of India [...] and suffragan bishops, the prelate of the Serra had his proper diocese which even in the time of the Portuguese included Mylapore, Travancore, Quilon, Cranganore exclusively and the hinterlands of those places, as is evident from the ancient books of this Church, from the testimonies gathered juridically by me, and from the tradition there is about it from time immemorial.<sup>56</sup>

An accurate analysis of the writings of Ros about the territory and jurisdiction of the Church of St Thomas Christians permitted Prof. A. M. Mundadan to arrive at the conclusion that “There seems to be little doubt about the fact that the see of St Thomas Christians was known for generations as the metropolitan see of ALL INDIA, and the metropolitans were referred to by the same qualifying title. As for the extent of the territory, we would suggest that there was no proper delimitation of territory as there was no need for it before the arrival of the Portuguese. [...] there is nothing wrong if one says that the whole of India was the territory of the see or the ecclesiastical province of India”.<sup>57</sup>

Another trustworthy Western witness of the all India jurisdiction of the see of St Thomas Christians is Father John Campori SJ, secretary to Bishop Francis Ros, who in 1607 testified at the judicial process regarding the jurisdictional controversy with the bishop of Cochin that, according to the information gathered from several Chaldean books and from well known facts, it was evident that the bishop and the archdeacon of the St Thomas

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<sup>56</sup> ARSI, *Goa-Mal.*, 65, ff. 43-44; English translation, J. Kollaparambil, *The Sources of the Syro-Malabar Law*, 569-570.

<sup>57</sup> A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 179-180.

Christians always used the titles “Metropolitan of all India” and “Archdeacon of All India”, respectively. He stated:

This bishopric of the Serra (Malabar) was always an archbishopric, the most ancient of all in India [...] its archbishops and prelates were using the title ‘Archbishop-Metropolitans of All-India and its confines’ [...] the archdeacon of the Serra always titled himself ‘Archdeacon of All India and its confines’ [...] every day priests and clerics in Mass and in the ordinary recital of the divine office are naming their prelate as Metropolitan of Hendo (India) [...] Mar Abraham, the predecessor of the present prelate, withdrew to Angamaly for fear of the Portuguese, and yet he never used to sign as Archbishop of Angamaly, but Metropolitan of the whole of India, as is evident from some letters [...] written by the said Mar Abraham to the Patriarch of Babylon.<sup>58</sup>

From the historical facts already indicated one can easily understand that the testimony of John Campori corresponds to the truth.

### 3.4. An All India Church

The “Metropolitan of All India” and the “Archdeacon of All India” were not mere empty titles because there were St Thomas Christian communities in different regions of India like Kalyana (Kalyan), Thana and Gujarat, Goa, Mysore and Vijayanagar, Mangalore, Cape Camorin, the Coromandel Coast and especially Mylapore (the residence of the metropolitan for several years), Sind-Punjab, Patna, Orissa, Malwa etc.<sup>59</sup> According to Bishop A. D. Mattam, on the basis of available documentary data which carry unquestionable authority like monuments, records and testimonies,

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<sup>58</sup> ARSI, *Goa-Mal.*, 65, ff. 4-5; see also, P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 34-35; J. Kollaparambil, *The Sources of the Syro-Malabar Law*, 576-577.

<sup>59</sup> See A. D. Mattam, *The Indian Church of St Thomas and Her Missionary Enterprises before the Sixteenth Century*, Kottayam 1975, 14-35; *Forgotten East: Mission, Liturgy and Spirituality of the Eastern Churches*, Satna 2001, 62-81; E. R Hambye, “Medieval Christianity in India”, 32; H. Hosten, *Antiquities from San Thomé and Mylapore*, Calcutta 1936, 402-463; X. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 84-85; X. Kochuparampil, *Evangelization in India*, Kottayam 1993, 247-265 J. Kollaparambil, *The Sources of the Syro-Malabar Law*, 579-585.

we can rightly draw the conclusion that there were Christian communities in various places, all over India; Christians were more numerous and widely spread on the Western and Eastern Coasts; Malabar was always a stronghold of Christianity, and the Christian population was concentrated there, at least during certain periods of history. But to speak of St Thomas Christians, or the Church in India, in terms of Malabar, as if it was confined to the Malabar Coast, is contrary to historical facts. It was an All India Church.<sup>60</sup>

In the course of time many of the Christian communities outside the Malabar Coast became extinct owing to Muslim invasions and various other political, ecclesiastical and historical reasons. In some instances the St Thomas Christians were also absorbed into the Latin Church.<sup>61</sup>

It is an incontestable and irrefutable historical fact that only the “apostolic see” of St Thomas existed in India until the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries at the dawn of the sixteenth century and hence there was not even any theoretical possibility for a territorial limitation of the Church of St Thomas Christians at that epoch. The metropolitan of all India and the archdeacon of all India, as their titles clearly indicate, freely and unreservedly exercised jurisdiction over the St Thomas Christians in the whole of India.

#### 4. Synodal Governance

Inspired by the apostolic council of Jerusalem, synods and assemblies developed in the early Church, especially when the Church was confronted with serious problems that could not be resolved by single diocesan bishops. Chronologically, provincial synods originated first. A provincial synod was the assembly of the bishops of the same province convoked and presided over by the metropolitan and such synods enjoyed electoral, legislative, judicial and administrative powers in the province. In the early Church, according to the legislation of the first ecumenical

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<sup>60</sup> A. D. Mattam, *Forgotten East*, 92.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. A. D. Mattam, *Forgotten East*, 79-81; J. Powathil, *The Ecclesial Milieu: Ecclesial Vision & Historical Interventions*, Trivandrum 2009, 128-129.

councils and important local synods, the only competent authority for the election of bishops was the provincial synod. The local synods also enjoyed ample legislative power; they regulated judicial, disciplinary, doctrinal and administrative matters within their territory by enacting and promulgating their own laws in harmony with the decrees of the ecumenical councils. Gradually there emerged super-provincial collegial bodies like the patriarchal synods. A patriarchal synod was the assembly of the metropolitans and bishops of the patriarchate, convoked and presided over by the patriarch. Even after the emergence of such patriarchal synods the provincial synods retained the right of electing bishops and regulating matters within the province.<sup>62</sup>

In the early Indian context a provincial synod was not possible because very often there was only one bishop, and sometimes none. Therefore the Indian Eastern Church of St Thomas developed its own quasi-synodal system called *palliyogam* or church-assembly, which enjoyed most of the powers of the ancient provincial synods, except the election of bishops. The *palliyogam* was composed of clergy and laity, who enjoyed equal rights and obligations. The archdeacon of all India together with the *yogam* (system of church-assemblies) formed a kind of 'Christian republic' with autonomy, equal to a patriarchal Church, if the election and consecration of bishops are excluded. The Carmelite missionary Paulino rightly affirms: "These Christians constitute a kind of Christian civil republic. When the rights of a particular parish are threatened, other parishes come together to defend it. The parish priest and elders judge and settle all cases [...]"<sup>63</sup> There were three kinds of such church-assemblies: the parish *yogam*, the regional *yogam* and the general *yogam*.

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<sup>62</sup> For the origin and development of the synodal structure, P. Pallath, *The Synod of Bishops of Catholic Oriental Churches*, Rome 1994, 82-121; P. Duprey, "The Synodical Structure of the Church in Eastern Theology", *One in Christ* 7 (1971) 152-182; E. Lanne, "Églises locales et patriarcats à l'époque des grands conciles", *Irénikon* 34 (1961) 292-321; D. Salachas, "Il principio della struttura sinodale delle Chiese orientali nella legislazione canonica antica", *Nicolaus* 2 (1978) 221-251.

<sup>63</sup> Paulino da S. Bartolomeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, 137.

#### 4.1. Parish *Yogam*

The parish *yogam* was the assembly of the heads of the Christian families and priests of a parish, usually under the presidency of the senior priest. This assembly enjoyed legislative, administrative and judicial powers within the parish. Each parish was autonomous and self sufficient in the sense that its assembly freely acquired and alienated property, selected and trained candidates for the priesthood, maintained the priests, deacons and seminarians, administered the temporal goods and exercised vigilance over the whole ecclesial and spiritual life of the parish. Priests were not ordained for the diocese but for the parish. The assembly even had the power to excommunicate public delinquents and sinners. The excommunicated had to undergo the penance imposed upon them by the assembly; then he or she would be absolved at the door of the church by a priest.<sup>64</sup> The parish *yogam* was an adaptation of the ancient system of local government which prevailed in Malabar. Specifying the indigenous origin of the *yogam* and its competence in his time, the missionary Paulino affirmed:

All matters of religion are decided by the Brahmins alone, presided over by the *Sarvavèda* or their pontiff. The assembly or the community that decides is called *Yogam*. All give their votes, and this custom passed to the ecclesial communities of the St Thomas Christians, which are presided over by the bishop or the missionary or the eldest among the priests called *muppen*. The Brahmins in their assemblies hold the same order. What has been decided in the *Yogam*, is considered inviolable and an almost infallible sentence. Those who are recalcitrant are excluded from the community and cease to be members of the *Yogam*.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, 137; P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 106; *The Thomas Christians*, 96; A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Kottayam 1987, 42; Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of Syrian Christians*, Ernakulam 1926, 133.

<sup>65</sup> Paulino da S. Bartolomeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, 256.

As Paulino also indicated, all the parishioners and priests were bound to comply with the decisions of the parish assembly in matters within its competence.

#### 4.2. Regional *Yogam*

This was the assembly of the priests and representatives of the Christian faithful of a region of at least four parishes. Such a *yogam* was often convoked for the administration of justice. Reflecting on the capital punishment unjustly and arbitrarily inflicted on Fr Chacko of Edappalli by the Western missionaries, Thomas Paremmakkal, the administrator of the St Thomas Christians from 1787 to 1799 wrote:

All are aware that according to the ancient custom of the Malabar Church no punishment could be inflicted unless the crime was proved before the representatives of four Churches.<sup>66</sup>

Again this was one of the main conditions put forward by the general church-assembly at Angamaly in 1778 for settling the disputes between the Church and the foreign missionaries: "no punishment would be meted out for any grave crime committed by the priests or lay men before the matter was judged by the representatives of four churches".<sup>67</sup> Therefore, according to the Malabar custom only the regional *yogam* was competent to judge the serious cases of priests and other Christian faithful and no authority could inflict any punishment on them even for grave crimes until the representatives of the four churches had heard the case and pronounced their judgment to that effect.

#### 4.3. General *Yogam*

The general *yogam* was the assembly of the priests and representatives of the Christian faithful of all the parishes of the Church of St Thomas Christians, convoked and presided over by the archdeacon of all India. Matters pertaining to the whole community were not decided by the metropolitan nor by the

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<sup>66</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 41.

<sup>67</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 43-44; cf. also page 46.

archdeacon, but only by the general assembly. With regard to this Paremmakkal stated: "In all the things mentioned above the Malabar churches acted rightly as their forefathers used to do in the past. Matters pertaining to the whole community were not decided by one or two churches: all the churches used to assemble together to deal with such matters".<sup>68</sup> The general assembly was the supreme authority of the Indian Church of St Thomas Christians and it enjoyed legislative, judicial and administrative powers over the whole Church. Prof. P. J. Podipara summarized the juridical status and competence of the general assembly as follows:

Matters pertaining to the whole Church or community – religious, social and political – were handled by the representatives of all the churches. It was in these General-Church-Assemblies (the Malabar Church *Yogam*) that the Archdeacon, the Jathikkukarthavian (the one responsible for the community) as he was popularly called, played his part in the most conspicuous way. The General-Church-Assemblies were practically supreme, and *de facto* no higher ecclesiastical authority questioned their decisions. The Thomas Christians, therefore formed, as it were a Christian Republic with a head from among themselves. Their bishops who were foreigners were eclipsed by, or were under the shadow of the Archdeacons. Such was the canonical set up that was developed among the Thomas Christians of the past. Because of this "autonomous state" and "oneness" no foreign heresy or religious controversy had any impact on them [...].<sup>69</sup>

The power and authority of the general assembly emerge clearly from *Varthamanappusthakam*. In 1778 the assembly sent a delegation to Lisbon and Rome under the leadership of Joseph Cariattil to handle the reunion of Mar Thomas VI with the Catholic Church. Two candidates for the priesthood were sent with the delegates to be admitted to the Propaganda College, Rome.<sup>70</sup> His Eminence Cardinal Giuseppe Maria Castelli, the Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide (1763-1780), at first refused to accept the two seminarians on the ground that they were not sent

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<sup>68</sup>*The Varthamanappusthakam*, 33.

<sup>69</sup> P. J. Podipara, "Introduction" to *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 3-4.

<sup>70</sup>*The Varthamanappusthakam*, 65; cf. also pp. 132, 144 & 146.



by a bishop. From what Paremmakkal wrote about this event, the perception of the St Thomas Christians concerning the authority of the general church assembly becomes evident:

If the Cardinal had known the high standing and unity of our people he would have realized that the bishop could not send Syrian boys from Malabar without the consent of our assembly, or, if he sent them, Propaganda could not force our assembly to accept them should it refuse to do so. If he had known our status he would not have acted as he did, but he would have accepted the boys taking the decision of the Malabar assembly as authoritative".<sup>71</sup>

According to the self-awareness of the St Thomas Christians, the decisions of their general assembly were definitive and supreme, leaving no room for any superior modification or revision.

In brief, before the sixteenth century, no important decision concerning the Indian Church could have been taken without the involvement of the general assembly, the supreme authority of this Church. The general assembly, presided over by the archdeacon of all India, in which the representatives of the clergy and the Christian faithful of all the parishes participated with active vote, was the greatest manifestation of the Church as the people of God and of the unity and communion of the St Thomas Christians, who at that epoch were dispersed amongst different native kingdoms.

As indicated above, for the St Thomas Christians the Church was really and effectively the people of God. The participation of the lay Christian faithful in the ecclesial life of the St Thomas Christians in India by means of the glorious institute of *palliyogam* was far greater than that of the West even after the promulgation of *Lumen gentium*, which officially teaches that the Church is the people of God (cf. *LG* 9-17).

During the period of Latin governance (1599-1896) of the Church of the St Thomas Christians, the regional and general *yogams* became extinct, because they were absolutely incompatible with the medieval concept of monarchic episcopal power prevalent in the West, which did not permit any participation of the Christian faithful in the administration of the Church. The parish *yogam*,

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<sup>71</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 133-134.

modified in accordance with the power of episcopal governance and updated according to the spirit of the Eastern Code, still exists today, but with very limited powers.<sup>72</sup>

## 5. The St Thomas Christian Liturgy

The actualisation of the *Mysterium salutis* in space-time, which was initiated with the call of Abraham and which reached its culmination in the Christ event: the incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, took place on Asian soil. The flesh which the *Orientalis lumen* assumed from the Virgin Mary and unified with the Divinity at the time of the incarnation is specifically Asian. In fact, Jesus Christ took flesh as an Asian and Oriental.<sup>73</sup>

### 5.1. Christianity as an Eastern Asian Religion

Christianity originated as an Eastern Asian religion and hence the Church of Christ had its inception in Asia. In fact, the Church, the Kingdom of God, was brought into being by the paschal Mysteries of Christ: the suffering, death, resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Lumen gentium*, 3-4), which took place in Asia. The Asian Church in Jerusalem, the members of which were the Virgin Mary, the apostles, the disciples, the pious women who accompanied Jesus during his earthly ministry and all those who had accepted Christ and his teaching from the day of Pentecost, is the mother, model and inspiration of all other Churches and ecclesial communities throughout the world. The one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ existed in the beginning only as the “Church of Jerusalem” in Asia, from whence the apostles and disciples of Jesus, who were all Orientals, after they had received the Holy Spirit, went forth to disseminate the

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<sup>72</sup> On 16 January 1998 the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church approved the norms to regulate matters relating to the parish *yogam*, which the major archbishop promulgated on the same date. See *Synodal News*, no. 11 (March 1998) 44-74.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 1, *AAS* 92 (2000) 449-450; *Orientalis Lumen*, Vatican City 1995, nos. 1-2, *AAS* 87 (1995) 745-746.

Christian faith everywhere in the world. Thus from Jerusalem, from the mother of all Churches, the Gospel was spread to Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, India and to all nations.<sup>74</sup> In brief, Christianity is originally one of the Asian religions in harmony with the other religious traditions, socio-cultural life, as well as philosophy and wisdom of the Asian people.

## 5.2. First Christian Liturgy as Eastern and Asian

Since Christianity is an Eastern and Asian religion, the first Christian liturgy which the apostles and disciples celebrated in Jerusalem could not but be Eastern and Asian. Christ instituted the Eucharist during the Last Supper in the context of Jewish liturgy. In accordance with the command of the Lord, “Do this in remembrance of me” (*Lk* 22: 19), following faithfully the action of Jesus in the “upper room”, the apostles and disciples together with the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem celebrated “the supper of the Lord” (*I Cor* 11, 20) or the “breaking of the bread” (*Acts* 2: 42), the memorial of the salvific paschal Mysteries of Jesus in the context of the Jewish liturgy. The last supper of the Lord was the essential model and the fundamental structure of this eucharistic celebration.<sup>75</sup> With regard to this primitive Jerusalem liturgy the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments states:

In gathering together to break the bread on the first day of the week, which became the day of the Lord (cf. *Acts* 20: 7; *Ap* 1: 10), the first Christian communities followed the command of Jesus who, in the context of the memorial of the Jewish pasch, instituted the memorial of his Passion. In continuity with the unique history of salvation, they spontaneously took the forms and texts of Jewish worship, and adapted them to express the radical newness of Christian worship. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, discernment was exercised

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Oriente Lumen*, no. 2, *AAS* 87 (1995) 746; *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 9, *AAS* 92 (2000) 460.

<sup>75</sup> For details, cf. A. G. Martimort, *The Church at Prayer Vol. 1: Principles of the Liturgy*, Minnesota 1987, 23-26; G. Dix, *The Shape of Liturgy*, London 1964, 36-102.

between what could be kept and what was to be discarded of the Jewish heritage of worship.<sup>76</sup>

The worshipping assemblies of the faithful in the apostolic period could not but have reflected the liturgical praxis of the first Christian community in Jerusalem both for the eucharistic sinaxis and for any community prayer. In brief, the Christian liturgy of the apostolic period was substantially the liturgy of Jerusalem.

### 5.3. The Liturgy of St Thomas

Although no historical documents are available concerning the liturgy in India in the first centuries, one might reasonably assume that St Thomas celebrated the primitive liturgy (the only one existing at that time) as did all the apostles and the first Christians at Jerusalem. He might have said the liturgical prayers in Aramaic (Syriac), the ordinary language of Palestine during the time of Christ. "As regards the Eucharist, 'the breaking of bread', Thomas must have acted in the same manner as Christ did at the Last Supper and as Thomas along with the other apostles and the Jewish nucleus of the new Church celebrated his memorial in Jerusalem".<sup>77</sup>

As we have already seen, the Churches in the Persian Empire were evangelized by Mar Addai and Mar Mari, disciples of St Thomas. It is even believed that St Thomas himself preached in Persia proper (Iran). Thus the commercial, cultural and linguistic relationship as well as the mutual collaboration and harmony that had existed between India and Persia since the pre-Christian era were ratified and reinforced by the new spiritual bond effected by the filial veneration of the Churches in these countries towards the Apostle Thomas. Naturally Thomas and his disciples must have introduced the same 'apostolic liturgy' wherever they evangelized and disseminated the Christian faith. Therefore, the Church of St

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<sup>76</sup> Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*, IV Instruction for the Right Application of the Conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy (nos. 37-40), Rome 1994, no. 15.

<sup>77</sup> A. D. Mattam, "The Liturgy St Thomas Introduced in India and Its Development", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, vol. LIX (1995) 31; *Forgotten East*, 151.

Thomas Christians in India together with the other Thomistic Churches possessed the same Thomistic liturgical nucleus and spiritual heritage.

#### 5.4. Development of Thomistic Liturgy as East Syrian Tradition

Liturgies gradually developed into fully-fledged and well-defined liturgical traditions, having their own distinct and specific identity and formulas of prayer, only in the great Christian centres such as Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, Edessa (later Nisibis), Constantinople, and, there too, only after a long and complex historical process. Those Churches which did not develop proper liturgies spontaneously received them from other Churches.<sup>78</sup> Thus, for example, many peoples throughout the world have received the Roman liturgy, while fourteen Eastern Catholic Churches and more than thirty Orthodox Churches celebrate the liturgy of St John Chrisostom and St Basil according to the tradition of Constantinople.

Among the Thomistic Churches, Edessa (later Nisibis) was a stronghold of Christianity and a famous theologico-liturgical centre that produced many saintly Fathers, theologians and monks, as well as the matrix of a rich ecclesial tradition, later denominated the East Syrian tradition.<sup>79</sup> In contrast, the Church of St Thomas Christians in India, in the beginning a “pusillus grex” living in the midst of a non-Christian multitude, had neither theological centres, nor Fathers, nor organized monastic life, nor eminent Christian writers, spiritual masters or theologians. In these circumstances they could not have perfected the liturgy bequeathed to them by

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. R. Taft, “The Missionary Effort of the East Syrian Churches as an Example of Inculturation”, in Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali, *Le Chiese Orientali e la Missione in Asia*, Città del Vaticano 1998, 37-38; A. G. Martimort, *The Church at Prayer*, vol. 1, 27-43; P. Maniyattu, “Foreign Interventions in the Liturgical Traditions”, in P. Pallath (ed.), *Catholic Eastern Churches, Heritage and Identity*, Rome 1994, 178-186.

<sup>79</sup> A. D. Mattam, *Forgotten East*, 119-134; S. Rassam, *Christianity in Iraq*, 51-56.

their Apostle Thomas.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, they spontaneously received and organically assimilated into their Thomistic liturgical nucleus the liturgical developments that were taking place in their sister Thomistic Churches. Thus, the East Syrian tradition, the fruition of the “pure original Asian Christianity” on Asian soil itself without being much influenced by the Western or the Hellenistic culture, gradually became the common heritage of all the Thomistic Churches. It goes without saying that the St Thomas Christians in India did not depend on other Thomistic Churches for their original Thomistic liturgical nucleus, but only for its perfection and organic development.

From what we have seen it is evident that the basic liturgical tradition of the Church of St Thomas Christians was the East Syrian or Chaldean tradition. Their liturgical language was Syriac, a form of Aramaic, namely the language of Our Lord, in which, as these Christians were certain, St Thomas had celebrated the Lord’s Supper in India and bequeathed to them other rites and prayers. A letter written by three lay Christian leaders to Pope Gregory XIII in 1578 expresses the self-awareness of the St Thomas Christians concerning their liturgy:

O, Supreme Pastor of all the faithful of Christ our God, we, your unworthy and sinful sons of India, inform Your Charity that we have been Christians from the time of Saint Thomas, a disciple of Our Lord. Thus we have become sharers of the Baptism, sacraments and the Body of Our Lord. Our prayers are in Syriac or the Chaldean language, which has been handed on to us by our Lord St Thomas, and we and our predecessors have been taught this language. Our bishops and archbishops have always been sent to us from among the Assyrians of the East, and the ordination to the priesthood and to the diaconate has been conferred on us by them.<sup>81</sup>

The St Thomas Christians were fully convinced that their Syriac liturgy came directly from St Thomas and not from the Babylonian or Assyrian Church. As mentioned above, the Indian Christians depended on their sister Churches only for the organic

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<sup>80</sup> There is no evidence to show that the St Thomas Christians had developed a liturgy in any Indian language.

<sup>81</sup> S. Giamil, *Genuine Relations*, 85.

development of their liturgy. Thomas Paremmakkal (1736-1799), in responding to the missionaries who sent accusations to Rome against the St Thomas Christians, manifested the conviction of these Christians concerning their rite:

We are Syrians. From the time the Apostle Thomas was in our country and gave us the treasure of the holy faith, we have been, until today, without any break, performing our ecclesiastical ceremonies and practices in the Syriac rite. Your predecessors tried their best to change this ancient rite of ours. But they realized they could not.<sup>82</sup>

The Congregation for the Oriental Churches rightly affirms: "According to a venerated tradition, the Apostle Thomas was sent to proclaim the Gospel, and the St Thomas Christians became members of the large family of the Syro-Oriental Churches, one of the five ancient Oriental traditions, which continue to exist to this day (CCEO c. 28 § 2). To this faith, these traditions, the fathers of the Syro-Malabar Church remained faithful".<sup>83</sup> In fact, the St Thomas Christians celebrated the divine liturgy and the sacraments in the East Syrian rite and lived their faith in harmony with this basic tradition with great devotion and marvellous concord until the arrival of the Western missionaries in the sixteenth century.

## 6. The St Thomas Christian Tradition as One of the Religions of India

The Indian Church on the one hand spontaneously received, adapted and integrated many liturgical elements and canonical institutes of the Church of the East, because they were congruent with its own original Thomistic heritage and Indian culture, but on the other hand, it adopted and Christianised the socio-cultural

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<sup>82</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 247. The expression "Syrians" simply signifies those who use the Syriac liturgy. Since the liturgical language of the St Thomas Christians was Syriac, they were often called Syrians or *Suriani* (Catholics).

<sup>83</sup> Congregation for the Oriental Churches, "Fundamental Orientations concerning the Syro-Malabar Liturgy", Prot. N. 200/93, 16 March 1998, no. II, 2; *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 14.

customs and those Hindu rites which were compatible with the Christian faith. Although those people in South India who had accepted Christ and his Gospel due to the evangelising ministry of St Thomas had changed their faith, they continued to maintain the very same customs, traditions and *modus vivendi* of their Hindu brethren. So the axiom “Hindu in culture, Christian in religion and Oriental in Worship” is often used to indicate the various aspects of the identity of the St Thomas Christian tradition at that epoch.<sup>84</sup> The names and surnames, lifestyle, architecture of houses and churches, the manner of church-administration, ecclesiastical art, the paraphernalia used in the churches, attire and insignia of the clergy and bishops, educational system, clerical formation, family life, dress and ornaments of the Christian faithful, eating habits, as well as professions and occupations of the St Thomas Christians were so Indian that they could not be distinguished from their Hindu brethren except in those aspects which were specifically Christian.<sup>85</sup>

Since the St Thomas Christians firmly believed that their ancestors had received at least the essential nucleus of their liturgy and prayers in the Aramaic or Syriac language directly from the Apostle Thomas, they never dared to make any modification or change in their Catholic faith and liturgy. Moreover, as the East Syrian liturgical tradition, the developed form of the original Asian Christianity and the Thomistic heritage, was fully in harmony with Indian culture and religious ethos, it seems that before the sixteenth century the St Thomas Christians never felt the need to make modifications in their liturgy in order to adapt it to Indian culture. Nevertheless, what did emerge spontaneously as a part of the organic growth of the East Syrian liturgical tradition in India with

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<sup>84</sup> This axiom was coined by P. J. Podipara in his article, “Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship”, *Ostkirchliche Studien* 8 (1959) 82-104.

<sup>85</sup> For details, see A. Thazhath, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 23-63; P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 80-85; “The Thomas Christians and Adaptation”, *Eastern Churches Review* 111 (1970) 171-177; J. Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, second edition, Bangalore 2001, 43-57.



regard to the rites of birth and Baptism, Eucharistic celebration, the sacrament of penance, marriage, anointing of the sick, funeral rites, religious festivals and processions, Holy Week celebrations, Marian feasts, fasting and abstinence, holy water, pilgrimages and “family-liturgy” was truly outstanding and unique.<sup>86</sup>

The original Asian and Eastern characteristics of Christianity consonant with Indian culture as well as the autonomy of the St Thomas Christian Church guaranteed by the glorious institutes of archdiaconate and *palliyogam*, enabled the spontaneous evolution and organic growth of the Christian faith on Indian soil and the Christianization of autochthonous socio-cultural customs, traditions and rites in South India. In brief the St Thomas Christian tradition had become one of the religions of India, and was considered as such by the religious and political leaders of the time.

From what we have seen it is evident that the St Thomas Christians followed a double principle with regard to their Christian life in relation to the autochthonous culture: 1) keep intact the “apostolic” faith and the liturgy, without any watering down of the essentials, but permitting organic growth and progress; 2) adapt the socio-cultural life and the whole *modus vivendi* to the religious and social ethos of the country in the maximum possible manner. The theology of inculturation, which the St Thomas Christians practised until the sixteenth century and which the Western missionaries condemned as paganism, seems to be valid even today and fully in harmony with the present magisterium of the Catholic Church.

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<sup>86</sup> For details about inculturation in liturgy, see P. Vazheparampil, “The *Toma Marga*, Icon of the Indo-Oriental Identity of the Thomas Christians of India”, *Christian Orient* vol. XV, no. 1, (1994) 3-23; P. Pallath, “The St Thomas Christian Church before the Sixteenth Century: A Model for Inculturation”, *ETJ*, vol. 6, no. 1, (March 2002) 18-32; P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 85-94.

## 7. The Faith and Communion of the Church of St Thomas Christians

The fundamental thesis concerning the faith and communion of the St Thomas Christians propagated by some Western missionaries and held even today by those who depend on their writings can be summarized thus: the St Thomas Christians, who had embraced the authentic Catholic faith from the Apostle Thomas, later abandoned this faith and accepted Nestorian heretical doctrines because of their hierarchical relationship with the Church of the East, and then broke communion with the Roman Pontiff. After several hundred years, Aleixo de Menezes, the archbishop of Goa (from 1595 to 1610) in collaboration with the Portuguese missionaries convoked a Synod in Diamper from 20 to 26 June 1599 and 'reduced the St Thomas Christians to the Roman Catholic faith and to the obedience of the Roman Pontiff'. In fact the very title of the book which the Portuguese historian Antonio de Gouvea published in 1606 expresses well the general Portuguese opinion:

*The Journey of the archbishop of Goa, Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes, primate of East India, of the Order of St Augustine. When he went to the Serras (mountains) of Malabar and to the places where inhabit the ancient Christians of St Thomas, he brought them back from many errors and heresies, in which they were found and reduced them to our Holy Catholic Faith and to the obedience of the Holy Roman Church, from which they had remained separated for more than a thousand years.*<sup>87</sup>

In the second part of the same book, we find the "Diocesan Synod of the Church and Bishopric of Angamaly belonging to the ancient Christians of St Thomas in the Serras (mountains) of Malabar in East India, celebrated by the most Reverend Lord Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes, Archbishop, Metropolitan of Goa [...] in which

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<sup>87</sup> A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes Primaz da India Oriental, Religioso da Ordem de S. Agostinho. Quando foy as Serras do Malavar, & lugares em que morão os antigos Christãos de S. Thome, & os tirou de muytos erros & heregias em que estavam & reduzio à nossa Sancta Fè Catholica, & obediencia da Santa Igreja Romana, da qual passava de mil annos que estavam apartados*, Coimbra 1606.

the said bishopric gave obedience to the supreme Roman Pontiff and with all the Christians submitted itself to the Holy Roman Church".<sup>88</sup> Many acts and decrees of the Synod of Diamper are directed against what Archbishop Menezes and his collaborators termed "Nestorian errors" or "heretical doctrines", which in fact the St Thomas Christians neither knew nor professed. The publication of this book and its translation into different European languages, as well as other missionary writings, created the false idea in the West that the St Thomas Christians were heretics and schismatics before the Synod of Diamper.

Since it is impossible in such a modest work to treat the complex question of the faith and communion of the St Thomas Christians before the Synod of Diamper, we give here only some indications based on the conclusions of already available studies.<sup>89</sup> The Portuguese missionaries, who had maintained a friendly relationship and *communicatio in sacris* with the St Thomas Christians, mainly for political motives began to accuse these Christians of heresy and schism after the erection of the diocese of Goa on 31 January 1533 and especially after its elevation to the status of an archbishopric on 4 February 1558. The Portuguese religious and political authorities wanted to suppress the metropolitan status of the of St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Angamaly, reduce it to a simple suffragan of the archdiocese of Goa and to bring it under the "jurisdiction" of the Portuguese king

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<sup>88</sup> *Synodo Diocesano da Igreja e bispado de Angamale dos antigos christãos de Sam Thome das Serras do Malavar das partes da India Oriental. Celebrado pello reverendissimo senhor Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes Arcebispo Metropolitano de Goa [...] no qual se deu obediencia ao sumo Pontifice Romano & se sogeitou o dito Bispado com todos os Christãos delle à Santa Igreja Romana, Combra, 1606.*

<sup>89</sup> See X. Koodapuzha, *Faith and Communion of the Indian Church of the Saint Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 1982; P. Pallath, "Were the St Thomas Christians in India Nestorians at the Time of the Synod of Diamper in 1599?", *ETJ*, vol. 5, no. 1 (March 2001) 34-70; P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 101-115; G. Thumpanirappel, *Christ in the East Syriac Tradition*, Satna 2003. For complete documentation concerning the orthodoxy of St Thomas Christians, see S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes* and G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, the second part of the book dedicated to documents; pp. 141-272.

in accordance with the provisions of patronage.<sup>90</sup> The accusation of heresy and schism was the best means of realizing their political projects without causing displeasure in the West, especially in Rome.

### 7.1. The True Catholic Faith

The Church of St Thomas Christians, which had its origin from the preaching of the Apostle Thomas, was not a daughter Church, nor a ramification of the Church of the East in the Persian Empire. The Indian Christians, who had received the true Catholic faith directly from the Apostle Thomas – and not from the Persian Church – only began to depend on the Church of the East for the appointment of bishops after several years, but never becoming an integral part of the same Church. The autonomous Indian Church, administered by the archdeacon of all India with the assistance of the general assembly (*yogam*), always jealously preserved the true Catholic faith and spiritual heritage bequeathed to it by the Apostle Thomas and faithfully handed them on to successive generations although, for canonical and practical reasons, this Church benefited from the ministry of the Chaldean bishops, especially for the celebration of those mysteries which required the episcopal Order. Therefore the doctrinal position and the theological vision of the St Thomas Christians could not always be identified with those of the Church of the East.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned political projects, some missionaries, who had been well acquainted with the St Thomas Christians, acknowledged the fact that these Christians always professed the Catholic faith, although some “errors” were found in some of their Syriac books. The Jesuit father Francis Dionysio, who came to India in 1563 and who was the rector of the Jesuit residence at Cochin from 1576 to 1578, after he had sufficiently studied the faith and customs of the St Thomas Christians, wrote in a letter to the Jesuit General on 4 January 1578:

These Christians commonly believe in all the articles of the Nicene Creed and the equality of the divine persons and the two natures and

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<sup>90</sup> For details, see chapter III, nos. 1-6.

one person in Christ. The same is held by the archbishop and the archdeacon. They regard the Pope as the Vicar of Christ our Redeemer on earth, and their patriarch as subject to the Pope from whom his powers are communicated to him.<sup>91</sup>

In this letter Dionysio explicitly and unambiguously bears witness to the orthodox faith, authentic Christology and doctrine of primacy of the St Thomas Christians.

Perhaps the most competent Western missionary to judge the faith of St Thomas Christians is Fr Francis Ros SJ, who arrived in India in 1583. Since he knew sufficiently well both Syriac and Malayalam, the provincial council of Goa in 1585 nominated him as assistant to Mar Abraham, especially for the translation of Latin liturgical books into Syriac for the use of the St Thomas Christians. From 1587 he was professor of Syriac at the Jesuit Seminary of Vaipicotta. In 1586-87 he examined a few Chaldean books present in Kerala and composed a treatise entitled: *De Erroribus Nestorianorum qui in hac India Orientali versantur*,<sup>92</sup> extracting from those books what he considered to be "Nestorian heretical doctrines" and translating them into Latin. The purpose of this essay was to demonstrate that Mar Abraham, the metropolitan of the St Thomas Christians, who resisted the introduction of the Latin liturgy among them, was a Nestorian heretic. After the strict scrutiny of the Chaldean books in Malabar, Fr Ros begins his treatise thus:

Although the Nestorians who live in East India have professed the Roman Catholic faith, their books contain the doctrines of Nestorius, Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia. The fact that all this is not unknown to Mar Abraham, the archbishop of this region (for he knows both the Roman Catholic faith and the

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<sup>91</sup> "Comumente estes cristãos confessão todos artigos de simbolo niceno e a igualdade das divinas pessoas, e duas naturezas em Cristo em huma pessoa, e o mesmo têm o Arcebispo e Arceidiago; do Papa têm que hé Vigairo de Cristo nosso Redemptor na terra e que seu Patriarcha he sugeito ao Papa e que delle tem seus poderes comunicados". F. Dionysio, "Informação da cristandade de São Thomé que está no Malavar, reino da Índia Oriental", *Documenta Indica*, XI (1970) 139.

<sup>92</sup> F. Ros, *De Erroribus Nestorianorum qui in hac India Orientali versantur*, annotated by I. Hausherr, *Orientalia Christiana* vol. XI (1), no. 40, Rome 1928.

Nestorian doctrine), stirs up in us certainly grave suspicion of heresy. When he was in Goa, he promised to correct the Syriac books; he even took an oath to do so. But he fell away from the truth, and now he cares nothing about it.<sup>93</sup>

At first sight the position of Ros seems to be contradictory, since he calls the St Thomas Christians “Nestorians”, but at the same time admits that they professed the “Roman Catholic faith”. The statement of Ros should be evaluated in the light of the fact that for a long period of time the expression “Nestorians” was indiscriminately employed to indicate all those who used the Syro-Oriental liturgical tradition or Chaldean rite, even when there was no intention to refer to the heresy called Nestorianism.

Both P. J. Castets SJ in his introduction to the treatise *De Erroribus Nestorianorum* and Iréné Hausherr SJ in his analysis of the document made it clear that the St Thomas Christians and their priests, whom Ros designated Nestorians, professed the faith preached to them by Apostle St Thomas and they did not even know the Nestorian doctrines.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, according to Ros and his interpreters the only person who knew the Nestorian doctrines, in addition to Catholic dogmas, among the St Thomas Christians was the Chaldean Archbishop Mar Abraham.<sup>95</sup> It can be rightly concluded that according to the thinking of Ros, the St Thomas Christians always maintained the “Roman Catholic faith”, in spite of the presence of some books containing doctrinal errors and the ministry of a metropolitan suspected of heresy.

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<sup>93</sup> “Nestoriani, qui Orientalium Indiam degunt, quamvis Romanam fidem catholicam fuerint professi, ipsorum tamen libri, Nestorii, Diodori Tarsensis et Theodori Mopsuesteni dogmatibus scatent. Quae cum non praetereant Mar Abrahamum, archiepiscopum regionis huius (scit enim ipse Romanam fidem catholicam, scit et Nestorianum dogma), certe maximam nobis de haeresi ingerit suspicionem. Cum Goae versaretur, libros syriacos emendaturum se pollicitus est, pollicitationique iusiurandum adiunxit; sed a veritate defecit, et nihil minus curat”. F. Ros, *De Erroribus Nestorianorum qui in hac India Orientali versantur*, 15.

<sup>94</sup> P. J. Castets, “Introduction” and I. Hausherr, “Analyse du Document”, *Orientalia Christiana* vol. XI (1), no. 40, Rome 1928, pp. 5 & 12 respectively.

<sup>95</sup> Abraham knew both the Catholic faith and Nestorian doctrines just like any other Catholic bishop who studied theology.

After Ros became the bishop of the St Thomas Christians (from 1599 to 1624), in his letter of 7 December 1601, addressed to the Jesuit General in Rome, he unambiguously confirmed his conviction about the faith of the St Thomas Christians:

These Christians are certainly the oldest in the Orient [...] having been converted from idolatry [...] to our most holy faith by the Apostle St Thomas; and although they have lived among heathens, Jews and Muslims, till this time they have always stood very firm in the faith (*semper tamen usque ad hoc tempus in fide constantissimi perstiterunt*).<sup>96</sup>

Ros admits the truth that the St Thomas Christians always professed the “Roman Catholic faith”, and that from the epoch of the Apostle Thomas till that time “they have always stood very firm in the faith”. The only negative aspect which he could point to concerning the faith of the St Thomas Christians, was that some errors were found in their books. It is evident that the mere presence of some doctrinal errors in the books possessed by a Church or Christian community does not make it heretical or schismatic, unless it abandons the true faith and professes the heretical dogma.<sup>97</sup>

D. Ferroli SJ, who published a comprehensive study of the activities of the Jesuits in Malabar in two volumes, concludes his evaluation of “The Religious Conditions of the St Thomas Christians in the Sixteenth Century” thus: “Though interspersed with errors, their faith was comparatively pure, and their moral standards were high. It is marvellous how they kept the faith so many centuries, though far away from the great Christian centres, and surrounded on all sides by luxuriant Hinduism”.<sup>98</sup> In fact, the St Thomas Christians always persisted in the Catholic faith in spite

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<sup>96</sup> ARSI, *Goa-Mal.*, 15, f. 52; P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 112.

<sup>97</sup> If this is not so, then the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome is the most heretical, since from the time of its inception it has held a very good collection of the books and journals belonging to the Eastern Churches, which are not in full communion with the Roman Pontiff.

<sup>98</sup> D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 1, Bangalore 1939, 178.

of several adverse circumstances and innumerable tragic vicissitudes of history.

## 7.2. Full Communion with the Roman Pontiff

There exists no sentence of excommunication against the St Thomas Christians, nor any decree of reunion with the Catholic Church as in the case of other Eastern Catholic Churches. The St Thomas Christians, who were never excommunicated nor reunited, always remained in communion with the Roman Pontiff, although this communion could not always be expressed through "communications" owing to the political and ecclesiastical circumstances of the time and the great distances involved. In fact, the communion with the Roman Pontiff cannot be identified with "communications".<sup>99</sup> According to the fundamental principle, "nemo tenetur ad impossibile", both the Roman Pontiff and the St Thomas Christians, who remained in full communion even in ancient times, were not obliged to manifest this through mutual exchange of letters or other means of communication, insofar as this was impossible.

Whatever the nature of communion in the preceding years,<sup>100</sup> it is an incontestable and irrefutable fact that from the moment that Patriarch John (Simon) Sulaqa (1551-1555) canonically renewed ecclesiastical communion with the Roman Pontiff in 1553, that is, 46 years before the Synod of Diamper (1599), the St Thomas Christians in India were ecclesiastically, hierarchically and canonically in full and explicit communion with the Roman Pontiff. In fact, at the time of the Synod, the Chaldean patriarchs,

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<sup>99</sup> For example, even when the Catholic Churches of the former Soviet Union could not communicate with the Roman Pontiff because of the particular political circumstances, they remained in full communion with the Roman Church. The case of the present Catholic Church in China is similar.

<sup>100</sup> For information concerning the nature of the communion of the St Thomas Christians with the Roman Pontiff before the period of John (Simon) Sulaqa, see G. Schurhammer, *The Malabar Church and Rome during the Early Portuguese Period and before*, Trichinopoly 1934, 1-42; G. Sorge, *L'India di S. Tommaso: ricerche storiche sulla Chiesa malabarica*, Bologna 1983, 21-28; X. Koodapuzha, *Faith and Communion*, 37-80; P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 46-51.



the canonical heads of the St Thomas Christians, were true Catholics, who made the profession of faith and obtained the pallium of the Roman Church after they had satisfied all the rigorous requirements of ecclesiastical communion as practised in the second millennium.<sup>101</sup> Similarly the bishops of the St Thomas Christians at that time were appointed by Chaldean Catholic patriarchs in full and explicit communion with the Roman Pontiff. Because of the accusations of heresy, these bishops personally went to Rome, submitted themselves to the meticulous examination of the Roman experts and proved their Orthodox faith, even obtaining recommendation letters personally signed by Roman Pontiffs.<sup>102</sup>

In brief, the St Thomas Christians were not only simply Catholics who professed the Catholic faith, but also “Roman Catholics” in full and explicit communion with the Roman Pontiff even before the Synod of Diamper. Hence one cannot but agree with the statement found in the *Travancore State Manual* – which reflects even the self-awareness of the non Christians – that the Western missionaries “found the Malabar Christians all Roman Catholics, only they were Roman Catholics not of the Latin Rite but of the Syrian Rite. And all the trouble was to make them Roman Catholics of the Latin Rite”.<sup>103</sup> The claim of the Portuguese missionaries that they had “reduced” the St Thomas Christians to the obedience of the Roman Pontiff is false and misleading. In fact, they had reduced these Christians only to obedience to their king in Portugal by placing them under the

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 1-27, 59-85; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, Bombay 1957, 34-35 & 52; P. Pallath, *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 2005, 39-41; G. Battaglia, *Cristiani indiani: i cristiani di San Tommaso nel confronto di civiltà del XVI secolo*, Città del Vaticano 2007, 97-101.

<sup>102</sup> For details, see G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 86-119; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 36-47; P. Pallath, “Were the St Thomas Christians in India Nestorians?”, 62-69; *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 42-53 & 59-63; “The Orthodoxy of Mar Abraham, the Last Chaldean Metropolitan of the St Thomas Christians in India”, *Christian Orient*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2002) 4-25.

<sup>103</sup> *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 124.

jurisdiction of the bishops nominated by the same king in accordance with the rights of Padroado.

### 7.3. Erroneous Formulas and Pagan Practices

Since the St Thomas Christians professed the Catholic faith and were in full and explicit communion with the Roman Pontiff, the only thing of which the Western missionaries could have reasonably accused them at the epoch of the Synod of Diamper was that there were some errors in the Syriac books found among them. Since the Syriac books of the St Thomas Christians were not really theirs, in the sense that they were not written by them but were brought from Assyria or Babylon, such books neither reflected nor determined the faith of those Christians. On the contrary the orthodox faith of those Christians determined the meaning of the so-called "erroneous formulas" in those books, if there were any. In fact most of what the Western missionaries considered Nestorian errors in the books found among the St Thomas Christians, were not really heretical doctrines but simply the result of misunderstandings and terminological confusion caused by the rendering of original Syriac concepts and idioms into Latin technical terms and Western categories.<sup>104</sup>

In order to understand better the accusations of heresy and doctrinal errors which the missionaries directed against the St Thomas Christians, it is necessary to consider the militant, monarchic and triumphalist ecclesiology prevalent in the West at that epoch. According to the Western missionaries the Catholic Church was the Latin Church, the Catholic rite was the Latin rite and the Catholic jurisdiction was the Latin jurisdiction. They practically identified the Catholic Church, the Catholic faith and Catholic canon law with the Latin Church, the Latin rite and Latin canonical discipline. In other words there was only one perfect Church, one pure rite and one authentic jurisdiction in the Catholic Church. Consequently other individual particular Churches were non-catholic, other rites were heretical and other jurisdictions were schismatic.

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<sup>104</sup> See X. Koodapuzha, *Faith and Communion*, 113-121.

As a consequence of such a disastrous ecclesiological vision, writes Prof. A. M. Mundadan, "Every ecclesiastical practice, every element of Rite which differed from the Latin and the Western ways was considered an abuse, an error, the result of heresy and superstitions".<sup>105</sup> G. M. Schurhammer, a prominent Western scholar confirms: "We know that the Portuguese [...] missionaries and laymen, did not know much of the Chaldean rite, and they often called heretical whatever was different from the Latin rite and that therefore the ideal thing for them was to win the Syro-Malabarian Christians over to the Latin Rite".<sup>106</sup> Writing on the Jesuits and the Christian Orient, another Western author Prof. E. C. Suttner confirms:

Neither the archbishop (of Goa), nor the Jesuits were prepared to understand the Syriac customs and traditions. The archaic doctrinal formulations unfamiliar to them, that should have been read in a context completely alien to the thought pattern and Western Christian concepts, were for them heretical. In the liturgical life of the St Thomas Christians, everything that did not correspond to the Western liturgy, alarmed them and induced them to judge as superstitious. On the other hand they considered an unforgivable lacuna that among those Christians might have been missing what was present in the Western rite. In order to ensure that the priests of the St Thomas Christians correctly administered the sacraments of the Church, the Latin ritual was translated into Syriac and attempt was made to convince the clergy to make use of it. Worried about the purity of the faith Fr Francis Ros compiled in the years 1586-1587 a comprehensive list of doctrines that sounded strange and indeed heretical to Western ears.<sup>107</sup>

Our recent study on the corrections and modifications made by Archbishop Aleixo de Menezes in the Eucharistic liturgy of the St Thomas Christians enables us to conclude that,

the pre-Diamper Qurbana of the St Thomas Christians enshrined authentic Christological, Mariological, pneumatological,

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<sup>105</sup> A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 484.

<sup>106</sup> G. Schurhammer, *The Malabar Church and Rome*, 37.

<sup>107</sup> E. C. Suttner, "Die Jesuiten und der christliche Osten", *Stimmen der Zeit*, 209 (1991) 463.

Eucharistic-sacramental and soteriological doctrines, but not even a single real doctrinal error. The corrections were, in fact, the result of exclusive adherence to Aristotelian philosophical and Scholastic theological system, ignorance and misapprehension of Eastern theology and liturgy, the claim of exclusive monopoly of truth, an extremely negative attitude towards non Catholic Churches and non-Christian religions, lack of respect for the “apostolic” traditions, autochthonous culture and religious ethos of other peoples, as well as the sense of superiority and triumphalism prevalent in the medieval Church.<sup>108</sup>

It is comprehensible that the missionaries who were educated and formed in the Latin rite and Western monarchic culture, without even a minimum idea about the Christian East and who did not know the Syriac or Chaldean rite, interpreted the particularities of the East Syrian tradition, namely whatever was different from the Latin rite, as well as Indian cultural elements as heretical expressions and pagan practices.

#### **7.4. Common Christological Declaration and the End of Nestorianism**

Even in 1553 it was known to the Roman Curia that the Church of the East, although sometimes called the Nestorian Church, did not profess the heresy known as “Nestorianism”. While presenting John (Simon) Sulaqa to Pope Julius III for the sacred pallium, on 22 February 1553 Cardinal Maffei stated: “These Nestorians seem to have kept rather the name of the heretic Nestorius than his heresies. For I see nothing in these men who are here, which may have any leaning to that sect”.<sup>109</sup> It is worth noting that, before obtaining ecclesiastical communion and pallium from the Roman Pontiff, Sulaqa did not make any change in the doctrine and liturgy, nor did the Roman Curia require him to do so.

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<sup>108</sup> P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, Kottayam 2008, 153.

<sup>109</sup> “Verum hi Nestoriani nomen potius Nestorii Heretici, quam errores retinuisse videntur; nam nihil plane quod illum Sectam referat, in his hominibus, qui hic adsunt comperio”. S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, 480.

Many studies have demonstrated that even the (Assyrian) Church of the East has never professed the heresy called Nestorianism and nor have the patristic, liturgical, theological and canonical books of this Church ever contained any heretical doctrine.<sup>110</sup> The Assyrian Church never denied the divinity of Christ, nor advocated any division or separation in the person of Christ, who is true God and true man. It preferred the Marian expression “mother of Christ, our God and Saviour” not to deny that Mary is *Theotokos*, but to specify that she is not the mother of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.<sup>111</sup> In reality Mary is *Theotokos* because she is *Christotokos*, namely mother of Christ, true God and true man in one single person. Since the expression mother of God without any qualification may signify the Holy Trinity or any person of the Trinity, the Church of the East prefers to employ the title mother of Christ, precisely to avoid any kind of equivocation and confusion. Prof. André de Halleux OFM in his study, “Nestorius: History and Doctrine”, arrived at the following important conclusion:

After fifteen centuries of mutual lack of understanding, the dialogue of the Oriental Orthodox Churches with the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church has permitted them at least to recognize in all the confession of the same Christological faith, beyond the divergences between formulations peculiar to each of their two traditions [...]. In the same manner, by the dissipation of another prejudice, also more than fifteen centuries old, all must recognize that as Nestorius never professed the heresy called Nestorianism,

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<sup>110</sup> For the discussion of the different aspects of the question, see the well documented studies in the book *Syriac Dialogue, First non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition*, Pro Oriente, Vienna 1994: One may consult the works of famous authors like S. P. Brock, L. Abramowski, J. F. Bethune-Baker, A. de Halleux, A. Grillmeier, etc. See also the book of G. Thumpanirappel, *Christ in the East Syriac Tradition*, Satna 2003. For an essential bibliography, E. G. Farrugia, a cura di, *Dizionario enciclopedico dell’Oriente cristiano*, Roma 2000, 523-524.

<sup>111</sup> For more about the Mariology of the Church of the East, P. J. Podipara, “The Mariology of the Church of the East”, *CO*, vol. 2, no. 4 (December 1981) 165-182; X. Koodapuzha, *Faith and Communion*, 42-57; for the Mariology of the St Thomas Christians, P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, 101-108.

the Assyrian Church of the East, which like him has always condemned this heretical Nestorianism, professed the common faith in the unconfounded unity of Christ throughout the formulation of its own tradition.<sup>112</sup>

In fact, the “first non-official consultation on dialogue within the Syriac tradition”, conducted by the Pro Oriente Foundation in Vienna permitted Pope John Paul II and the patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East Mar Dinkha IV to sign the common Christological declaration of 11 November 1994 in which they affirmed that the controversies of the past and “the divisions brought about in this way were due in large part to misunderstandings” and that “they can indeed, from now on, proclaim together before the world their common faith in the mystery of incarnation”.<sup>113</sup> They acknowledged that they have always maintained the same unique faith in the mystery of Christ and recognized that the Marian formulae of both Churches are legitimate and rightful expressions of the same faith. We cite the relevant part of this important declaration:

Therefore Our Lord Jesus Christ is true God and true man, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity, consubstantial with the Father and consubstantial with us in all things but sin. His divinity and his humanity are united in one person, without confusion or change, without division or separation. In him has been preserved the difference of the natures of divinity and humanity, with all their properties, faculties and operations. But far from constituting “one and another”, the divinity and humanity are united in the person of the same and unique Son of God and Lord Jesus Christ, who is the object of a single adoration.

Christ therefore is not an “ordinary man” whom God adopted in order to reside in him and inspire him, as in the righteous ones and the prophets. But the same God the Word, begotten of his Father before all worlds without beginning according to his divinity, was born of a mother without a father in the last times according to his humanity. The humanity to which the Blessed Virgin Mary gave

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<sup>112</sup> Pro Oriente, *Syriac Dialogue* I, 213-214; for detailed discussion, see four articles under the title “Is the Theology of the Church of the East Nestorian?,” presented by four different authors in the same book (pp. 116-152).

<sup>113</sup> *Common Christological Declaration, AAS 87* (1995) 685.

birth always was that of the Son of God himself. That is the reason why the Assyrian Church of the East is praying the Virgin Mary as “the Mother of Christ our God and Saviour”. In the light of this same faith the Catholic tradition addresses the Virgin Mary as “the Mother of God” and also as “the Mother of Christ”. We both recognize the legitimacy and rightness of these expressions of the same faith and we both respect the preference of each Church in her liturgical life and piety.<sup>114</sup>

To arrive at the common declaration the Assyrian Church of the East, often designated the Nestorian Church, did not make any change in the faith which it has always professed in Jesus Christ, true God and true man in one unique person. The fruit of dialogue was simply the dissipation of misunderstandings and equivocations, as well as the mutual official recognition of the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East that both of them have always professed the same true and authentic Christological and Mariological faith. Therefore it is evident that no Christian Church on the globe has ever professed the heresy known as Nestorianism.

Even though the common Christological declaration of Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV does not affect the St Thomas Christians, who have always professed the Catholic Faith, as many Western missionaries have also testified, it completely dispenses every doubt of the sceptics regarding the authentic faith of the St Thomas Christians before the sixteenth century. At least after this declaration it is evident to all that the particular doctrinal nuances of the East Syrian tradition found in some Chaldean books in Malabar, which some Western missionaries had misinterpreted as “Nestorian errors”, were authentic and Catholic Christological and Mariological expressions of the one and the same faith in Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Similarly, at least since the Second Vatican Council all can understand that what the missionaries had condemned as pagan practices were instances of authentic inculturation, which should have been encouraged and promoted.

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<sup>114</sup> *Common Christological Declaration, AAS 87 (1995) 686.*

## Conclusion

In this chapter an attempt has been made to provide a panoramic view of the Catholic Church in India until the sixteenth century. According to the constant and living tradition, corroborated by historical, liturgical, patristic, archaeological and circumstantial evidence, St Thomas the Apostle, who reached South India in the middle of the first century, founded there some Christian communities and thus originated the first nucleus of the Catholic Church in India. The Indian Church, which had its inception from the evangelising ministry of the Apostle Thomas, was not a ramification or offshoot of the Persian Church, nor a daughter Church of the same. However, over the course of time due to ecclesiastical and canonical reasons the Indian Church entered into communion with the patriarch of its sister Churches in the Persian Empire, but without jeopardizing its autonomy or its particular administrative and organizational structures. The Chaldean metropolitan appointed by the patriarch at the request of the St Thomas Christians, was only a spiritual head; the real ruler and leader of the community was the archdeacon of all India, an indigenous priest, comparable to a high prelate. Since only the Church of St Thomas Christians existed in India until the sixteenth century there was not even any room for a territorial limitation of this Church at that epoch. The metropolitan of all India and the archdeacon of all India freely exercised jurisdiction over the St Thomas Christians in the whole of India.

The St Thomas Christians were fully convinced of the fact that they had received the essential content of their liturgy in Aramaic (Syriac), the language of Our Lord, from the Apostle Thomas himself. This was later enriched and perfected by the reception of liturgical developments in the Churches in Persian Empire, which also possessed the same Thomistic heritage and liturgy. In spite of such liturgical enrichment, the St Thomas Christian tradition gradually emerged as one of the religions of India owing to the fruitful encounter and spontaneous interaction of the Christian faith with the Indian culture *in loco*. The St Thomas Christians always professed the Catholic faith and maintained communion with the Roman Pontiff even before the



Synod of Diamper in 1599, although the particularities of the East Syrian liturgical tradition and the christianised Indian socio-cultural elements could have been misinterpreted as doctrinal errors and pagan practices according to the mentality and theological vision of the Western missionaries at that epoch.

## Chapter Two

# THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE LATIN CHURCH IN INDIA

### Introduction

It should be pointed out from the outset that the Latin Church originated in different regions of the vast Indian subcontinent, which was often designated by the plural expression "East Indies", at different times and under diverse circumstances. Here it is impossible to deal with the missionary efforts and evangelization process in each region. Our intention is simply to consider the first origins and then to present an overview of the growth of the Latin Church in India. Beyond doubt, the history of the Latin Church in India is essentially connected with two institutes, namely the Portuguese Padroado and the Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide. Hence we highlight the nature and functioning of these two missionary agencies as well as the encounter and jurisdictional conflicts between them, since it is impossible to comprehend the origin and progress of the Latin Church in India without a proper understanding of these institutes. We will then proceed to a brief analysis of the context and circumstances of the erection of the new Latin hierarchy in India under the Congregation of Propaganda Fide and the progress of the Latin Church up to the present day.

### 1. The Portuguese Patronage and the Origin of the Latin Church in India

The Portuguese patronage had its origin in the fifteenth century. Even though some allusions to patronage can be found in some of the papal documents dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century, it obtained a kind of solemn ecclesiastical confirmation only on 18 June 1452 when Pope Nicolas V (1447-1455) granted the king of Portugal and his successors full authority to invade, conquer, subdue and subject all the kingdoms and lands

of the infidels and to reduce those peoples to perpetual subjection as a sign of the triumph of the Catholic faith.<sup>1</sup> The bulls *Romanus Pontifex* of the same Pope Nicolas V and *Inter Caetera* of Pope Callistus III (1455-1458) determined the specific significance of Portuguese patronage with regard to the Church. In fact, the popes granted ecclesiastical jurisdiction to the kings of Portugal in all the countries already conquered and yet to be conquered.<sup>2</sup> Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) in the bull *Aeterni Regis* of 21 June 1481 unambiguously confirmed the ordinary ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the king of Portugal from Capes Bojador and Nam as far as the Indies. The spiritual power and authority of the Portuguese Crown included the right to found and erect churches, monasteries and other ecclesiastical institutions as well as the right to appoint ministers.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the right of patronage was originally exercised by the Grand Master of the Military Order of Christ (*Militiae Jesu Christi*) founded by king Diniz of Portugal in 1317 and approved by Pope John XXII on 15 March 1319. The seat of this Military Order of Christ was in Tomar. Upon the request of King Emmanuel I, with the bull *Dum fidei* of 7 June 1514 Pope Leo X (1513-1521) granted the king and his successors the right of exercising directly the *ius patronatus*.<sup>4</sup> Thereupon the king of Portugal began to exercise "ecclesiastical jurisdiction" in all the Portuguese territories already conquered or yet to be conquered.

The right of patronage carried with it a religious monopoly of Portugal in Asia and Africa with the grave consequence of forbidding the entrance to these territories of any missionary who was not sent by Portugal. In fact, Pope Clement VIII (1592-1605)

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas V, the bull *Dum diversas*, *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum in Ecclesiis Africae, Asiae Atque Oceaniae*, tomus 1 (1171-1600), curante Levy Maria Jordão, Olisipone 1868, 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> The bulls *Romanus Pontifex* of Pope Nicolas V and *Inter caetera* of Pope Calixtus III in *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus, 1, 31-34 and 36-37 respectively.

<sup>3</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 1, 47-52.

<sup>4</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 1, 98-99.

granted to Portugal the privilege that all missionaries to Africa and Asia had to sail from Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. Excommunication was foreseen for any missionaries who attempted to enter Japan, China or India from America or from the Philippines.<sup>5</sup> Later, missionaries even had to swear an oath:

- (1) to be loyal to Portugal in all countries discovered or to be discovered, conquered or to be conquered by Portugal;
- (2) to warn Portugal of any activity (political or otherwise) which may be contemplated against her;
- (3) to uphold the rights, concessions and privileges granted to Portugal by the popes;
- (4) to recognize patriarchs, bishops and ecclesiastical superiors, who might be elected by the pope only after presentation by the king;
- (5) to accept all the apostolic letters wherein the rights of Padroado are contained.<sup>6</sup>

In brief, the popes granted excessive and exclusive powers to Portugal for the selection and sending of missionaries, the evangelization and Christianization of populations, as well as the erection of churches and the founding of dioceses.

Although sporadic visits by some Western missionaries can be traced back to the thirteenth century, organized missionary activity of the Latin Church in India began together with the Portuguese colonial expansion.<sup>7</sup> The Portuguese enterprise began in India when Vasco da Gama, who discovered the sea route to India, landed in the harbour of Calicut on 21 May 1498. After having established friendly relations with the king of Calicut he went to Cranganore and there he also entered into a peace treaty

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 2, Bangalore 1951, 170.

<sup>6</sup> D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 2, 171.

<sup>7</sup> For the visits and activities of Latin missionaries in India before the arrival of the Portuguese, see G. M. Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India*, Bombay 1964, 80-105; "Latin Church", in H. C. Perumalil & E. R. Hambye (eds.), *Christianity in India*, Alleppey 1972, 38-45; A. M. Mundaden, *History of Christianity in India*, 120-142; S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, 71-86.

with its king. On 20 November 1498 he left Cranganore, reaching Lisbon on 10 July 1499. The purpose of this first expedition was not evangelization but to “discover” India and to promote the commercial interests of Portugal through trade.<sup>8</sup>

Following Vasco da Gama, Pedro Alvarez Cabral and his men arrived in Calicut on 30 August 1500. Eight Franciscan friars, eight chaplains and a chaplain-general accompanied Cabral’s expedition. The Franciscans who travelled with Cabral soon started their evangelization work and converted many Hindus. Following a conflict with the king of Calicut, Cabral and his soldiers sailed to Cochin, landing there on 24 December. Soon the missionaries began their work in Cochin. Joao do Nova followed Cabral in 1501 bringing with him more Franciscan missionaries who, for the purposes of evangelization, divided themselves between Cochin and Cranganore. The second arrival of Vasco da Gama in 1502 and the arrival of Francesco Albuquerque in 1503 gave fresh impetus to the missionary work. From this time on, a Portuguese fleet sailed to India every year.

In 1503 the Portuguese built a fortress in Cochin, the first European fort in India. They took Cranganore in 1504 and later erected a fortress there. In 1513, a Portuguese fortress was constructed in Calicut and later, in 1531, it was transferred to Chaliyam, a city near Calicut. Cochin was the centre of all Portuguese activity in Kerala and the seat of the Portuguese Viceroy from 1503 until it was transferred to Goa in 1530. The number of Latin Christians steadily increased in Cochin, Cranganore and the neighbourhood through the conversion of non-Christians and mixed marriages. Charitable institutions, monasteries and churches were also built. Thus the first nucleus of the Latin Christians of Kerala was formed in Cochin, the administrative centre of the Portuguese for three decades, and in other places such as Cranganore, Calicut and Quilon.

The first recorded visit of the Portuguese to Mylapore (Meliapore) in Tamilnadu was in 1517. From that time on, there was an effective Portuguese presence on the east coast and there

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<sup>8</sup> A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 245-248 & 254-255.

was even a captain specially appointed for the coast. A Portuguese colony gradually came into being in and around Mylapore and many non-Christians were converted. In 1536/37 there was a great mass conversion of the fishermen on the Pearl Fishery Coast<sup>9</sup> and several thousands received Baptism. This was the greatest missionary achievement of the Portuguese at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The aforementioned Christians, together with other fisher folk converted later along the coast from Trivandrum to the Coromandel, formed the backbone of Tamil Christianity in the sixteenth century. The major community in Tamilnadu at that epoch was in Mylapore.<sup>10</sup>

In the course of time, in addition to the Franciscans, members of other important religious orders like the Jesuits (from 1542), the Dominicans (first monastery in 1548) and the Augustinians (arrived in India in 1572) flocked to India and established their houses and provinces, thus paving the way for successful evangelization.<sup>11</sup> The Christians of the Pearl Fishery Coast, which extends from Cape Camorin to the Island of Pamban or Rameswaram, were greatly enriched by the selfless work of St Francis Xavier, who reached Goa at the beginning of May 1542. In October 1542 he landed at Mannappad on the Fishery Coast and worked on this coast until the end of 1544, though with some intervals. He confirmed the already baptized in the faith and converted thousands and thousands of people to Christianity.

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<sup>9</sup> The Pearl Fishery Coast in Tamilnadu extends from Cape Camorin to the Island Promontory of Rameswaram and from there to Mannar off the Coast of Sri Lanka.

<sup>10</sup> A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 391-428.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. Wicki, "The Portuguese Padroado in India in the 16th Century & St. Francis Xavier", in H. C. Perumalil & E. R. Hambye (eds.), *Christianity in India*, Alleppey 1972, 55; J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India, Volume II, From the Middle of the Sixteenth Century to the End of the Seventeenth Century*, Bangalore 1988, 6-7.

Francis Xavier studied the Tamil language and, with the help of his collaborators, translated catechism and prayer books into Tamil.<sup>12</sup>

In 1544 Francis Xavier visited Kaniyakumari District, then known as the Travancore Coast and many villages, such as Puvar, Kollankod, Vallavilai, Thuthur, Puthenthurai, Thengapattanam, Enayam, Midalam, Vaniyakudi, Kolachel, Kadiapattanam, Muttam, Pallam and Manakkudi completely embraced the Christian faith.<sup>13</sup> Over a period of only one month (November-December 1544) he converted more than ten thousand persons in Travancore. After the first three years (May 1542-May 1545), Francis Xavier stayed in India only from January 1548 until April 1549 and then from January until April 1553. In addition to the places mentioned above, during his stay in India he laboured in Goa, Cochin, Quilon, Mylapore and Bassein.<sup>14</sup>

The Jesuit missions to the Great Mughal Empire marked another important event in the sixteenth century. Having been invited by Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) the Jesuits had led three missions to the royal court. The first mission of three Jesuits under the leadership of Fr Rudolf Acquaviva arrived in the capital city of Fatehpur Sikri in 1580 and stayed at the royal court for three years. The second mission lasted only a few months. The third mission in 1595, headed by Fr Jerome Xavier, lasted for about twenty years and many people were converted during this time. The Jesuits also built churches in Agra, Delhi, Lahore and Patna.<sup>15</sup>

Goa was a Portuguese colony from 1510 to 1961. At the end of February 1510 Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Goa. In 1530

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. G. Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times*, English trans. M. J. Costelloe, vol. 2, Rome 1977, 295-310; J. Wicki, "The Portuguese Padroado in India", 62.

<sup>13</sup> G. Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times*, 463-469; J. Wicki, "The Portuguese Padroado in India", 62.

<sup>14</sup> J. Wicki, "The Portuguese Padroado in India", 62-64.

<sup>15</sup> S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, 166-190; A. Meersman, "Development of the Church under the Padroado", in H. C. Perumalil & E. R. Hambye (eds.), *Christianity in India*, Alleppey 1972, 77-78; X. Kochuparampil, *Evangelization in India*, 296-298.

Nuno da Cunha, governor from 1529 to 1538, transferred the Portuguese administrative capital from Cochin to Goa. From then on, the central government, consisting of the viceroy or governor, chancellor, secretary and chief justice, was settled in Goa. The number of Christians increased day by day thanks to the policy of encouraging inter-religious marriages and the conversion of non-Christians effected by moral force and effective charitable and social activities.<sup>16</sup> Christianity gradually extended also to neighbouring areas, including the Kanara Coast, Chaul, Diu and Daman. Gradually Goa became the chief ecclesiastical centre not only of India, but of the whole Portuguese East.

Another particularly important mission effort, which enabled the conversion of many high caste Hindus and others in Tamilnadu, was the Madurai Mission in the seventeenth century headed by the Jesuit Robert De Nobili, who arrived in Madurai in 1606. Dissatisfied by the failure of the missionary methods of that epoch, he took up his abode in a small ashram. He dressed and comported himself as a member of the Rajah caste, wearing the thread, the *kudumi* and other marks of this caste. He studied the Indian languages Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit. He formulated Christianity in terms and thought-patterns more in accord with the genius of the country and led several thousands to Christ. From the Madurai Mission, Christianity spread to various parts of Tamilnadu like Tiruchirappalli, Salem, Thanjavur, the provinces of Satyamangalam and Dharmapuri, the kingdom of Gingee, etc.<sup>17</sup> In brief, the method of De Nobili was very successful and effective, although it provoked criticism from several quarters.

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<sup>16</sup> G. M. Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India*, 147-174; S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, 118-124; A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 437-467.

<sup>17</sup> A. Meersman, "Development of the Church under the Padroado", 74-76; S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, 279-309; J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, 219-249; X. Koodapuzha, *History of Christianity in India*, 183-188.



## 2. The Latin Hierarchy under the Portuguese Patronage

After a brief presentation of the inception of the Latin Church in India, we turn our attention to the hierarchical organization of the Church under the Portuguese Padroado. Since there was no Latin diocese, nor any Latin bishop in India at that epoch, through the bull *Dum fidei constantiam* of 7 June 1514, Pope Leo X (1513-1521) placed India under the jurisdiction of the vicar of Tomar and all churches and ecclesiastical benefices were reserved to the king of Portugal.<sup>18</sup> However, on 12 June 1514 with the apostolic letter *Pro excellenti* the same Pope erected the diocese of Funchal on the island of Medeira (Portugal) as a suffragan see of the archdiocese of Lisbon and placed the whole of India under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Funchal. In fact the diocese of Funchal comprised, in addition to India, all the other African and Asian territories under Portuguese patronage.<sup>19</sup> The jurisdiction of the vicariate of Tomar was extinguished in the aforementioned territories since they were assigned to the new diocese. The first bishop of Funchal was Don Diogo Pinheiro (1514-1526) who had previously been the vicar of Tomar. Obviously the bishop could not have effectively exercised jurisdiction over such vast territories. Therefore the king of Portugal used to appoint one of the priests as vicar general, who acted as the “ordinary” of the place and exercised jurisdiction over the Latin Christians in India.

### 2.1. Erection of the Diocese of Goa

On 31 January 1533 Pope Clément VII (1523-1534) raised the diocese of Funchal to the rank of an archdiocese and decided on the erection of the diocese of Goa, the first Latin diocese in India, as a suffragan of Funchal. Since the Pope died before the publication of his decision, the apostolic letter *Aequum reputamus* constituting the diocese of Goa was promulgated only on 3 November 1534 by his successor Pope Paul III (1534-1549). However, as the Pope explicitly stated in *Aequum reputamus* the

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<sup>18</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 1, 98-99.

<sup>19</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 1, 100-101.

date of the erection of the diocese of Goa was to be considered as that decided upon by his predecessor, namely 31 January 1533. In *Aequum reputamus*, referring to the decision of Pope Clement VII to erect the diocese of Goa upon the solicitation of the Portuguese King John III, Pope Paul III stated:

[...] whereas the aforesaid King John, desired to enhance divine worship in that island of Goa and to propagate with pious affection the salvation of souls, our predecessor Clement named above, on 31 January, in the tenth year of his Pontificate, after mature deliberation with his brothers, upon their advice, with the same authority, at the supplication made humbly by the aforesaid King John to the same predecessor Clement concerning this matter, for the praise and honour of Almighty God and his glorious Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary and for the honour of all the celestial court, constituted the place or the village as a city, to be called Goa, and the same church of St Catherine as the cathedral church of Goa, under the same invocation, for one bishop to be called the bishop of Goa, who should preside over the Church of Goa, and in it and in the city and diocese should confer and disseminate those spiritual goods which he would know to be expedient for the enhancement of divine worship and the salvation of souls.

Moreover he could exercise episcopal jurisdiction, authority and power, and he could and should exercise freely and rightfully all and everything which other bishops in the kingdom and dominions of Portugal could and should do in their churches, cities and dioceses by law, custom or any other title whatsoever. And he should be subject to the metropolitan and primatial right of the archbishop of Funchal for the time being, with the see, episcopal and capitulary funds (*mensa*), other insignias and episcopal jurisdictions, as well as all privileges, immunities, faculties and favours which other cathedral churches and their prelates in the same kingdom of Portugal were using, possessing and enjoying by law, custom or by any other title whatsoever and could use, possess and enjoy in the future by any title.<sup>20</sup>

The territory of Goa stretched from the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa to China and Japan in East Asia.<sup>21</sup> The archbishop of Funchal exercised metropolitan authority over the whole territory

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<sup>20</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 1, 148-149; *IRD*, 18-19.

<sup>21</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 1, 149.

indicated above. Don Francisco de Melo was chosen the first bishop of Goa, but he died in 1536, before he could begin his journey to India. Hence Don John de Albuquerque, the confessor of King John III, was nominated bishop of Goa on 22 April 1537 and was consecrated on 13 January 1538. In June 1539 he solemnly took possession of the cathedral in Goa. His task was to build up a diocese, which included Eastern Africa, Malacca, the Moluccas (Indonesia), China and Japan. Albuquerque governed the diocese of Goa until his death on 23 February 1553.<sup>22</sup>

## 2.2. Constitution of the Ecclesiastical Province of Goa

After the death of Bishop Albuquerque the see remained vacant for a long period of time. During this vacancy, on 4 February 1558 by the apostolic constitution *Etsi sancta* Pope Paul IV (1555-1559) constituted the ecclesiastical province of Goa, elevating the diocese of Goa to the status of a metropolitan archdiocese and erecting the dioceses of Cochin in India and Malacca (Malaysia) as suffragan sees.<sup>23</sup> According to the apostolic constitution, upon the persistent and efficacious request of the Portuguese King Sebastian, for the honour and glory of almighty God, the exaltation of Orthodox faith, as well as for the glory of the blissful and militant Church,

[...] we erect and constitute the said Church of Goa which, as referred, is vacant, as a metropolitan Church and the episcopal see of Goa as an archiepiscopal, and the seat of archiepiscopal metropolitan government of a province for one archbishop, to be

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, 31; J. Wicki, "The Portuguese Padroado in India", 51.

<sup>23</sup> The apostolic constitutions *Etsi sancta* (Goa) and *Pro excellenti* (diocese of Cochin) can be found in *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 1, 191-192 and 193-195 respectively. In the apostolic constitution the date of the erection of the new ecclesiastical province of Goa is indicated as "Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on 4 February, in the year of the Incarnation of the Lord 1557, the third year of our Pontificate". Based on this, several authors have given the year as 1557. In the first edition we also followed them but the year of the Incarnation of the Lord 1557 is really 1558 AD. Cf. A. Capelli, *Cronologia, cronografia e calendario perpetuo*, 9-10; the *Annuario Pontificio* also indicates the year as 1558.

named in future the archbishop of Goa, with the right of bearing of the pallium and cross, and all the various single insignia, and so forth, – with the rights of patronage guaranteed to the same Sebastian and his successors, kings of Portugal and Algarve for the time being, safe and inviolate, who shall henceforth possess, it in perpetuity over the same metropolitan Church, as they held it formerly over the cathedral church of Goa – and we adorn it with the archiepiscopal and metropolitan name and title.

Moreover, we constitute the aforementioned Church of Goa, the cities of Malacca and Cochin and their aforementioned dioceses as its archiepiscopal and metropolitan province and the same Churches of Malacca and Cochin and their prelates for the time being to be suffragans of the archbishop of Goa, who as members in relation to the head are subject to the same archbishop and his metropolitan rights. We assign and grant in perpetuity to the aforementioned province of Goa the entire clergy and people of the same Churches and the city of Goa as the provincial subjects, whose individual cases are to be referred according to the prescriptions of the sacred canons to the said archbishop of Goa, and as regards the archiepiscopal, metropolitan and provincial jurisdiction we subject them to the same.<sup>24</sup>

The diocese of Cochin included the Malabar Coast (excluding the territory of the St Thomas Christians), Coromandel Coast, Madura Mission and Karnatic Mission, as well as Burma and Ceylon. The diocese of Malacca comprised the Molucas (Indonesia), China and Japan. The first archbishop of Goa was Don Gaspar de Leao Pereira, who arrived in Goa on 1 December 1560. The first bishop of Cochin was Don Jorge Temudo, who governed the diocese until he was transferred to Goa as archbishop in 1567.

Since the bishop of Cochin could not have extended his effective pastoral care to the faithful on account of the great distances between the various places, heedful of the recommendations of King Philip of Portugal, on 9 January 1606 Pope Paul V (1605-1621) bifurcated the diocese of Cochin and erected the diocese of Mylapore. The consistorial minute states:

[...] after mature deliberation about these matters with my most reverend Lords, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, upon their

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<sup>24</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 1, 191-192; *IRD*, 54-55.

advice and with their consent, with the fullness of apostolic power, at the supplication made humbly in writing by the aforesaid king Philip to His Holiness, for the praise of Almighty God and his most glorious Mother the Virgin Mary and for the glory of Saint Thomas and of the whole Church triumphant and likewise for the exaltation of the faith, [the Pope] adorned the town of Mylapore with the name, title and honour of a city, and erected it as the city of Saint Thomas; or otherwise Mylapore, and erected the aforesaid Church of Saint Thomas as a cathedral church, under the invocation of the same Saint Thomas, for one bishop to be called the bishop of Saint Thomas, or otherwise of Mylapore, to preside over it and have the church itself, that is to say its structures and buildings enlarged and made to resemble the form of a cathedral church.<sup>25</sup>

The territory of the new diocese consisted of the Coromandel Coast, Orissa, Bengal and Pegu or Burma.<sup>26</sup> The Pope subjected the diocese, clergy and the Christian faithful to the archbishop of Goa as regards metropolitan jurisdiction. Until 1 September 1886 there were only three Latin dioceses in India, the archdiocese of Goa and its two suffragans, Cochin and Mylapore, although, as we shall see below, some vicariates apostolic were erected under the Congregation of Propaganda Fide from the beginning of the eighteenth century on.

Goa was the capital of the Portuguese political and ecclesiastical empire in the East. As we have seen above, the territory and jurisdiction of the archdiocese of Goa extended to all the territories conquered by the Portuguese in Asia and Africa. In the course of time, in addition to the diocese of Malacca in Malaysia (1558), the sees of Macau near Hong Kong (1576), Funay in Japan (1588), Mozambique (1612) in East Africa, as well as Nanking and Peking in China (1690) were erected outside India as suffragans of the archdiocese of Goa. Hence the archbishop of Goa could exercise metropolitan jurisdiction over all these territories, which even embraced two continents.

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<sup>25</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae in Ecclesiis Africae, Asiae atque Oceaniae*, tomus 2 (1601-1700), curante Vicecomite De Paiva Manso, Olisipone 1870, 4; IRD, 54-57.

<sup>26</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 5.

### 2.3. The Rights and Obligations of Patronage

The documents erecting the dioceses Goa, Cochin and Mylapore, clearly defined the nature and extension of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the king of Portugal in India and in other Portuguese territories. According to the documents, the rights, privileges and obligations of the king of Portugal who enjoyed the *ius patronatus* included:

1. The right of determining the utility and opportunity of erecting new dioceses and proposing the matter to the Roman Pontiff, who could not erect any diocese in the Portuguese territory without the consent of the king.

2. The right of presenting to the Roman Pontiff worthy candidates for appointment as bishops in the dioceses under Portuguese dominion, at the time of their erection and whenever such sees remained vacant; the pope could not appoint any bishop in Portuguese territories except by such presentation.

3. The right of presenting to the bishops thus appointed the deans, canons, honorary canons, dignitaries, beneficiaries, parish priests, chaplains, missionaries and all other ecclesiastical officials. This provision carried with it a Portuguese monopoly in India, since to such offices the king mainly presented Portuguese nationals or those who, he believed, would safeguard the political and commercial interests of Portugal as well.

4. The obligation to erect, maintain and repair cathedrals, churches, monasteries, convents, oratories, schools, hospices as well as all other charitable and ecclesiastical institutions.

5. The obligation to provide the cathedrals, churches and chapels with vestments, ornaments, chalices, patens, vessels, books, lamps, organs, bells, mass wines, the flour for the hosts, and other items necessary for divine worship.

6. The obligation to maintain the bishop, canons, deans, parish priests, cantors, school masters and all other ecclesiastical officials, paying them salary and allowances from the revenues pertaining to the king from the East Indies.

7. The Roman Pontiff could not revoke or alter the *ius patronatus*, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the king of Portugal, without the explicit consent of the same king.<sup>27</sup>

It is evident that the king of Portugal was not only the political authority but also the supreme ecclesiastical power in the Portuguese territories. His powers were extremely vast and unlimited. The erection of dioceses, appointment of bishops, nomination of parish priests and missionaries as well as the whole ecclesiastical governance ultimately depended on him.

### 3. The Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide and the Latin Church in India

The popes conferred *ius patronatus* upon the king of Portugal when the Holy See had neither the organization nor the resources to conduct missionary activities in the non-Christian world. From the second half of the sixteenth century many were considering the institution of a central office or even a congregation for the propagation of the faith in the newly "discovered countries", especially so as to be able to coordinate mission work undertaken by various religious congregations and diocesan clergy who often found themselves in conflict. As underlined by Velasio De Paolis, the Church in this period turned its attention to the evangelization of new peoples, urged in this work also by the desire to contrast the controversial methods to which the kings of Spain and Portugal resorted in the attempt to propose the Gospel to the new countries.<sup>28</sup>

The aspirations of many for a central ecclesial organ of evangelization reached fulfillment when Pope Gregory XV erected the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*) on 22 June 1622 by the constitution *Inscrutabili*

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<sup>27</sup> Our description of the rights and obligations of the royal patron is based on the documents erecting the dioceses in India, namely *Aequum reputamus* (diocese of Goa), *Etsi sancta* (archdiocese of Goa), *Pro excellenti* (Cochin) and the consistorial minute *Hodie Sanctissimus* (Mylapore).

<sup>28</sup> V. De Paolis, "La Congregazione per l'evangelizzazione dei popoli", in *La Curia Romana nella Cost. Ap. "Pastor Bonus"*, Città del Vaticano 1990, 361.

*divinae*.<sup>29</sup> At that time the Congregation had the task of directing and supervising missionary activity all over the world and of appointing ministers to all the missions to preach and teach the Gospel and to watch over Catholic doctrine. At that epoch this Congregation, often called “omnipotent” in common parlance, had the full authority to take all the decisions necessary to accomplish the task assigned to it, namely the missionary activity all over the world.<sup>30</sup>

Until the erection of the Propaganda Fide, evangelization in India was the monopoly of the Portuguese Padroado. Because of the decline of political power and the lack of financial resources, from the early seventeenth century onwards, Portugal was no longer able to carry on the Christianisation of a vast country like India or to maintain adequately the Church and her institutions. In this context Propaganda Fide took steps to send missionaries directly from Rome, without the involvement of Portugal. From 1622, Propaganda Fide permitted all Orders and Congregations to work in India without the prior permission of the Portuguese government or the Goan ecclesiastical and political authorities.<sup>31</sup> In 1633, with the brief *Ex debito Pastoralis* Pope Urban VIII formally abolished the religious monopoly of Portugal and granted complete freedom to the heralds of the Gospel to go to missions by whichever way they found best, anyone who prevented them being threatened with excommunication.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the religious orders already present in India, in the course of the seventeenth century the Discalced Carmelites, the Capuchins, the Theatines and later on the Paris Foreign Missionary Society arrived in India. Most of these missionaries worked under Propaganda Fide.

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<sup>29</sup> *Collectanea Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 1, Romae 1907, 2-4.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Collectanea Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 1, 4; V. De Paolis, “La Congregazione per l’evangelizzazione dei popoli”, 363.

<sup>31</sup> Dominic of St. Theresa (OCD), “Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda”, in H. C. Perumalil & E. R. Hambye (eds.), *Christianity in India*, Alleppey 1972, 104; J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, 414.

<sup>32</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 48-49.



Evangelization progressed in different parts of India under the supervision and direction of Propaganda Fide, in spite of the bitter conflicts and controversies between the two evangelising agencies.<sup>33</sup>

At that epoch the whole territory of the East Indies was divided among the four Portuguese Padroado dioceses: the metropolitan archdiocese of Goa, the suffragan dioceses of Cochin and Mylapore, and the St Thomas Christian diocese of Angamaly-Cranganore.<sup>34</sup> These four Portuguese dioceses covered canonically the whole of the East Indies, even though only a few centres were effectively occupied and controlled by the Portuguese ecclesiastical and civil authorities. According to the principles of *ius patronatus* it was the exclusive right of the Portuguese king to decide the erection of dioceses in the newly discovered lands and to present to the Roman Pontiff persons worthy of appointment as bishops in the dioceses thus erected and whenever they remained vacant. Since the whole of the East Indies was covered by the four Portuguese dioceses, the Holy See could not have erected dioceses nor appointed bishops in India without the consent of the Portuguese Crown and the knowledge of the metropolitan of Goa.

In these circumstances, without revoking the *ius patronatus* of the Portuguese Crown, the Holy See adopted the provisional and administrative measure of erecting vicariates apostolic and appointing vicars apostolic coming directly under the Pope. The vicars apostolic were titular bishops receiving jurisdiction directly from the Holy See to work in certain districts assigned to them within the existing Padroado dioceses. Thus, in India and South Asia the vicars apostolic directly appointed by Rome took full charge of the pastoral and missionary work in the regions, which at

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Dominic of St. Theresa, "Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda", 104-128; G. M. Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage in the 19th and the 20th Centuries", 152-170.

<sup>34</sup> On 20 December 1599 Pope Clement VIII suppressed the metropolitan status of the ancient see of the St Thomas Christians, made it a suffragan of Goa and on 4 August 1600 imposed upon it the Portuguese patronage. See chapter III, nos. 4-7.

that time were juridically under the authority of the Padroado.<sup>35</sup> Propaganda Fide erected the first vicariate apostolic of Bijapur or Idalcan in 1637, extended later to Golconda and Pegu (1669) and to the whole of the great Moghul Empire (1696).<sup>36</sup> Then in 1700 the vicariate apostolic of Malabar (later Verapoly) was created, especially for the St Thomas Christians.<sup>37</sup>

The intervention of Propaganda in India and especially the erection of vicariates prepared the ground for a long jurisdictional battle between the missionaries and vicars apostolic of Propaganda Fide and the missionaries and bishops of the Portuguese Padroado, who accused the Holy See of unilaterally and unjustly infringing upon the rights of the Portuguese Crown, recognized and confirmed by many Roman Pontiffs. As Dominic states: "Lack of agreement between Rome and Portugal regarding the erection of vicariates, their provisional character, lack of clarity concerning the powers the vicars enjoyed, the interference of other powers in some cases, all these contributed much to turn this complementary intervention of Propaganda into a kind of permanent conflict with the Padroado".<sup>38</sup> Prof. G. M. Moraes, a historian of the Latin Church in India, has even compared this conflict to a "regular civil war between the two parties in the same Church, or rather two systems of ecclesiastical colonialism - the Portuguese Padroado and the Italian intrusion backed by the Propaganda", a civil war which, starting with the erection of the first vicariate in 1637, ended only in 1953.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Dominic of St. Theresa, "Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda", 105; J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, 415-416.

<sup>36</sup> Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, 46-50; J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, 417-420; S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, 335-341; Dominic of St. Theresa, "Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda", 105-106.

<sup>37</sup> See chapter III, no. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Dominic of St. Theresa, "Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda", 105.

<sup>39</sup> G. M. Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage", 155.

From the second half of the seventeenth century Portuguese power in India began to decline further as other European colonial powers like the Dutch, English, French and Danish seized the main centres in India. Portugal could not exercise her rights of patronage in territories under other colonizers. By the beginning of the nineteenth century Portuguese political power had been reduced to very limited areas like Goa, Daman and Diu, owing to the establishment of English supremacy in India centring on Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The decline of political power and the lack of financial resources prevented Portugal from carrying on the evangelization of vast regions like the Indies or adequately maintaining the Church and its institutions. Moreover, interest in the missions was dwindling, since the political situation in Portugal had suddenly turned viciously anti-religious. In 1833 Portugal broke off diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and what little activity there was in the missions came to a halt due to the decree of 30 May 1833 which suppressed the religious Orders throughout the Portuguese Empire.<sup>40</sup> The Portuguese Crown failed to fulfil the obligations of patronage even with regard to the four Portuguese dioceses in India, which remained vacant for a long period of time.

The Church in India was in a desolate and deplorable situation and it was generally believed that Indian Catholicism itself would become extinct if the Holy See did not intervene.<sup>41</sup> Therefore many other vicariates were created in spite of strong protests by the Portuguese government and ecclesiastical authorities. Thus Pope Gregory XVI (1831-1846) who had been Prefect of Propaganda Fide before his election, erected the vicariates of Madras (1832) which took over a great part of Golconda, Bengal (1834) which was given a part of Great Mogul, Ceylon in Sri Lanka (1834) and the vicariate of Coromandel (1834). After the aforementioned dismemberment, the remaining

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<sup>40</sup> G. M. Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage", 156; A. Da Silva Rego, *Le Patronage portugais de l'Orient*, Lisboa 1957, 121-122; see also E. R. Hull, *Bombay Mission-History with a Special Study of the Padroado Question*, vol. 1, Bombay 1839, 231-234.

<sup>41</sup> For details, see J. Puliurumpil, *A Period of Jurisdictional Conflict in the Suriani Church of India (1800-1838)*, Kottayam 1993, 205-217.

part of the vicariate apostolic of Great Mogul was called Bombay from the year 1832 on.<sup>42</sup> Obviously all these vicariates apostolic were superimposed on the pre-existing Padroado dioceses without explicitly derogating from the Padroado jurisdiction.

#### 4. The Partial Suppression and Re-establishment of Portuguese Patronage

The disastrous and scandalous jurisdictional conflicts between the vicars apostolic directly appointed by the Holy See and the Portuguese ecclesiastical and civil authorities adversely affected the progress of the Catholic Church in India. Finally, after many discussions, but without consulting the Portuguese Crown, with the apostolic letter *Multa praeclare* of 24 April 1838 Pope Gregory XVI suppressed the Padroado jurisdiction in India except in the archdiocese of Goa.<sup>43</sup> After referring to the erection of vicariates and other provisions made for the good of the souls, the Pope stated:

We understand that by these things, which have been hitherto decreed by us concerning the region of the Indies, the good of religion in the greater part of the peninsula has been provided for. Yet besides those places which have been handed over to the vicars apostolic for administration, not a few regions still remain there, for whose spiritual welfare we are bound to provide, and which are situated within the boundaries of the dioceses of Cranganore, Cochin, and Mylapore or St Thomas. We know that the ecclesiastical discipline, the morals of the people, the Catholic faith in those places which have lacked a pastor for such a long period of time, have suffered great damage, and we are also well acquainted with the fact that many are abusing the pretext of defending and preserving the rights of those dioceses in order to oppose the vicars apostolic, whom the Apostolic See has appointed, to attack their authority and endeavour to stir up a pernicious schism. We distinctly perceive that, in virtue of the office, which God has committed to us in succession to St Peter, we are fully obliged to regulate the care of the Church even in any remote part of the world,

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Dominic of St. Theresa, "Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda", 111-128.

<sup>43</sup> *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 5, 195-198; *IRD*, 114-125.

and to decree those things which we consider could be of aid to religion everywhere. Therefore, having taken counsel concerning so grave a matter with our venerable brothers, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, appointed for the affairs of Propaganda Fide – the sentence of the same cardinals have been approved – and after making a mature consideration of the whole matter, with the plenitude of apostolic power, we judged that the following must be decreed. That is to say, in a provisional way and as long as the Apostolic See has not deliberated anything else new, we decree that all those regions which are comprised within the boundaries of the diocese of Mylapore or St Thomas and which up to this time have not been entrusted to a vicar apostolic, must be united to the vicariate apostolic of Madras and that all jurisdiction and authority, ecclesiastical and spiritual, over those regions belong to the venerable brother Daniel, bishop of Salditan, vicar apostolic of Madras and to his successors. For the same reason we order that those regions which are contained within the boundaries of the dioceses of Cranganore and Cochin and which have not yet been committed to a vicar apostolic, must be united to the vicariate apostolic, established in the Malabar region, whose seat is in the town of Verapoly, and that all jurisdiction and authority, ecclesiastical and spiritual, in those regions shall pertain to the venerable brother Francis Xavier, bishop of Amata, the vicar apostolic residing in Verapoly and to his successors. And that Malacca, as well as the region beyond the Ganges may also receive the benefits of our apostolic solicitude, and that we may provide for the safety and increment of religion in that region, we in the same provisional way subject that entire region to the jurisdiction of our venerable brother Federici Cao, bishop of Zama, vicar apostolic of Ava and Pegu.

We declare that in the ecclesiastical and spiritual government of those regions, the abovementioned vicars apostolic immediately depend only on us and the Apostolic See, they (vicars apostolic) alone must be considered by all the true Ordinaries of those places and all must obey them and receive ecclesiastical jurisdiction and faculties from them. Therefore we derogate from the aforementioned apostolic letters of our predecessors with regard to the erection and the boundaries of the dioceses of Cranganore, Cochin, Mylapore or St Thomas and likewise from the apostolic letter *Pro excellenti* promulgated by Paul IV on 4 February 1558 concerning the establishment of the bishopric of Malacca and moreover we repeal also the apostolic letter of our predecessor Paul IV of happy memory on 4 February 1558, beginning *Etsi sancta*, concerning the erection of the archdiocese of Goa so that in future

the archbishop of Goa can in no way exercise any jurisdiction over those regions, under any title whatsoever, even worthy of special mention.<sup>44</sup>

The Pope explicitly derogated from the apostolic letters of his predecessors concerning the erection of the dioceses of Goa, Cochin, Mylapore and Cranganore as well as their territorial boundaries. The Portuguese diocese of Mylapore was suppressed and its territory became part of the vicariate apostolic of Madras. The Portuguese Padroado sees of Cranganore (St Thomas Christian) and Cochin were annexed to the vicariate of Malabar (Verapoly). The territory of Malacca was allotted to the vicariate apostolic of Ava and Pegu. The Padroado jurisdiction was limited to the archdiocese of Goa. The apostolic letter *Etsi sancta* constituting the ecclesiastical province of Goa was repealed and the metropolitan rights of the archbishop of Goa were suppressed both inside and outside India. The vicars apostolic received exclusive and proper jurisdiction in their territories.

The apostolic letter only worsened the situation and gave rise to what some authors call the "Goan Schism".<sup>45</sup> The vicars apostolic appointed by the Holy See wholeheartedly accepted the apostolic letter, while the Portuguese Crown, the Portuguese bishops and clergy, firmly and resolutely rejected *Multa praeclare* as an arbitrary and unjust encroachment upon their acquired rights. The Portuguese bishops, clergy, religious and the Christian faithful subject to them decisively and publicly disobeyed the apostolic letter.<sup>46</sup> The Propaganda Fide labelled the followers of Padroado as schismatics because they disobeyed the supreme authority of the Pope, while these latter treated the Propaganda missionaries and vicars apostolic as intruders. Prof. Moraes provides a vivid picture of the grave situation:

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<sup>44</sup> *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 5, 196-197; *IRD*, 118-121.

<sup>45</sup> For a balanced evaluation of the schism, A. Da Silva Rego, *Le Patronage portugais de l'Orient*, 272-289.

<sup>46</sup> For more about the jurisdictional controversy and the situation in the territories, see S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India 1707-1858*, Cambridge 1985, 288-294; A. Da Silva Rego, *Le Patronage portugais de l'Orient*, 144-147; E. R. Hull, *Bombay Mission-History*, vol. 1, 249-490.

The Propaganda dubbed the followers of the Padroado as dissidents and schismatics, while these latter remained firm in their opinion and treated the Propaganda agents as insolent intruders. Henceforward the age-long activity in which Propaganda missionaries had indulged, not in effecting conversion to the faith but bringing about change of jurisdiction among the faithful, assumed a sacrosanct character. It was in their eyes a meritorious act which was tantamount to reducing dissidents to Rome, though in their heart of hearts they must have known that they were only wasting their energy in trying to convert Catholics into Catholics.<sup>47</sup>

The Portuguese pointed out that, according to the various apostolic letters granting ecclesiastical jurisdiction to the king of Portugal even the Pope could not abrogate the patronage rights without the explicit consent of the same king. On 8 October 1838 Antonio Feliciano de Santa Rita Carvalho, the archbishop-elect of Goa wrote a long pastoral letter to the governors, suffragan bishops, clergy and laity declaring that the subjects of Padroado were not only free from obeying the papal letter, but actually bound not to obey it.<sup>48</sup> He concluded the pastoral letter as follows:

We have often made our profession of faith and obedience to the Holy See, but this is not incompatible with another oath which we have also taken, of equal force and solemnity, to maintain fidelity and obedience to our sovereign, and to maintain untouched the prerogatives of the royal patronage and of our metropolitan see. And as the supposed brief attacks these royal rights, and offends against the ordinary rights of our suffragans as well as our own, we feel bound to protest against and legally to resist the execution of this or any similar brief [...]. We order all our subjects not to admit or to give effect to the brief referred to, unless it is fortified by the royal consent of the Queen, to whom we have communicated an account of this new usurpation designed by the Propagandists, in

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<sup>47</sup> G. M. Moraes, "The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage", 158.

<sup>48</sup> The content of this pastoral letter can be found in E. R. Hull, *Bombay Mission-History*, vol., 1, 244-249; A. Da Silva Rego, *Le Patronage portugais de l'Orient*, 137-142.

order that she may make due protest to Rome, and ask the sovereign Pontiff for a suitable declaration about the matter.<sup>49</sup>

While the battle for jurisdiction continued in the territories, Pope Gregory XVI and his successor Pius IX (1846-1878), together with the officials of Propaganda Fide, proceeded with their endeavours to execute the apostolic letter, but without much success. By reorganization, divisions and bifurcation, in the course of time even several new vicariates apostolic such as Agra (1845), Mangalore (1845), Patna (1845), Quilon (1845), Madurai (1846), Jaffna in Sri Lanka (1849), Mysore (1850), Vishakapatanam (1850), Coimbatore (1850), Pondicherry (1850), Calcutta (1850), Krishnanagar (1851), Hyderabad (1851), Punjab (1880) and Kandy in Sri Lanka, (1883) were erected.<sup>50</sup> On the question of the suppression of Padroado and the subsequent events the evaluation of G. Martina seems to be balanced and objective. He observes, "the Brief of Gregory XVI had polyvalent effects: on the one hand it provoked a long series of jurisdictional conflicts, that the Vatican simply calls 'schism' not only in its official documents, but also in its diplomatic correspondences with the Nuncio in Lisbon, on the other hand it multiplied the apostolic vicariates and constituted a strong shake to the Church in India, too much accustomed to await everything from the State, stimulating it to act on its own proper strength".<sup>51</sup>

In the course of time it became all the more evident that the contrast between the Portuguese Crown and the Holy See, as well as between their representatives on the battlefield in India could not have been settled by the arbitrary suppression of Padroado or through mutual threats, censors and punishments. Therefore, following the re-establishment of diplomatic relations in 1841 the Holy See and the Portuguese government began to engage in negotiations, which led to the concordat of 21 February 1857 for

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<sup>49</sup> E. R. Hull, *Bombay Mission-History*, vol. 1, 249; A. Da Silva Rego, *Le Patronage portugais de l'Orient*, 141-142.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. 5, Romae 1886, 172-175; S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India 1707-1858*, 294-302.

<sup>51</sup> G. Martina, *Pio IX (1851-1866)*, Roma 1986, 384.



the continuation of the Portuguese Crown's exercise of the rights of patronage in India and in China. The treaty, which re-established and regulated the patronage was confirmed and ratified on 6 February 1860 and was published on 30 May 1860. We cite only some important articles:

Art. 1: In virtue of the respective apostolic bulls and in accordance with the sacred canons, the exercise of the right of patronage of the Portuguese Crown with regard to India and China will continue in the cathedrals declared below:

Art. 2: With regard to India: in the metropolitan and primatial Church of Goa; in the archiepiscopal Church *ad honorem* of Cranganore; in the episcopal Church of Cochin; in the episcopal Church of S. Thomas of Mylapore; and in the episcopal Church of Malaca.

Art. 3: With regard to China: in the episcopal Church of Macau.

Art. 7: In view of the considerations of religious convenience, presented by the Holy See, concerning the erection of a new diocese in some part of the present territory of the archdiocese of Goa, the Portuguese government, as patron, will contribute, as far as it can, in order that this erection may be realised opportunely, within the limits and in the places which in agreement with the Holy See shall be deemed more suitable to the good administration of that Church and to the convenience of the faithful.

Art. 14: In those parts of the territory, which will remain outside the limits assigned to the abovementioned dioceses in India, new dioceses can be founded with the due formalities, in which dioceses the exercise of the patronage of the Portuguese Crown will commence at that time.<sup>52</sup>

The concordat confirmed the Portuguese patronage in the metropolitan see of Goa and re-established the Portuguese dioceses of Cranganore (St Thomas Christian), Cochin, Mylapore and Malacca, which together formed the ecclesiastical province of Goa. The concordat even recognized the right of Portugal to constitute new dioceses under its patronage. In brief, the Portuguese royal patronage was fully re-established with all its rights and privileges,

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<sup>52</sup> *Conventio inter Pium IX et Petrum V Regem Portugalliae, Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 7, 316-322; *IRD*, 126-129.

as if it had never been suppressed. The only outcome favourable to the Holy See was that the King and the Pope, "wishing to put an end as soon as possible to the misunderstandings and dissensions which have afflicted and are still afflicting the churches in the East Indies, to the great detriment of the interests of religion and public peace of the faithful of the same churches", "agreed to proceed without delay to the drafting of an additional act or regulation, by which the limits of the said episcopates of the patronage may be defined".<sup>53</sup> In fact, the aforementioned four Portuguese dioceses covered the whole of India and hence there was no free territory.

### 5. The Erection of the New Latin Hierarchy in India under Propaganda Fide

Even after the re-establishment and regulation of Portuguese patronage in 1860, diplomatic contacts and negotiations between the Holy See and the Portuguese government continued and consequently "His Holiness the Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII, and His Most Faithful Majesty King Don Louis I, animated by the desire to foster and promote the greater progress of Christianity in the East Indies, and to regulate therein in a stable and definitive way the patronage of the Portuguese Crown, have resolved to draw up a concordat". The new concordat was signed on 23 June 1886. The relevant articles follow:

Art. 1: In virtue of the ancient pontifical concessions, the exercise of the patronage of the Portuguese Crown will continue, in conformity with the sacred canons, in the cathedral Churches of the East Indies, according to the modifications expressed in the present concordat.

Art. 2: As regards the metropolitan and primatial Church of Goa, its archbishop shall continue to exercise the rights of metropolitan in his suffragan dioceses.

By a gracious concession of His Holiness the archbishop for the time being, shall be raised to the dignity of honorary patriarch of the East Indies, and he shall also enjoy the privilege of presiding over the national councils of all the East Indies, which shall ordinarily

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<sup>53</sup> Art. 11, *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 7, 319.

meet at Goa, the Pope reserving to himself the right to dispose otherwise in particular circumstances.

Art. 3: The ecclesiastical province of Goa shall consist, in addition to the metropolitan see, of the following three dioceses: *Daman* which shall have also the title of *Cranganore*, *Cochin*, and *St Thomas of Mylapore*.

Art. 4: In the metropolitan diocese of Goa as well as in the three suffragan sees, the right of patronage shall be exercised by the Portuguese Crown.

The boundaries and the places subject to the three dioceses will be indicated on a separate sheet.

Art. 7: For the four dioceses of *Bombay*, *Mangalore*, *Quilon* and *Madurai*, which will be erected along with the institution of the hierarchy of the Indies, the metropolitans together with the suffragan bishops, on the occasion of the vacancy of an episcopal see, likewise the suffragans of the province when the archiepiscopal see falls vacant, shall form a *terna* according to their free choice and shall communicate it to the archbishop of Goa who shall transmit it to the Crown, which must within six months present to the Holy See a candidate from among the three listed in the *terna*; once the time limit has expired, the free choice devolves on the Holy See.

Art. 8: The Supreme Pontiff shall name for the first time the archbishops and bishops of the four dioceses indicated in the preceding article, which shall be founded with the constitution of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Art. 10: Having regulated the patronage of the Crown in this way, in all the remaining territory of the East Indies, the Holy See shall enjoy complete liberty to nominate the bishops and to determine those matters which it deems opportune for the good of the faithful.<sup>54</sup>

According to this concordat at the time of the erection of the new Latin hierarchy the archbishop of Goa would be elevated to the dignity of honorary patriarch of the East Indies. The archbishop of Goa would obtain the privilege of presiding over the national provincial councils, which should ordinarily meet in Goa. Well-defined boundaries were to be set for the ecclesiastical province of

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<sup>54</sup> *Publicum de re sacra conventum die 23 Iunii anno 1886 a S. Sede et Lusitaniae Rege initum*; ASS 19 (1886) 185-189; IRD, 144-149.

Goa, which would consist of Daman, a new diocese to be created near Goa and the sees of Cochin and Mylapore. The St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Cranganore would be suppressed and its title was to be granted to the new diocese of Daman.

The king of Portugal would retain his full patronage rights and obligations over the four Padroado dioceses in India (Goa, Daman, Cochin and Mylapore) and would obtain the right of presenting candidates even to the four Propaganda dioceses to be created, namely Bombay, Mangalore, Quilon and Madurai.<sup>55</sup> The main advantage of this concordat consisted of the fact that the territorial boundaries of the four Padroado dioceses could be determined in such a way that the rest of the territory remained outside the Padroado jurisdiction. In such territories of the East Indies, the Holy See would enjoy complete liberty to erect dioceses, nominate bishops and determine other matters opportune for the good of the faithful

In accordance with the resolutions of the concordat, on 1 September 1886 Pope Leo XIII established the new Latin hierarchy in India under the authority of Propaganda Fide, with the apostolic letter *Humanae salutis auctor*.<sup>56</sup> In the first part of the letter the Pope gives a brief account of Christianity in India: the preaching of Apostle Thomas, the arrival of the Western missionaries, the constitution of Padroado dioceses and the erection of vicariates. Then the Pope decreed:

Wherefore, as the serious nature of the matter required, after asking the opinion of our venerable brothers, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church appointed to the sacred council for the propagation of the Christian name, after pouring forth prayers to Almighty God in humility from the profundity of our heart, and after imploring the

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<sup>55</sup> When the hierarchy was erected on 1 September 1886, the diocese was designated Madurai. But on 7 June 1887 the name was changed to Trichinopoly and later, on 21 October 1950, to Tiruchirapalli. The present diocese of Madurai was erected only on 8 January 1938, which became an archdiocese on 21 October 1953. See the entries Tiruchirapalli and Madurai in the *Annuario Pontificio* of any year.

<sup>56</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Humanae salutis auctor*, in *Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. 5, Romae 1886, 164-179; ASS 19 (1886) 176-184.

help of the Immaculate Mother of God and that of the Saints Peter and Paul, as well as of the holy Apostle Thomas and Saint Francis Xavier who many years ago brought the light of the Gospel to those peoples and who now guard and protect them with their heavenly patronage, we, with a sure knowledge and after mature deliberation, from the plenitude of our apostolic power, with the authority of this letter establish "motu proprio" an episcopal hierarchy covering all the missions of the East Indies according to the prescriptions of canon law for the greater glory of God and the increase of the Catholic faith.

Furthermore, following in the footsteps of our predecessors, who first erected the archdiocese of Goa and then the dioceses of Cochin, Mylapore and Cranganore as suffragans to it, and in accordance with the recent agreement with the illustrious and most faithful king of Portugal and Algarve, we confirm the same dioceses and wish them to be reunited again into one ecclesiastical province.

Moreover, by our own apostolic authority, we erect and constitute, according to the tenor of this letter, all the vicariates apostolic of the whole peninsula and those of the island of Ceylon, which we described above, as well as the prefecture situated in the centre of the Bengal province, as episcopal Churches (dioceses). From the new dioceses we promote to the honour of archiepiscopal dignity the Churches (dioceses) of Agra, Bombay, Verapoly, Calcutta, Madras, Pondicherry and Colombo. As regards the designation of provincial or suffragan Churches we shall be at liberty to determine what is seen to be more expedient.<sup>57</sup>

As stipulated in the concordat the archbishop of Goa was elevated to the rank of the patriarch *ad honorem* of the East Indies. The archdiocese of Goa together with its suffragans of Cochin, Mylapore and the new diocese of Daman erected on 1 September 1886 became one ecclesiastical province. The Padroado archdiocese of Cranganore (St Thomas Christian) was suppressed and its title was given to the aforementioned diocese of Daman. All the then existing vicariates apostolic were declared archdioceses and dioceses, which were constituted into six provinces in India and one in Sri Lanka. Hence, altogether there were eight

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<sup>57</sup> *Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. 5, 175-177; ASS 19 (1886) 182-183; IRD, 168-169.

ecclesiastical provinces: the Padroado province of Goa, six Propaganda ecclesiastical provinces in India and one in Sri Lanka.

<b>Archdioceses</b>	<b>Suffragan dioceses</b>
1. Agra:	Allahabad, Lahore
2. Bombay:	Poona
3. Calcutta:	Krishnanagar, Dacca
4. Colombo:	Jaffne and Kandy (in Sri Lanka)
5. Goa:	Cochin, Mylapore and Daman (with the title of Cranganore)
6. Madras	Hyderabad, Vishakapatanam, Mangalore, Trichinopoly (Madurai)
7. Pondicherry	Coimbatore, Mysore
8. Verapoly	Quilon

Although dual jurisdiction continued even after the constitution of the new Latin hierarchy in India, since the boundaries and limits of the ecclesiastical province of Goa under the Portuguese patronage and those of the archdioceses and dioceses under Propaganda Fide were well defined, peace and harmony began to reign in the Church in India. The problems relating to the interlacing of the territories of some dioceses and the right of presentation granted to the Portuguese government in the dioceses of Bombay, Mangalore, Quilon and Trichinopoly (Madurai) under Propaganda Fide were settled a few years later, as we shall see below.

## **6. The Gradual Termination of the Portuguese Patronage and the Advancement of the Latin Church under Propaganda Fide**

In the course of time the political situation in Portugal and India changed. After a period of internal power struggle and popular revolts, Portugal became a republic in 1910. Consequently the patronage rights passed on to the president of Portugal. Having recognized the difficulties posed by the execution of the concordat

of 1886, as a result of the profound changes which had occurred both in Portugal and in the religious life of the Indies, another concordat was concluded between the Holy See and the Portuguese government on 15 April 1928.<sup>58</sup> According to this concordat the archdiocese of Goa, which maintained the patriarchal title, was enlarged by the addition of the Portuguese possessions of the diocese of Daman (which was suppressed) and by the addition of the island of Diu on the coast of Kathiavar. The archbishop began to be named archbishop of Goa and Daman. The rest of the diocese of Daman was annexed to the archdiocese of Bombay. The boundaries of the Padroado diocese of Mylapore were modified, by separating 14 parishes scattered in the territory of the dioceses of Trichinopoly and Tuticorin, so as to optimise the continuity of the territory over which the episcopal jurisdiction was exercised. A new arrangement was made for the appointment of bishops in the traditional Portuguese dioceses of Goa (and Daman), Cochin, St Thomas of Mylapore and in the dioceses of Bombay, Mylapore, Quilon and Trichinopoly. We cite the relevant articles regarding the new arrangement for the appointment of bishops:

Art. 6: As regards the provision of the sees of Goa, Cochin, St Thomas of Mylapore and Macao:

(a) the Holy See, after having consulted, according to the usual practice of the Roman Curia, the bishops of the province through the Apostolic Delegate of India, or respectively, of China, shall select the most worthy Portuguese candidate to govern the diocese;

(b) the Holy See shall transmit the name of the chosen candidate confidentially to His Excellency the President of the Portuguese republic, through the Apostolic Nuncio of Lisbon or the Legation of Portugal at the Vatican;

(c) if the candidate does not present difficulties of a political nature, the President of the republic shall officially present his name to the Holy See.

(d) the response of the President of the republic to the consultation of the Holy See is presumed affirmative, in the case that it is not

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<sup>58</sup> *Conventio inter Sanctam Sedem et Rempublicam Lusitaniae*, AAS 20 (1928) 129-133; IRD, 174-181.

made within two months, counting from the delivery date of the respective communication;

(e) the two high contracting parties shall each time reach an agreement as regards the simultaneous publication of the nomination, which must remain secret until the completion of the official acts.

Art. 7: As regards the provision of the sees of Bombay, Mangalore, Quilon and Trichinopoly:

(a) the Holy See having chosen the most suitable candidate, shall make his name known to the President of the republic, through the Apostolic Nuncio or the Legation of Portugal at the Vatican;

(b) the President of the republic shall make the official presentation of the said candidate within the period of one month, and the appointment shall be published in the manner provided under section (e) of the preceding article.<sup>59</sup>

In accordance with this concordat the participation of the Portuguese government in the appointment of bishops in India was highly reduced. It was limited to the mere acceptance of the "most worthy Portuguese candidate" for the sees of Goa, Cochin and Mylapore, and the "most suitable candidate" (not necessarily Portuguese) for the sees of Bombay, Mangalore, Quilon and Trichinopoly.

On 15 August 1947 India obtained independence from the colonial power Great Britain and on 26 January 1950 it became a sovereign republic. The intervention of a foreign government in the appointment of bishops in a sovereign state was inappropriate and counterproductive. Hence the government of India decided to end the Portuguese patronage, and upon the demand of India the Holy See and the Portuguese republic signed another concordat on 18 July 1950, terminating the patronage. We cite the important articles:

Art. 1: The Portuguese government renounces the privilege of presentation conferred upon the President of the Portuguese republic for the provision of the sees of Mangalore, Quilon, Trichinopoly, Cochin, St Thomas of Mylapore and Bombay.

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<sup>59</sup> AAS 20 (1928) 132-133; IRD, 178-179.



Art. 2: The Portuguese government considers the Holy See free from the obligation of consulting the President of the Portuguese republic and of appointing bishops of Portuguese nationality to the sees of Cochin and of St Thomas of Mylapore.

Art. 6: The Portuguese government shall strive to take in due consideration, in the spirit of this agreement, of a possible new delimitation of the archdiocese of Goa, towards which should the Holy See deem it necessary to proceed.

Art. 7: The other dispositions of the concordat of 1886 and of the agreement of 1928, which have not been expressly modified by the present agreement, remain in force, especially as regards the metropolitan and patriarchal dignity of the see of Goa, as well the nationality of the parish priests of determined parishes.<sup>60</sup>

According to the concordat the Portuguese government renounced the rights and privileges of patronage and consequently it was relieved of the obligations of endowment in the dioceses of Cochin and Mylapore. The Holy See achieved complete freedom for the erection of dioceses and the appointment of bishops anywhere in India. The only thing Portugal obtained in accordance with this agreement was the preservation of the metropolitan and patriarchal dignity of the see of Goa, which was the capital of the Portuguese political and ecclesiastical empire for several hundred years. Even after India obtained independence and became a republic in 1950, Goa continued as a Portuguese colony.

As we have seen elsewhere, Goa the first Latin diocese in India erected on 31 January 1533, became metropolitan archdiocese on 4 February 1558 and patriarchate of the East Indies on 1 September 1886. The diocese of Daman was erected on 1 September 1886 as a suffragan of Goa with the title of the suppressed St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Cranganore. On 1 May 1928 the diocese of Daman was united with Goa and from that epoch they together formed the archdiocese of Goa and Daman. Towards the end of 1961, Indian troops marched on Goa, Daman and Diu and Portuguese sovereignty over these territories

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<sup>60</sup> *Sollemnis conventio inter Sanctam Sedem et rempublicam Lusitanam*, AAS 42 (1950) 811-814; IRD, 182-185.

came to an end. The following year, the last Portuguese patriarch-archbishop of Goa and Daman, José Vieira Alvernaz left India.

Over the course of time the see of Goa and Daman lost all its suffragan dioceses and on 1 January 1976 it was placed directly under the Congregation for the Evangelisation of the Peoples. On 25 November 2006 Pope Benedict XVI created once again the metropolitan province of Goa and Daman, which comprises also the diocese of Sindhudurg, until then suffragan of the archdiocese of Bombay.<sup>61</sup> The metropolitan archdiocese of Goa and Daman still possesses the title of the ancient St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Cranganore and remains the patriarchate *ad honorem* of the East Indies (*Indiarum Orientalium*).<sup>62</sup>

After the erection of the Latin hierarchy under Propaganda Fide, and especially after the concordat of 1950 dioceses and ecclesiastical provinces were created liberally and freely. One can find the rapid advancement of the Latin Church in India during this period, especially in the number of dioceses and bishops. At present the Latin Church has 132 dioceses organized into 23 ecclesiastical provinces. We give here below the names of archdioceses and their suffragan sees, indicating the date of their erection in brackets.<sup>63</sup>

### 1. Agra (1.9.1886)

Ajmer (20.7.2005; formerly Ajmer and Jaipur from 13.5.1955, Ajmer from 22.5.1913), Allahabad (1.9.1886), Bareilly (19.1.1989), Jaipur (20.7.2005), Jhansi (5.7.1954), Lucknow (12.1.1940), Meerut (20.2.1956), Udaipur (3.12.1984), Varanasi (14.5.1971).

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<sup>61</sup> Ap. Const. *Cum Christi Evangelii*, AAS 99 (2007) 6-7.

<sup>62</sup> See the title Goa-Daman in the *Annuario Pontificio* of any year.

<sup>63</sup> Our enumeration is based on *Annuario Pontificio* 2019. The abbreviation D. signifies diocese and A. indicates archdiocese. Since the ten Syro-Malabar dioceses in North India (though considered suffragans of Latin archdioceses) are not dioceses of the Latin Church, they are excluded from this list.

**2. Bangalore** (D. 13.2.1940, A. 19.9.1953)

Belgaum (19.9.1953), Bellary (10.3.1949), Chikmagalur (16.11.1963), Gulbarga (24.6.2005), Karwar (24.1.1976), Mangalore (1.9.1886), Mysore (1.9.1886), Shimoga (14.11.1988), Udupi (16.7.2012).

**3. Bhopal** (13.9.1963)

Gwalior (9.2.1999), Indore (15.5.1952), Jabalpur (5.7.1954), Jhabua (1.3.2002), Khandwa (3.2.1977).

**4. Bombay** (1.9.1886)

Nashik (15.5.1987), Poona (1.9.1886), Vasai (22.5.1998).

**5. Calcutta** (1.9.1886)

Asansol (24.10.1997), Bagdogra (14.6.1997), Baruipur (30.5.1977), Darjeeling (8.8.1962), Jalpaiguri (17.1.1952), Krishnagar (1.9.1886), Raiganj (8.6.1978).

**6. Cuttack-Bhubaneswar** (24.1.1974; formerly Cuttack from 1.6.1937)

Balasore (18.12.1989), Berhampur (24.1.1974), Rayagada (11.4.2016), Rourkela (4.7.1979), Sambalpur (14.6.1951).

**7. Delhi** (4.6.1959; formerly Delhi and Simla from 13.4.1937)

Jammu-Srinagar (10.3.1986), Jullundur (6.12.1971), Simla and Chandigarh (12.5.1964).

**8. Gandhinagar** (11.10.2002)

Ahmedabad (5.5.1949), Baroda (29.9.1966).

**9. Goa and Daman** (metropolitan province from 25. 11. 2006, other details already given above)

Sindhudurg (5.7.2005, formerly suffragan of Bombay).

**10. Guwahati** (D. 30.3.1992; A. 10.7.1995)

Bongaigaon (10.5.2000), Dibrugarh (12.7.1951), Diphu (5.12.1983), Itanagar (7.12.2005), Miao (7.12.2005), Tezpur (16.1.1964).

**11. Hyderabad** (D.1.9.1886; A. 19.9.1953)

Cuddapah (19.10.1976), Khammam (18.1.1988), Kurnool (12.6.1967), Nalgonda (31.5.1976), Warangal (22.12.1952).

**12. Imphal** (D. 28.3.1980; A.10.7.1995)

Kohima (28.3.1980).

**13. Madras and Mylapore** (13.11.1952; Madras - 1.9.1886, Mylapore - 9.1.1606)

Chingleput (28.6.2002), Coimbatore (1.9.1886), Ootacamund (3.7.1955), Vellore (13.11.1952).

**14. Madurai** (D. 21.10.1950; A. 19.9.1953)

Dindigul (30.10.2003), Kottar (26.5.1930), Kuzhahirurai (22.12.2014), Palayamkottai (17.5.1973), Sivagangai (3.7.1987), Tiruchirappalli (21.10.1950, formerly Trichinopoly from 7.6.1887), Tuticorin (12.6.1923).

**15. Nagpur** (D. 11.7.1887; A. 19.9.1953)

Amravati (8.5.1955), Aurangabad (17.12.1977).

**16. Patna** (D.10.9.1919; A.16.3.1999)

Bettiah (27.6.1998), Bhagalpur (11.1.1965), Buxar (12.12.2005), Muzaffarpur (6.3.1980), Purnea (27.6.1998).

**17. Pondicherry and Cuddalore** (D. 1.9.1886; A. 7.6.1887; addition of Cuddalore 7.8.1953)

Dharmapuri (24.1.1997), Kumbakonam (1.9.1899), Salem (26.5.1930), Tanjore (13.11.1952).

**18. Raipur** (D. 5.7.1973; A. 18.3. 2004)

Ambikapur (10.11.1977), Jashpur (23. 3. 2006), Raigarh (10.11.1977, formerly Riagarh-Ambikapur from 13.12.1951).

**19. Ranchi** (D. 25.5.1927; A. 19.9.1953)

Daltonganj (5.6.1971), Dumka (8.8.1962), Gumla (28.5.1993), Hazaribag (1.4.1995), Jamshedpur (2.7.1962), Khunti (1.4.1995), Port Blair (22.6.1984), Simdega (28.5.1993).

**20. Shillong** (D. 9.7.1934; A. 26.6.1969)

Agartala (11.1.1996), Aizawl (11.1.1996; formerly Silchar from 26.6.1969), Jowai (28.1.2006), Nongstoin (28.1.2006), Tura (1.3.1973).

**21. Trivandrum** (D. 1.7.1937); A. 3.6.2004)

Alleppey (19.6.1952), Neyyattinkara (14.6.1996), Punalur (21.12.1985), Quilon (1.9.1886).

**22. Verapoly** (1.9.1886)

Calicut (12.6.1923), Cochin (4.2.1558), Kannur (5.11.1998), Kottapuram (3.7.1987), Sultanpet (28.12.2013), Vijayapuram (14.7.1930).

**23. Visakhapatnam** (D. 21.10.1950; A. 16.10.2001; formerly Vizagapatam from 1.9.1886)

Eluru (9.12.1976), Guntur (13.2.1940), Nellore (3.7.1928), Srikakulam (1.7.1993), Vijayawada (13.10.1950, formerly Bezwada from 13.4.1937).

## Conclusion

The considerable organized evangelising work of the Latin Church began in India only with the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Beyond doubt the Latin Church in India is obliged to the Portuguese kings and missionaries for its origin and development especially in the sixteenth century and in the first half of the seventeenth century. The kings of Portugal and the Portuguese officials were the official protectors and defenders of the Latin Church in India. According to the regulations of *ius patronatus* the Portuguese kings provided financial resources for the erection of the dioceses, cathedrals, churches, chapels, monasteries, hospices and schools as well as for the maintenance of bishops, clergy, schoolmasters and all other ecclesiastical officials. Hence whatever may have been the demerits of the institute of Portuguese Padroado, it was instrumental in laying down the first foundations for the Latin Church in India.

In the course of time owing to internal problems in Portugal and the lack of resources and personnel, the royal patronage became an obstacle to the progress of the Church in India. The intervention of the Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide to "save" the Church from "destruction" engendered grave jurisdictional conflicts and confrontations between the two evangelising agencies which definitively terminated only after the concordat of 1950. Despite such difficulties and struggles, the Latin Church in India progressed under the providence of God owing to the selfless toil of several hundred foreign missionaries, making possible the erection of a hierarchy covering the whole of India under the authority of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. After the independence of India in 1947 the Padroado jurisdiction was terminated and the Church came completely and fully under the Holy See.

The origin of several native religious congregations, the formation of indigenous missionaries and priests as well as the gradual indianization of the hierarchy contributed to the rapid progress of the Latin Church in India augmenting the number of dioceses to 132 organized into 23 ecclesiastical provinces. At

present the Latin Church has 190 bishops, among whom 23 archbishops, 95 bishops, 3 coadjutor bishops, 8 auxiliary bishops, 10 apostolic administrators, 4 administrators and 47 retired bishops.<sup>64</sup> The Latin Church counts 15,925,660 Christian faithful, 10,545 diocesan priests and 7,133 parishes.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, *2019 Directory*, Bangalore 2019, 7 and *Annuario Pontificio* 2019.

<sup>65</sup> The statistics has been formulated according to the details provided in the *Annuario Pontificio* 2019.

## Chapter Three

# DECLINE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS UNTIL ITS SUPPRESSION IN 1886

### Introduction

As we have seen in the first chapter, at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries in the sixteenth century, the Church of St Thomas Christians was an autonomous metropolitan Church, headed by a metropolitan of all India, appointed by the Chaldean patriarch and governed by an indigenous archdeacon of all India, assisted by the general church assembly consisting of the representatives of the clergy and the people of God. At that epoch only the Church of St Thomas Christians existed in India and hence there was not even any question of a territorial limitation of this Church. The St Thomas Christians were convinced of the fact that the liturgy, sacraments and other rites which they were celebrating according to East Syrian tradition, had been bequeathed to their forefathers by the Apostle Thomas in the Aramaic or Syriac language. They designated the sum total of their spiritual heritage and religious ethos as the way or law of Thomas, which they considered sacrosanct and inviolable, since they received it directly from the Apostle Thomas through tradition. They zealously preserved and diligently observed the law of Thomas and were even ready to shed their blood in its defence. Since the St Thomas Christians, who kept intact their Catholic faith and liturgy, maintained the same socio-cultural life as the autochthonous people, their tradition was considered one of the religions of India. After this brief summary of the nature and status of the Church of St Thomas Christians which the Western missionaries encountered in the sixteenth century, in this chapter we continue with the history of this Church after the arrival of the missionaries and during the period of Latin governance until its suppression in 1886.



## 1. The Portuguese Project concerning the Church of St Thomas Christians

Following the erection of the diocese of Goa on 31 January 1533 (the first Latin diocese in India) and especially after its elevation to the metropolitan status on 4 February 1558 the Portuguese devised a systematic plan of action with regard to the Church of St Thomas Christians. We pinpoint the important aspects of their political strategy:

1. Sever the hierarchical relationship of this Church with the Chaldean Catholic Church and with its patriarch, who was the canonical head of St Thomas Christians at that time.

2. Suppress the law of Thomas, the Eastern rite, the Syriac language and the Indian cultural elements which constituted the distinctive identity of this Church and substitute them with the "law of Peter", the Latin rite, the Latin language and Western culture.

3. Impede the arrival of Eastern bishops and make arrangements for the appointment of Latin bishops in the see of St Thomas Christians for the gradual realization of the said project.

4. Suppress the autonomous metropolitan status of the see of St Thomas Christians and reduce it to a simple suffragan diocese of the archdiocese of Goa, thus constituting one single ecclesiastical province and forming one Church and jurisdiction.

5. Bring the Church of St Thomas Christians under the Portuguese patronage, thus the king of Portugal would gain the right to present bishops to the Pope for appointment, whenever the see remained vacant.

The Portuguese project gradually unravels, if we examine carefully some of the acts, letters and pronouncements of the ecclesiastical and political authorities of the time. With the intention of terminating the Eastern jurisdiction in India the Portuguese authorities arrested and detained in Goa the two Chaldean Catholic archbishops: Mar Joseph Sulaqa, the metropolitan of the St Thomas Christians and Mar Elias, the patriarchal visitor, sent by the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Mar Abdiso or Ebediesus (1555-1567). Even the Latin Catholic

Dominican Archbishop Ambrosius Buttigeg, the papal nuncio to the East and his companion Anthony Sahara OP, a Latin Catholic priest, who accompanied the said bishops were detained in Goa.<sup>1</sup> After his liberation from prison and his return from India, Bishop Mar Elias visited Rome and submitted a report to Cardinal Giulio Antonio Santori, in which he described the tragic fate of the said bishops in Goa:

The Patriarch Mar Ebediesus created Mar Joseph, brother of the former Patriarch Sulaqa, the archbishop of India, in order to provide for the Chaldeans who are in the Indies from Cochin up to the Indies of St Thomas. He sent myself as a companion (to Mar Joseph) together with Bishop Ambrosius and friar Anthony and two other Chaldean friars, with recommendation letters to the Portuguese viceroy in India, which Patriarch Sulaqa brought from Rome, namely from the Apostolic See [...]. Arrived in Goa, they presented the said letters, but were placed in a monastery, where they remained for one and a half years [...].<sup>2</sup>

The apostolic nuncio Archbishop Ambrosius Buttigeg, who had accomplished his mission with great success even in the dominion of Turkish tyrant without any hindrance, surprised by his detention in Catholic Goa, on 23 December 1556 wrote to John III, king of Portugal:

Behold, it is not lawful for me to depart, nor to continue my journey, although it is for the Pope my patron and for the Apostolic See. Because of the wish and order of the governor of Your Highness I remain in detention here in your city of Goa [...]. I do not wish to fight with the officials of Your Majesty, who should understand that I, a bishop of the Roman Church and a legate or

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<sup>1</sup> For details, see G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 37-53; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, Bombay 1957, 35-37; P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 64-65; J. Thekkedath, *Christianity in India*, 40-42; G. Sorge, *L'India di S. Tommaso*, 53; G. Battaglia, *Cristiani indiani*, 101; P. Pallath, "Were the St Thomas Christians in India. Nestorians", 43-44; *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 42.

<sup>2</sup> The printed versions of the report of Mar Elias kept in the Vatican Archives can be found in *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 239-241; S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, 90-97 and in G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 199-203, here p. 201.

nuncio (though unworthy) of the Pope and of the Holy Apostolic See, could have employed the spiritual arms of the Catholic Church, since they have done me violence and have impeded my course in the service of the Apostolic See (and this) in accordance with the law of nature (since violence could be repelled by violence). However, this way would have been scandalous, against the person of the governor and against this city according to the doctrine of the canon [...]. Then on account of my great reverence towards Your Majesty I decided to wait patiently, if not enough one year, four and five, and even the whole period of my life.<sup>3</sup>

If the Catholic faith had been the concern of the Portuguese authorities, there would not have been any reason to prevent the apostolic nuncio from reaching Malabar, to accomplish his mission among the St Thomas Christians.

The letter of Antonio do Porto, the custodian of the two Chaldean bishops in the Franciscan monastery of Bassein, written on 20 November 1557 to the king of Portugal, reflects well the mentality of the Portuguese at that time. After acknowledging the authentic faith, good morals, exemplary life and heroic virtues of the two Chaldean bishops, Do Porto, humble servant of His Majesty, stated:

I advised them as well as I could and pointed out to them the reasons why they should not go to Malabar, one of the reasons being that, as they well know, no bishop could enter the bishopric of another to attend to his flock, and that the bishop of Goa was the bishop of Malabar and the whole of India, and of all the other parts of the Orient conquered by Your Majesty, and that no one without his leave could interfere with the Christians of those parts, and that those who went to minister the sacraments to the Christians of Malabar without the leave of the bishop of Goa were thieves who did not enter through the door into the sheep-pen. [...] it is necessary that Your Majesty should send a memorandum to the Pope to order the Chaldean Patriarch, who has given his allegiance, that in no case should he send bishops to Malabar; but that if the Malabarians

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<sup>3</sup> J. Wicki, "Zur Orientreise des päpstlichen Nuntius Ambrosius Buttigieg O. P. (1553-56)", *OCP* 19 (1953) 359-361.

should ask for them that he should tell them to obey the bishop of Goa, who is their bishop by the order of the Pope, whom he obeys.<sup>4</sup>

It is surprising that the humble servant of His Majesty considered the bishop of Goa to be the bishop of the St Thomas Christians as well and the two bishops who were canonically appointed and who reached Goa accompanied by the apostolic nuncio as “thieves who did not enter through the door”. After eighteen months of detention, in the second half of 1558 the Portuguese authorities, constrained by the particular historical circumstances of the time, liberated the said bishops and their companions. However, Metropolitan Mar Joseph was still twice arrested and deported during his governance of the Malabar Church. He died in Rome in 1569 after proving his authentic catholic faith and total obedience to the Roman Pontiff.<sup>5</sup>

Also Mar Abraham, the last Chaldean Metropolitan of the St Thomas Christians, who had been sent by the Chaldean patriarch during the first incarceration of Mar Joseph and who had reached Malabar travelling through another route (avoiding Goa), was also arrested and deported. In the meantime on the petition of the missionaries in India on 6 March 1563 the king of Portugal ordered the colonial civil authorities to let no Oriental bishop reach Malabar and to expel at once anyone who might enter India eluding the Portuguese port authorities.<sup>6</sup> The courageous prelate Mar Abraham, after his deportation, went to Rome with testimonial letters of the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Mar Abdiso,

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<sup>4</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum*, vol. 2, 300-301; G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 42-43; D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 1, 160-161.

<sup>5</sup> For details, see G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 86-94; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 38-41; P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 65-67 & 77; J. Thekkedath, *Christianity in India*, 44-47; G. Sorge, *L'India di S. Tommaso*, 53-54; G. Battaglia, *Cristiani indiani*, 102-103; P. Pallath, “Were the St Thomas Christians in India Nestorians”, 44-45; *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 43-47.

<sup>6</sup> See the order of the king in J. Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, vol. 6, Romae 1960, 11-14.

convincingly proved his orthodoxy with acts and facts and returned to Goa in the beginning of 1568, carrying with him credentials and testimonial letters from Pope Pius IV (1559-1565) and from Patriarch Abdiso.<sup>7</sup> Evenso Mar Abraham was arrested and detained in the Dominican monastery of Goa, although a few months later he escaped from the monastery on the night of Maundy Thursday and reached his flock in Kerala in 1568.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of the fact that the archdiocese of Angamaly, subject to the jurisdiction of the Chaldean patriarch, was not a suffragan of Goa, Mar Abraham was convoked to the provincial council of Goa in 1575 together with the two suffragan bishops of Cochin and Malacca, as if he had been a “conprovincial” bishop. Mar Abraham, who depended exclusively on the Chaldean patriarch, did not participate in the council, since he had no obligation to do so. Even so, the council decreed:

For the good of the Christianity of the Apostle St Thomas, which is in the land of Malabar, it is convenient that the diocese be governed by a prelate presented by the king of Portugal and not by the patriarch of Chaldea in order that the said Christianity may be more easily freed from many abuses in which it is involved. Since the archbishop of Angamaly, who governs these Christians, has no suffragan bishops, and neither does he go nor can he easily go to Chaldea, owing to the great distance, this council petitions His Holiness that he should come, and should be obliged to come to the council of this province and to observe and make them (his Christians) observe its decrees, according to the Council of Trent.

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<sup>7</sup> The letter of Pope Pius IV to the Archbishop of Goa, 28 February 1565. ASV, Arch. de Castello, Armad. VII, caps. V, N. 9; S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, 71-72; letter of the Chaldean Catholic patriarch Mar Abdiso to the Archbishop of Goa, 24 August 1567, original Syriac, ARSI, *Gallia* 95, f. 197; photo reproduction, *Documenta Indica*, vol. 11, Romae 1970, 41\*; the original texts with English translation in P. Pallath, *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 160-172.

<sup>8</sup> For the history of Mar Abraham until 1568, see G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 90-91 e 94-97; G. Sorge, *L'India di S. Tommaso*, 55-56; G. Battaglia, *Cristiani indiani*, 127-130; P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 67-71; J. Thekkedath, *Christianity in India*, 47-49; P. Pallath, “Were the St Thomas Christians in India Nestorians”, 48-52; *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 48-52.

For, he is our close neighbour, and in this way, that Christianity will have a great remedy [...].<sup>9</sup>

The decree indubitably and explicitly reveals the Portuguese intention to place “the Christianity of the Apostle St Thomas” under the Portuguese patronage which would have naturally granted the king of Portugal the right of presenting to the Pope anyone he wished to be appointed bishop in the see of Angamaly. Similarly the decree indicates that Mar Abraham would be obliged to participate in the future provincial councils of Goa and to observe and make the St Thomas Christians observe their decrees, as if the archdiocese of Angamaly were a suffragan of Goa. In fact, complying with the aforementioned decree, in the letter of 29 November 1578 Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585) ordered Mar Abraham to participate in the provincial councils of Goa, since there was no other synod that he could attend, as he had no suffragan bishops.<sup>10</sup>

Archbishop Vincent da Fonseca (1583-1593) officially convoked Mar Abraham to the third provincial council of Goa, which opened on 9 June 1585. Mar Abraham, who was not a suffragan of Goa and who had no juridical obligation to participate in the provincial councils, on account of his heroic obedience and filial devotion to the Roman Pontiff, did go to Goa, though he had already been twice arrested and detained by the Portuguese authorities. The third session of the council dedicated to the affairs of the St Thomas Christians, enacted ten decrees. With regard to the appointment of bishops the council stipulated:

[...] henceforth no one should be received and approved as a bishop or Catholic prelate, unless he first presents letters addressed to the archbishop of Goa as the Primate of India and the Eastern regions. Such letters should be of His Holiness or of a patriarch who must be Catholic and has given obedience to the Roman Church and has

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<sup>9</sup> Provincial Council of Goa (1575), session 3, decree 1, *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum*, Appendix 1, Olisipone 1872, 51; original with Engl. trans. in P. Pallath, *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 70.

<sup>10</sup> S. Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes*, 605; for details, P. Pallath, *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 54-63.

been approved by it, as previously did Archbishop Mar Abraham, when he came, being appointed archbishop of Angamaly by Pope Pius IV of happy memory. He who does not present such letters shall be regarded as an intruder and as such shall be dragged out of the Church. The council humbly begs His Holiness to approve this and order the patriarch of Chaldea to whom this pertains to issue orders likewise as this is most important for the good of that Christianity and the Holy Roman Church.<sup>11</sup>

Paradoxically Archbishop Mar Joseph Sulaqa and Bishop Mar Elias who arrived in Goa accompanied by the papal nuncio Ambrosius Buttigeg and Mar Abraham who had presented the letters of the Pope and the Chaldean Catholic patriarch to the archbishop of Goa, fulfilled all the procedures prescribed in this decree even before its enactment. Notwithstanding this they were arrested and deported. Moreover, this decree publicly acknowledges that Mar Abraham, whom the Portuguese authorities had arrested and detained, was not an “intruder” to be dragged out of the Church as he had been, but a Catholic bishop who came “being appointed archbishop of Angamaly by Pope Pius IV of happy memory”, and who presented letters from His Holiness and the patriarch to the archbishop of Goa. Lastly, this decree testifies to the fact that the Portuguese were aware of the existence of a Catholic patriarch in Chaldea, who was in full communion with the Roman Pontiff and who had the right to nominate bishops in India. In truth, it seems that the council ordered such presentation of letters to the archbishop of Goa because this would have enabled the Portuguese authorities to prevent these bishops from reaching their flock. As we have seen above, the decision was taken to expel at once any Oriental bishop who reached India.

The Council also ordered that the Roman Ritual, the Roman Missal, the Roman Breviary, and the Roman Pontifical were to be translated into Chaldean (Syriac) for the use of the St Thomas Christians:

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<sup>11</sup> Session 3, decree 10, *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum*, Appendix 1, 76; original with Engl. trans. in P. Pallath, *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 141-142.

Moreover, for the same conformity, it has seemed to this council that, since for the time being Latin cannot be utilized, the Roman Missal and the Roman Breviary, reformed in accordance with the order of the Council of Trent, should be translated into Chaldean (Syriac); and that from the Roman Pontifical and the Roman Sacerdotal (Ritual) are to be translated those parts necessary for conferring or giving (holy) Orders, and for administering the sacraments; and from the other books of the (Latin) Church, what is necessary for that Church [...].<sup>12</sup>

The intention of the Goan authorities was to expunge the Eastern rite from India and to gradually introduce the Latin rite among the St Thomas Christians as well. Since these Christians believed that the Apostle Thomas had bequeathed their prayers and rites to them in Aramaic or Syriac, the language of Our Lord, it was not possible to replace immediately Syriac with Latin. Considering this fact the Council ordered the translation of the Latin liturgical books into Syriac for the time being.

Moreover the council declared invalid all the holy Orders conferred by Metropolitan Mar Abraham during his governance because of the lack of proper matter since, according to the Chaldean rite, there was no handing over of the instruments (chalice and paten), which the Latin Church considered the matter of the said sacrament at that epoch. Mar Abraham was ordered to re-ordain all his priests and other clerics, utilizing the Roman Pontifical, translated into Syriac.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Outrosim para a mesma conformidade pareceo ao Concilio que por agora se tresladasse em caldeu, para em quanto o latim não servisse, o missal, e breviario romano reformados por ordem do Concilio Tridentino, e que do pontifical, e sacerdotal romano se tresladasse o necessario para conferir, ou dar ordens, e administrar sacramentos, e dos mais livros da Igreja o que para ella fosse necessario [...]”. Session 3, decree 7, *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum*, Appendix 1, 75; original with Engl. trans. in P. Pallath, *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 115-116.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Alessandro Valignano, Letter to the Jesuit General Claudio Acquaviva, dated 17 December 1585, in J. Wicki, “Quellen zum 3. Provinzialkonzil von Goa (1585)”, *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum* 5 (1973) 382-407; original with Engl. trans. in P. Pallath, *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 184-191.



After the conclusion of the council, under the guidance of Francis Ros SJ, appointed by the same council as an aid to Mar Abraham for the execution of its decrees in Malabar, the translation of Latin liturgical books into Syriac progressed rapidly. In his letter to the Jesuit General Aquaviva on 6 January 1587 Ros wrote:

[...] already the books began to be corrected and the clerics who had not been rightly ordained were re-ordained in the Roman manner in Syriac language, because during the last year the archbishop and I together made a pontifical of all ordinations according to the Latin rite and translated it into Syriac.<sup>14</sup>

This indicates that after the council Mar Abraham cooperated with Fr Ros for the correction of Syriac books and for the translation of Roman liturgical books into Syriac. He also re-ordained some of his priests and other clerics, but as soon as he understood that the project was the complete substitution of the Eastern rite with the Latin rite, he ceased to collaborate and hence the operation was blocked. Consequently, the missionaries had to wait until his death and the convocation of the Synod of Diamper in 1599 for the full implementation of their strategy.

## 2. The Synod of Diamper

The death in January 1597 of Mar Abraham, the last Chaldean metropolitan, wiped the slate clean for the realization of the Portuguese project of definitively separating the St Thomas Christians from Chaldean jurisdiction and incorporating the archdiocese of Angamaly into the ecclesiastical province of Goa as its suffragan. After the death of Mar Abraham, according to the ancient custom and in virtue of the appointment previously made by Mar Abraham, Archdeacon George of the Cross began to govern the Church as administrator. As soon as Dom Aleixo de Menezes, the archbishop of Goa (1595-1610), received news of the death of Mar Abraham, he decided to go to Malabar for the materialization of the long cherished Portuguese project. This is evident from his letter of 19 December 1597 addressed to Fabio

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<sup>14</sup> ARSI, *Goa-Mal.* 13, fol. 344; *Documenta Indica*, vol. 14 (1979) 565.

Biondi, the Latin (titular) patriarch of Jerusalem, residing at that time in Rome, in which he revealed his intention to go to Malabar, visit the churches personally and to convoke a synod with the help of the “infidel king”, who would be “friendly to serve his own interests” since Menezes was the second highest representative of the Portuguese state in India.<sup>15</sup> Towards the end of this letter Menezes stated:

I shall remain there until October, waiting to see if a bishop for this Church will come with the ships, so that I can more easily introduce him into his bishopric. If the new bishop for this Church is not yet made, I advise Your Excellency that it is a matter of great importance to select a Jesuit Father, as the Fathers of the Company of Jesus are there already. I humbly suggest that he be instructed to extinguish little by little the Syrian language, which is not natural. His priests should learn the Latin language, because the Syrian language is the channel through which all that heresy flows. A good administrator ought to replace Syrian by Latin. What is most important of all is that the bishop should be a suffragan of this city (Goa), as is at present the bishop of Cochin, his nearest suffragan.<sup>16</sup>

According to Menezes the three most important things were: the nomination of a Latin bishop in the archdiocese of Angamaly, the gradual extinction of the Syriac language and the introduction of Latin in its place and the reduction of Angamaly to a suffragan of Goa.

As a man of the state, devoted to the expansion of the Portuguese empire, Menezes had also a design of pure military strategy for subjecting the St Thomas Christians, among whom there were a large number of excellent soldiers, to a Latin bishop of the Padroado. In another letter of 1597 addressed to Agostino de Castro, archbishop of Braga, he wrote: “These malabarians are excellent in fighting and very obedient to their bishop. If they

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<sup>15</sup> *Subsidium ad Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, Alleppey 1903, 12-13; G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 121-122.

<sup>16</sup> *Subsidium ad Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, 13; G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 122; English trans., *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 174.

accept a Latin bishop we will have 50.000 soldiers at our disposal, already trained in the use of fire weapons".<sup>17</sup>

On 27 December 1598 Dom Aleixo de Menezes, the archbishop of Goa, set sail from Goa to Malabar. On reaching Malabar in February 1599, as a first act he commanded the archdeacon and the priests under precept of obedience and under the pain of excommunication *latae sententiae* not to mention the name of the Chaldean patriarch in the Eucharistic celebration or in the Divine Office. He won over the local kings, who were eager to obtain Portuguese support against their rivals, with threats, bribes and impressive gifts. He canonically visited the churches, at times opened them with force against the will of the Christian faithful and exercised jurisdiction, celebrating the sacraments, especially Confirmation. He subjugated many priests and the Christian faithful with various tactics, intimidation and the threat of excommunication. Within a period of only four months he also ordained to the priesthood more than a hundred young men who had no formation, in order to create a group favourable to him.<sup>18</sup> The St Thomas Christians, terrified by the weapon of excommunication, to which Menezes often made recourse, could not do anything to safeguard their rights.

Having thus prepared the ground, Archdeacon George of the Cross was constrained under threat of excommunication *latae sententiae* to subscribe to the ten points prepared by Archbishop Menezes, among which was the promise to convoke a synod. In fact, the archdeacon consented that:

- 1) He would abjure all the errors of Nestorius and his followers, Diodore and Theodore who were taken to be saints, and would confess that they were cursed heretics, and were condemned in hell for their errors, in whose obstinacy they died. 2) He would confess and he himself would tell to the people wherever he went with the

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<sup>17</sup> S. Subrahmanyam, "Dom Frei Aleixo de Menezes (1599-1617) et l'échec des tentatives d'indigénisation du Christianisme en Inde", *Archives de Sciences sociales des Religions* 103 (1998) 37.

<sup>18</sup> All such activities of Menezes are fully described in A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, book 1, chapters V-XVIII.

archbishop that there was no law of St Peter nor that of St Thomas, but only one of Christ Our Lord, which his apostles preached uniformly to the world. 3) He would make the profession of faith, which the archbishop had sent him from Goa when he was made governor of the bishopric on the death of Archbishop Mar Abraham. 4) He would hand over all the books, both his and those of the former archbishops, of the churches, and of some lay Chaldeans and Syrians to be revised, and to be corrected, those which needed correction, and the rest to be burnt. 5) He would promise and swear obedience to the Pope, successor of St Peter, Vicar of Christ on the earth, head of his Church, father and teacher, doctor and prelate of all the Christians and of all the bishops, primates and patriarchs of the world, and would confess that all owed obedience to him, and those who did not give it were outside the eternal salvation. 6) He would anathematize the patriarch of Babylonia as a Nestorian heretic, schismatic, outside the obedience of the Holy Roman Church, and would swear not to obey him in any thing, nor to have with him any dealings or contact, nor to accept his letters nor to reply to them. 7) He would swear not to receive any bishop or prelate in Malabar, if not sent by the Roman Pontiff and recognized by the archbishop of Goa, and to this one, whoever he was, he would obey as his true prelate. 8) He would swear to recognize him (Menezes) as his prelate, as sent by the Apostolic See, and in all he would be subject to his precepts, as long as their own prelate did not come. 9) He would issue *olas* (letters) and provisions to convene the diocesan synod, to discuss therein the things of the faith in the place chosen by him (by the archbishop), which would be attended by all the priests and persons elected by the people, and would swear to abide by its resolutions. 10) He would peacefully accompany the archbishop wherever he went with no more armed people than the members of his family, and would enter with him in the ships, which were needed, and in all the churches he went to visit.<sup>19</sup>

Archbishop Menezes explicitly prescribed that the refusal to accept any of these points would be considered the rejection of all. Although many of these articles were offensive to the St Thomas

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<sup>19</sup> The Portuguese original in A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 52-53; Latin trans. in J. F. Raulin, *Historia Ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Diamperitana Synodo*, Romae 1745, 36-37; English trans. in P. Malekandathil, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar*, Kochi 2003, 214-215 and in M. Geddes, *The History of the Church of Malabar, together with the Synod of Diamper*, London 1694, 94-96.

Christians who were Catholics in full communion with the Roman Pontiff,<sup>20</sup> the archdeacon, a pious and devout man, signed them because he had no other alternative if he were to “save his people” from imminent tragedy. As Beltrami affirmed, “the Malabarians, surrounded from every part by the Portuguese pressure, were alone in the struggle to save what was dear to them from their long tradition; they tried the last effort, that of desperation. But at last George surrendered himself and thus it was possible to arrive at the Synod of Diamper.”<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, during the vacancy of the see, when nothing could be innovated (*Sede vacante nihil innovetur*), the archbishop of Goa, a Latin Ordinary who had no jurisdiction over the St Thomas Christians, namely in an Eastern Church, without any explicit mandate from the supreme authority of the Church, forcefully entered the archdiocese of Angamaly and with the help of the non-Christian kings and princes of the place and that of the Portuguese civil and military authorities orchestrated the pseudo-Synod of Diamper from 20 to 26 June 1599, under pain of excommunication *latae sententiae*, contrary to the norms of the canon law of that time.<sup>22</sup> About 153 priests (as we have indicated above, Menezes ordained more than a hundred priests) and 660 lay delegates from the Malabar Church participated in the synod. In the nine sessions of the synod wide-ranging doctrinal and canonical decrees were made with the intention of transforming completely the religious, ecclesial, sacramental and socio-cultural life of St Thomas Christians in accordance with the Latin rite and Western culture.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See chapter I, no. 7.

<sup>21</sup> G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 123.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. P. Pallath, “The Synod of Diamper Valid or Invalid?”, in G. Nedungatt (ed.), *The Synod of Diamper Revisited*, Rome 2001, 199-226; for a detailed discussion on the invalidity of the Synod, J. Thaliath, *The Synod of Diamper*, OCA 152, Rome 1958; J. Wicki, “Die Synode von Diamper in Malabar (1599) und ihre Beurteilung (1600-1975)”, *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum*, 1-2 (1977) 190-205.

<sup>23</sup> For the acts and decrees of the Synod of Diamper, A. De Gouvea, *Synodo Diocesano da Igreja e bispado de Angamale* 3-62; *Bullarium Patronatus*

After the synod, the missionaries informed Rome and the West that the St Thomas Christians had been “reduced” to the Catholic faith and “brought” to obedience of the Roman Pontiff, a thesis sustained even today by some authors who rely only on the missionary sources of the time. However, as we shall see below, the Synod made legislation for the suppression of the law of Thomas and the Eastern rite and for the termination of the Eastern jurisdiction in India with the intention of extending the Portuguese patronage over the St Thomas Christians.

### 3. Legislation for the Substitution of the Law of Thomas and the Eastern Rite with the Latin Rite

The Synod of Diamper condemned the law of Thomas, so dear to the Eastern Christians in India as a “manifest error and heresy” and made them pronounce in the profession of faith: “I do likewise confess and believe that in pure Christianity there is only one law of Our Lord Jesus Christ, true God, one only faith, and one only Baptism; which one only law was preached by all the holy apostles, and their disciples and successors after the same manner. I do therefore condemn and reject all those who ignorantly teach that there was one law of St Thomas and another law of Peter [...]”.<sup>24</sup> The synod declares further:

The Synod is with great sorrow sensible of that heresy, and perverse error, sown by the schismatics in this diocese, to the great prejudice of souls; which is, that there was one law of St Thomas, and another of St Peter which made two different and distinct Churches, and both immediately from Christ; and that the one had nothing to do with the other; neither did the prelate of the one owe any obedience to the prelate of the other; and that they who had followed the law of St Peter, had endeavored to destroy the law of St Thomas, for

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*Portugalliae Regum*, Appendix 1, 147-368; J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissime collectio*, vol. 35, 1161-1368; J. F. Raulin, *Historia Ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Diamperitana Synodo*, 59-282; J. Hough, *The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era*, vol. 2, London, 1839, 511-683; M. Geddes, *The History of the Church of Malabar, together with the Synod of Diamper*, 97-443; Scaria Zacharia, *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599*, Edamattam 1994, 73-214.

<sup>24</sup> Synod of Diamper, session II, decree 1.

which they had been punished by him; all which is manifest error, schism, and heresy, there being but one law to all Christians which is that which was given and declared by Jesus Christ the Son of God and preached by the holy apostles all over the world [...].<sup>25</sup>

Of course the missionaries presented the St Thomas Christian concept of particular law in an extremely negative light in order to demonstrate that it was a manifest heresy to be condemned. But the law of Thomas, in its original and authentic form, rich in its ecclesiological content and incomprehensible to the Western missionaries of that epoch, had nothing to do with any heresy or error.

The long-standing strategy of the Portuguese to westernize the St Thomas Christians reached its culmination in the Synod of Diamper. In fact the synod aimed at the complete conformity of the liturgy and sacramental discipline of the St Thomas Christians to those of the Roman-Portuguese tradition. In the profession of faith conducted on the second day of the Synod, the St Thomas Christians were obliged to confess that "I also admit and accept all the customs, the rites and ceremonies received and approved in the Roman Church for the solemn administration of all the sacraments mentioned above".<sup>26</sup>

We present further a few decrees of the Synod which explicitly order complete conformity to "our own rite and customs". Images, painted after "our manner" were to be placed in all churches, houses of the faithful and in other places.<sup>27</sup> The Syriac lectionary of the St Thomas Christians was to be replaced by "the Vulgar Latin edition made use of by holy Mother Church".<sup>28</sup>

The Synod, in virtue of obedience and upon pain of excommunication to be *ipso facto* incurred, prohibited the use of the East Syrian baptismal formula and prescribed "that which is

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<sup>25</sup> Synod of Diamper, session III, decree 7.

<sup>26</sup> Synod of Diamper, session II, decree 1.

<sup>27</sup> Synod of Diamper, session III, decree 1, chapter 11.

<sup>28</sup> Synod of Diamper, session III, decree 2.

used in the Holy Roman Church”.<sup>29</sup> The Synod strictly enjoined that “all children are to be baptized on the eighth day after they are born, according to the custom of the universal Church”.<sup>30</sup> All vicars and curates were ordered in virtue of holy obedience to celebrate the sacrament of Baptism “with the rites and ceremonies, exorcisms and prayers, that are contained in the Roman ceremonial, which the most illustrious metropolitan has ordered to be translated into Syriac for the administration of all the sacraments, and is to be kept in all churches [...]”.<sup>31</sup> Similarly baptismal fonts were to be built and the baptismal water “shall be blessed with holy chrism, according to the Roman ceremonial, which they are to make use of”.<sup>32</sup>

Since the sacrament of Confirmation was administered by the priest together with Baptism in one and the same ceremony according to the universal tradition of the Christian Orient, the Western missionaries and the Synod of Diamper judged that the said sacrament did not exist among the St Thomas Christians.<sup>33</sup> Hence, the rite of the said sacrament was completely translated from the Roman Pontifical into Syriac and introduced in Malabar.<sup>34</sup> The Synod definitively separated the sacrament of Confirmation from Baptism in harmony with the Roman tradition and stipulated that the ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop and not the priest.<sup>35</sup> The Synod ordered that all St Thomas

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<sup>29</sup> Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 1.

<sup>30</sup> Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 5.

<sup>31</sup> Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 14.

<sup>32</sup> Synod of Diamper, session IV, decree 19.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. F. Ros, “Relação sobre a Serra”, 331; A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 58; P. Malekandathil, English trans., *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 238; A. Monserrat, “Información de los christianos de S. Thomé”, A Report to the Jesuit General Fr. Everardo Mercuriano, dated 12 January 1579, J. Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, XI (1970) 518; the Synod of Diamper, session IV, *The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Confirmation*, decree 1.

<sup>34</sup> F. Ros, “Relação sobre a Serra”, 331.

<sup>35</sup> Synod of Diamper, session IV, *The Doctrine of Confirmation*.



Christians, who were above the age of reason, had to receive anew the sacrament of Confirmation according to the Latin rite during the visit conducted by Menezes after the conclusion of the Synod.<sup>36</sup>

The Synod “desiring that in all things this Church may conform herself to the customs of the holy mother, the universal Church of Rome” made more than forty changes to the East Syrian Missal,<sup>37</sup> and about twenty-four modifications in connection with the Eucharistic liturgy.<sup>38</sup> Already Mar Joseph (1555-1569) had translated from Latin into Syriac the Institution Narrative and introduced it in the Eucharistic liturgy.<sup>39</sup> However, the Synod detected some differences from the Roman Missal in the words of consecration. “Therefore the Synod does command, that words of consecration of the body and blood be reformed, and put in all their missals, according to the canon of the Roman Missal used in the universal Church without the least addition or diminution, and with the same adorations, inclinations, and ceremonies as are in the Roman Missal”.<sup>40</sup> The Creed was also to be modified to conform to that which “is sung in the Catholic Church in the Roman Missal”.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Synod of Diamper, session IV, *Confirmation*, decrees 1-2.

<sup>37</sup> See Synod of Diamper, session V, decree 1; cf. also *The Doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass*, decrees 1-3; for more information, P. J. Podipara, “The Present Syro-Malabar Liturgy: Menezian or Rozian?”, *OCP* 23 (1957) 313-322; J. Vellian, “The Synod of Diamper and the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church”, in G. Nedungatt (ed.), *The Synod of Diamper Revisited*, Rome 2001, 174-181; P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, 85-154.

<sup>38</sup> For details, P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, 155-209.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. F. Ros, “Relação sobre a Serra”, 331.

<sup>40</sup> Session V, *The Doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass*, decree 1; for details concerning the insertion of Institution Narrative and the corrections made by the Synod in the “words of consecration”, see P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, 123-134.

<sup>41</sup> Session V, *The Doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass*, decree 1.

The sheer ignorance of Menezes with regard to Eastern theology did not permit him to tolerate even the epicletic hymn sung at that time during the fraction of the bread, “the priest [...] invokes the Holy Spirit; and the Spirit descends from above and consecrates the body and blood of Christ”, because “in which words the priest seems to call upon the Holy Ghost, to come down from heaven to consecrate the body of Christ, as if it were not the priest that consecrated it; whereas in truth it is the priest that does it, though not in his own words, but the words of Christ”.<sup>42</sup> The Synod also granted permission to translate the Roman Missal “together with all the Roman ceremonies” into Syriac for the use of priests that have a mind to celebrate daily.<sup>43</sup>

The synod ordered the complete conformation of the sacrament of penance to the Latin tradition, but did not decree explicitly the translation of the absolution formula, because Metropolitan Mar Jacob (1503-1550) had already translated the Latin formula of absolution into Syriac and Mar Joseph further perfected it.<sup>44</sup> The sacrament of Extreme Unction was to be administered to the sick “according to the Roman ceremonial, which is to be translated into Syriac, and kept in all churches”.<sup>45</sup> All the priests were commanded, in virtue of holy obedience, to use only the exorcism formula of the Roman Church.<sup>46</sup>

The Synod did not explicitly speak of the translation of Latin Pontifical into Syriac, because this had already been done after the third provincial council of Goa in 1585 and Mar Abraham himself ordained some priests using such Latin-Syriac texts.<sup>47</sup> The Synod

<sup>42</sup> Session V, *The Doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass*, decree 1; for the theological context of this correction and commentary, P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, 109-113.

<sup>43</sup> Session V, *The Doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass*, decree 4.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. F. Ros, “Relação sobre a Serra”, 333.

<sup>45</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VI, *Extreme Unction*, decree 1.

<sup>46</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VII, decree 9.

<sup>47</sup> See the letter of Francis Rós to the Jesuit General Acquaviva dated 6 January 1587, ARSI, Goa-Mal. 13, fol. 344; *Documenta Indica*, vol. 14 (1979) 565.

“desiring to restore this Church to its purity, and the usage of the Roman Church” abolished the Eastern discipline of married clergy (optional celibacy) and imposed the Latin discipline of obligatory celibacy.<sup>48</sup> Regarding the form of marriage the Synod stipulated that “the priest shall give them the blessings, as they are in the Roman ceremonial of the administration of the sacraments, which is to be translated into Syriac, and to be used in all churches”.<sup>49</sup>

“Notwithstanding the Synod does approve of the laudable custom that has obtained in this diocese, of beginning the holy fast of Lent, upon the Monday following Quinquagesima Sunday; nevertheless in conformity to the usage of the universal Church, it does ordain and command, that on the Wednesday following, they consecrate ashes in the church, which shall be sprinkled on the heads of the people by the priest that celebrates [...] as he is directed by the Roman ceremonial, translated into Syriac, by the order of the most reverend Metropolitan [...]”.<sup>50</sup> The priests had to bless the holy water “by throwing holy salt into it, according to the custom of the universal Church, as is directed by the Roman ceremonial, translated into Syriac”.<sup>51</sup>

The priests were enjoined to wear Latin vestments “in the administration of the holy sacraments” and “likewise to use the rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Roman ceremonial, which the said Metropolitan has commanded to be translated into the Syriac and to be kept in all churches, which contains the forms of baptizing, of anointing the sick, of marrying, of sacramental absolution, with the customary prayers therein; of administering the holy sacrament of the altar, of exorcisms of the church, for people possessed with the devil, the blessings of holy water, of ashes, of chains and branches, as also the form of burying the dead, old and young, and of reconciling churches and churchyards

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<sup>48</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VII, *Sacrament of Orders*, decrees 16-17.

<sup>49</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VII, *Sacrament of Matrimony*, decree 2.

<sup>50</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 14.

<sup>51</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 17.

[...]”.<sup>52</sup> “The Synod desiring that this Church in all things be conformable to the Holy Roman and whole Latin Church” decreed that the blessing of wax candles was to be introduced and processions to be conducted according to the Roman ceremonial.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly the purification of defiled churches was to be performed “according to the form, and with the prayers and ceremonies contained in the Roman ceremonial translated into Syriac [...]”.<sup>54</sup> “The Synod being desirous that the Church of the Serra, should in all things be conformable to the Latin customs, or holy mother Church of Rome [...]” abolished the St Thomas Christian custom of making the sign of the cross from the right to left and commanded that “all children and all other people be taught to cross and bless themselves from the left to the right, according to the Latin custom, which shall also be observed by the priests in the blessings they give to the people, and in the crosses they make in the holy sacrifice of the mass, and the administration of other sacraments”.<sup>55</sup>

From the few decrees which we have cited it becomes evident that the project of Menezes was not the correction of errors, but the eradication and extermination of the Eastern rite from India and the gradual introduction of the Roman rite among the St Thomas Christians as well. Many decrees ordered the translation of the Roman liturgical books into Syriac, since even the Western missionaries were convinced that the St Thomas Christians would never have accepted their liturgical books in Latin or in any other language because of their great attachment to Syriac, as they firmly believed that Apostle Thomas had bequeathed to them their liturgical prayers in this language.

The translation of the Latin liturgical books into Syriac, unofficially begun during the governance of Metropolitan Mar Jacob (1503-1550) and canonically approved in the third provincial

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<sup>52</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 22.

<sup>53</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 23.

<sup>54</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 30.

<sup>55</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 37.

council of Goa (1585), was almost complete even before the Synod of Diamper. In fact, during the concluding ceremony of the Synod a Syriac translation of the Roman Ritual, a small box with three vases containing the holy oils and a surplice were given to each parish priest for the correct administration of the sacraments.<sup>56</sup> As a matter of fact, in the four succeeding centuries the bishops, who governed the St Thomas Christians endeavoured to realize the design of Menezes, although without full success.

#### 4. Suppression of Eastern Jurisdiction and Inauguration of Latin Governance

As we have seen above, in his letter of 19 December 1597 addressed to Fabio Biondi, the Latin (titular) patriarch of Jerusalem, residing at that time in Rome, Menezes revealed his intention to appoint a Latin bishop for the St Thomas Christians: “[...] If the new bishop for this Church is not yet made, I advise Your Excellency that it is a matter of great importance to select a Jesuit Father, as the Fathers of the Company of Jesus are there already. I humbly suggest that he be instructed to extinguish little by little the Syrian language, which is not natural. A good administrator ought to replace Syrian by Latin”.<sup>57</sup>

In the profession and oath of faith conducted on the second day of the Synod the St Thomas Christians were made to condemn, reject and anathematize as being a Nestorian heretic and schismatic, the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Simon Denha (1581-1600), who had obtained ecclesiastical communion and the pallium from Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585).<sup>58</sup> The profession of faith which Menezes had made and which the St Thomas Christians were obliged to pronounce, reads:

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes*, 72; P. Malekandathil, English trans., *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, 291; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 177.

<sup>57</sup> *Subsidium ad Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, 13; G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 122; *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 174.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 68-81.

I do also promise, vow and swear to God, this cross, and these holy Gospels, never to receive into this Church and bishopric of the Serra any bishop, archbishop, prelate, pastor or governor whatsoever, but whom shall be immediately appointed by the holy Apostolic See, and the Bishop of Rome, and that whomsoever he shall appoint, I will receive and obey as my true pastor, without expecting any message, or having any further dependence upon the patriarch of Babylon, whom I condemn, reject and anathematize, as being a Nestorian heretic and schismatic, and out of the obedience of the Holy Roman Church, and for that reason out of a state of salvation; and I do swear and promise, never to obey him any more, nor to communicate with him in any matter; all this I have professed and declared, I do promise, vow and swear to almighty God, and this holy Cross of Christ; so help me God, and the contents of these Gospels. Amen.<sup>59</sup>

The Synod further ordered, under the precept of obedience and upon pain of excommunication to be *ipso facto* incurred, that this bishopric “shall not from henceforward have any manner of dependence upon the said patriarch of Babylon” and prohibited all priests and curates to name the said patriarch during any liturgical celebration.<sup>60</sup> Such acts of Menezes were obviously non-canonical and *ultra vires*, since no Latin Ordinary has ever had the power to condemn or excommunicate a Catholic patriarch in full communion with the Roman Pontiff, and this too without any knowledge of the same Pontiff.

The Latin jurisdiction over the St Thomas Christians really began on 20 December 1599, when Pope Clement VIII appointed Francis Ros SJ as successor to Metropolitan Mar Abraham in the see of Angamaly. Bishop Ros received episcopal consecration at Goa on 28 January 1601 and on 1 May of the same year he reached

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<sup>59</sup> Synod of Diamper, session II, decree 1; cf. also session III, decree 8; the phrase “immediately appointed” is particularly relevant, since it excludes appointment through the mediation of the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch in communion with the Bishop of Rome, as was the custom at the epoch of the Synod.

<sup>60</sup> Synod of Diamper, session III, decree 8.

Angamaly and took possession of his diocese.<sup>61</sup> Thus with the Synod of Diamper the concerted efforts of the Portuguese to separate the St Thomas Christians from the jurisdiction of the Chaldean Catholic patriarch and to bring them under the Latin jurisdiction of Padroado became a reality. The Latin jurisdiction continued until the erection of three vicariates and the appointment of native vicars apostolic on 28 July 1896.<sup>62</sup>

Francis Ros SJ, the first Latin bishop of the St Thomas Christians (1599-1624), effectively implemented the liturgical prescriptions of the Synod of Diamper, including the administration of the sacraments according to the Syriac translation of the Roman Ritual. From his time on, the sacramental liturgy of the St Thomas Christians was the liturgy of the Latin Church in Syriac language. With regard to this, in his Report on Malabar, written in 1604, Bishop Francis Ros himself stated:

About twenty years back, through the diligence of the Fathers of the Society residing at Vaypicotta, the Book of the Rituals of all the sacraments including Orders, together with all their formulas, prayers and ceremonies was translated from Latin into Chaldean. All the parish priests of this Christianity are now using it in the administration of the sacraments. They differ from us in this matter only as regards the language, except that the saying of the Mass is in the ancient manner, but as corrected and approved by the most illustrious Primate of India, who reviewed and recognized the said Mass which was translated into Latin by the Fathers of the Society.<sup>63</sup>

Evidently Ros obliged the priests to use the Latin liturgical books in Syriac for the celebration of the sacraments. Consequently, "All the parish priests of this Christianity are now using" the Roman ritual in the administration of the sacraments and "they differ from us in this matter only as regards the language".

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. A. Santos, "Francisco Ros, S. J. Arzobispo de Cranganor, primer Obispo Jesuita de la India", *Missionalia Hispanica* 14 (1948) 377; D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 1, 292.

<sup>62</sup> See chapter IV, no. 3.

<sup>63</sup> F. Ros, "Relação sobre a Serra", 335.

As Prof. Jacob Vellian rightly states: “The policy of Latinization was adopted and legalized in the Synod of Diamper, but it was Bishop Ros who applied it officially and extended it further to change the whole physiognomy of the liturgy of the Malabar Church”.<sup>64</sup> In fact, besides the changes made by the Synod of Diamper and Archbishop Menezes, Ros further restructured the Eucharistic liturgy in accordance with the Roman Missal with several Latin interpolations and many East Syrian omissions. Similarly almost all the rubrics and ceremonies of the simple and solemn Masses were adopted from the Roman Missal.<sup>65</sup>

### **5. Suppression of the Metropolitan Status of the See of St Thomas Christians and Its Reduction to a Suffragan of Goa**

In the cited letter of Menezes addressed to Fabio Biondi, while speaking about the scope of the Synod of Diamper Menezes revealed that “What is most important of all is that the bishop should be a suffragan of this city (Goa), as is at present the bishop of Cochin, his nearest suffragan”.<sup>66</sup> In fact, one of the cardinal aspects of the Portuguese project was to suppress the autonomous metropolitan status of the see of St Thomas Christians and to make it a suffragan of Goa. It is surprising that even before the official reduction of the archdiocese of Angamaly to a suffragan of Goa, Archbishop Menezes and his collaborators began to consider it as such. In the convocation letter of the Synod of Diamper, while referring to his authority, Menezes claimed that such authority was incumbent on him “as metropolitan and primate of this and all the

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<sup>64</sup> J. Vellian, “The Synod of Diamper and the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church”, 187.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. P. J. Podipara, “The Present Syro-Malabar Liturgy: Menezian or Rozian?”, 313-322; J. Vellian, “The Synod of Diamper and the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church”, 185-191.

<sup>66</sup> *Subsidium ad Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, 13; G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 122.



other Churches of the Indies, and the oriental parts".<sup>67</sup> Similarly, in the minutes of the opening session of the Synod of Diamper on Sunday, 20 June 1599, Gouvea, the Portuguese historian, affirms that the right to convoke the Synod belonged to Menezes as the metropolitan of the archdiocese of Angamaly, and primate of the Indies, and all the oriental parts.<sup>68</sup>

The Synod of Diamper, which held the same position, submitted all the St Thomas Christian priests and faithful "to the holy, upright, just, and necessary court of the holy office of the inquisition" in Goa, as if the archdiocese of Angamaly had been its suffragan.<sup>69</sup> Similarly the Synod stipulated that "this Church being a suffragan" it was obliged by the constitutions which had been enacted in the provincial councils of Goa, and "to which this Synod yielding a due obedience, does command, that in things that can be observed in this bishopric, or concerning which there is no provision made in this Synod, the said constitutions be kept and obeyed [...]".<sup>70</sup>

In accordance with the Portuguese project, six months after the Synod of Diamper, on 20 December 1599 Pope Clement VIII (1592-1603) suppressed the metropolitan status of the archdiocese of Angamaly, reduced it to the status of a simple diocese and made it a suffragan of the archdiocese of Goa.<sup>71</sup> Although the document of suppression has not yet been found, Pope Clement VIII in the document *In supremo militantis* of 4 August 1600 (extension of Portuguese patronage) and Pope Paul V (1605-1621) in the bull *Romanus Pontifex* of 22 December 1608 (re-establishment of metropolitan status) explicitly referred to the reduction of the

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<sup>67</sup> A. De Gouvea, *Synodo Diocesano da Igreja e bispado de Angamale*, 1; M. Geddes, *The History of the Church of Malabar*, 89-90.

<sup>68</sup> A. De Gouvea, *Synodo Diocesano da Igreja e bispado de Angamale*, 2; M. Geddes, *The History of the Church of Malabar*, 98-99.

<sup>69</sup> Synod of Diamper, session III, decree 22.

<sup>70</sup> Synod of Diamper, session VIII, decree 41.

<sup>71</sup> Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, 61.

archdiocese of Angamaly to a simple suffragan of Goa.<sup>72</sup> In the document *In supremo militantis*, with regard to the suppression of the archiepiscopal status of the archdiocese of Angamaly, Pope Clement VIII stated:

Since in the Church of Angamaly, which is situated in the East Indies under the rule of a gentile king, namely the one of Cochin, and which lacks any endowment, on account of the death of Mar Abraham, of blessed memory, the former archbishop of Angamaly, who died outside the Roman Curia, which Church has been deprived of the consolation of a pastor, upon the advice of our brothers, by means of another letter of ours, we have recently suppressed and extinguished in perpetuity the name and title of archbishop and metropolitan Church, as well as the archiepiscopal seat, dignity, superiority, pre-eminence and the metropolitan right in its entirety, and have reduced that same Church to the status of a simple cathedral Church of one bishop, to be in the future suffragan of the archbishop for the time being of Goa, and have subjected it to the metropolitan authority of the Church of Goa, as is more amply contained in the above mentioned letter.<sup>73</sup>

The Portuguese religious and political authorities had finally succeeded in suppressing the metropolitan status of the see of St Thomas Christians, which had existed in India since the time of the Apostle, and in reducing it to a simple suffragan of the recently created missionary archdiocese of Goa. Thereupon the diocese of Angamaly, together with the other two suffragans of Goa, Cochin and Malacca, formed one ecclesiastical province of the Latin Church.

## 6. Imposition of Portuguese Patronage over the St Thomas Christians

Already the provincial council of Goa in 1575 had stipulated that "For the good of the Christianity of the Apostle St Thomas, which is in the land of Malabar, it is convenient that the diocese be

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<sup>72</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae* which published all the official documents of the time omitted the bull of suppression. Similarly authors like S. Giamil and G. Beltrami did not publish this document.

<sup>73</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 1, 260; IRD, 68-69.

governed by a prelate presented by the king of Portugal and not by the patriarch of Chaldea [...]”.<sup>74</sup> The subjection of St Thomas Christians to the Portuguese patronage was also part of the long standing political strategy. The Synod of Diamper also made possible the extension of the power of His Majesty the King of Portugal, “the only Christian king and lord in the Indies”, over the St Thomas Christians. In fact, the Synod “does with great instance desire, that His Majesty the King of Portugal would be graciously pleased to take all Christians of this bishopric under his favour and protection, he being the only Christian king or lord in all these oriental parts [...], beseeching the most reverend Metropolitan, President of this Synod, to present this their petition to His Majesty, and to let him know how ready all the Christians of this bishopric are to serve him”.<sup>75</sup>

Conforming to the Portuguese strategy, Pope Clement VIII not only made the autonomous metropolitan see of the St Thomas Christians a suffragan of the archdiocese of Goa, but also imposed upon it the patronage of the king of Portugal on 4 August 1600. In order to obtain the right of patronage, Philip of Portugal offered a sum of five hundred gold cruzados of Portuguese currency annually for the maintenance of the bishop of Angamaly from the incomes pertaining to him from the East Indies. We cite the relevant parts of the apostolic letter *In supremo militantis*:

We, considering it right and expedient to foster and treat with especial grace and favour this so pious and generous benefaction of King Philip towards the bishop and the Church of Angamaly, swayed in this regard by the petitions of the same King Philip, with this present letter by apostolic authority bestow and assign to the same (episcopal) table, the income from the annual revenues as aforementioned [...].

Moreover to king Philip and his successors, in virtue of the present letter and in view of the endowment, we reserve, grant and attribute in perpetuity the right of patronage and of presenting to us and to the Roman Pontiff for the time being, a person suitable for the

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<sup>74</sup> Provincial Council of Goa (1575), session 3, decree 1, *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, Appendix 1, 51.

<sup>75</sup> Synod of Diamper, session IX, decree 24.

aforesaid Church of Angamaly, on the occasion of a vacancy henceforth, whenever and wherever, whatsoever it should occur, even at the Apostolic See, such person to be set over the Church of Angamaly as its bishop and pastor by ourselves and by the Roman Pontiff for the time being, upon such presentation and no other.

We decree that the “*ius patronatus*” and the right of presentation in this way pertain to king Philip and to his aforementioned successors in virtue of the true, mere and real endowment of the same Church of Angamaly, and that such cannot be abrogated, nor declared abrogated by the said [Apostolic] See for any reason whatsoever except by explicit consent of Philip or the king for the time being, and were it to happen that it be abrogated in any other way, that abrogation and its effects would be null and void.<sup>76</sup>

Originally the popes granted the patronage right to the kings of Portugal in order to invade, conquer and subdue pagan kingdoms and territories, to reduce the population in those places to the Catholic faith and to constitute dioceses and new Churches there. In the case of the St Thomas Christians the Portuguese civil and religious authorities conquered an individual Eastern Church in existence since the time of Apostle Thomas, suppressed its autonomous metropolitan status, heritage and identity, reduced it to a simple suffragan diocese of the recently created missionary archdiocese of Goa and then subjected it to the “jurisdiction” of the Portuguese Crown. Thus the king of Portugal obtained the absolute right and privilege to present a prelate to the Pope for appointment to the diocese of Angamaly, whenever the see remained vacant, which right even the supreme authority of the Church could not revoke without the consent of the same king. It should be noted that the patronage was imposed upon the St Thomas Christians against their will, for the benefit of the Portuguese Crown and in order to strengthen the political, military and religious power of the Portuguese authorities in India.

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<sup>76</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 1, 260-261; *IRD*, 70-72.

## 7. Transfer of the See, Jurisdictional Conflicts, Restitution of Metropolitan Status

The suppression of the metropolitan status of the archdiocese of Angamaly and its incorporation in the ecclesiastical province of Goa as its suffragan under the Portuguese patronage naturally provoked great consternation and scandal among the St Thomas Christians. Several petitions were sent to the Holy See expressing deep sorrow and bewilderment over such a drastic act and pleading for the restoration of the autonomous metropolitan status.<sup>77</sup> Bishop Francis Ros, who wanted to recuperate his metropolitan title and to transfer the seat and residence from Angamaly to Cranganore because of the presence of a Portuguese fortress there, took great interest in the matter and wholeheartedly supported the request of the St Thomas Christians. Persuaded by Bishop Ros, the St Thomas Christians also requested the Pope to transfer the seat and residence of the metropolitan from Angamaly to Cranganore, which they had formerly abandoned for fear of the Portuguese.<sup>78</sup>

The indefatigable efforts of Bishop Francis Ros and the Jesuit missionaries convinced king Philip of Portugal and Pope Paul V (1605-1621) to transfer the seat and the residence of the bishop from Angamaly to Cranganore, which was at that time under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Cochin. The transfer provoked a very strong reaction from the bishop of Cochin, thus unleashing a violent and scandalous jurisdictional conflict between the Jesuit Bishop Francis Ros and the Franciscan Bishop Andrew of Saint Mary of Cochin (1588-1615), involving the members of the

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<sup>77</sup> J. Kollaparambil enumerates as many as 19 items of communication on the question. See his book, *The Archdeacon of All India*, p. 113, footnote no. 6; one important letter of the archdeacon and the councillors of Angamaly dated 20 December 1601 and addressed to Pope Clement VIII can be found in G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 263-266.

<sup>78</sup> See the letter of the archdeacon and the councillors of Angamaly dated 20 December 1601 and addressed to Pope Clement VIII in G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 263-266.

respective religious Orders as well.<sup>79</sup> About the transfer of the see, Stephen Neill writes:

In 1605 Ros made the grave mistake of securing from the Pope permission to move the seat of the archbishopric from Angamaly to Cranganore. The ground on which the decision was taken was that Angamaly was in the territory of a Hindu ruler, and that the archbishop would be gravely hindered in the exercise of his duties by the caprices and aggressions of such rulers. Cranganore, being a Portuguese fortress, would be a safer centre of operation [...]. And by making the change Ros landed himself in dissensions with his neighbour the bishop of Cochin, dissensions which are among the most painful and ridiculous in the whole history of the Church.<sup>80</sup>

The jurisdictional conflict became violent, as the bishop of Cochin attempted by all means to impede the transfer of the see as decreed by the Pope. Ecclesiastical sanctions and excommunications were promulgated provoking scandal among the Christian faithful and the non-Christian population; liturgical vestments and other items pertaining to divine worship were removed from the church in Cranganore. Being aware of such disastrous conflicts, on 12 October 1608 Pope Paul V wrote to the bishop of Cochin:

We are extremely grieved by the fact that there emerged so vehement a conflict between Your Fraternity and our venerable brother, the bishop of Angamaly that, as we know, degenerated to the level of impugning arms. It has been referred to us that this was done on the pretext of defending jurisdiction. It is quite fitting to defend the rights of one's Church, but it is shameful to resort to force and arms against your brother and fellow bishop. For, it is diametrically opposed to Christian charity, which we must prefer over all other things so that the people may recognize in us the teaching of Christ, which we profess. For which reason we advise

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<sup>79</sup> For a short account of the conflict, see D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 1, 312-335.

<sup>80</sup> S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*, 311.

and admonish Your Fraternity again and again to abstain from such acts in the dispute on the right of your Church [...].<sup>81</sup>

Unfortunately such admonitions and reproof from the Pope did not bring to an end the controversy and disaccord engendered by the separation of the parish church of Cranganore from the jurisdiction of the bishop of Cochin and the transference of the seat of the diocese of Angamaly to that city.

Meanwhile repeated petitions of the St Thomas Christians to the Holy See requesting the restitution of the metropolitan status of their Church bore fruit. Pope Clement VIII, who suppressed the metropolitan status of the Church of St Thomas Christians and subjected it to the Portuguese patronage, died on 3 March 1605. His successor Pope Paul V (1605-1621), with the apostolic letter *Romanus Pontifex* of 22 December 1608 liberated the see of St Thomas Christians from the metropolitan right of the archdiocese of Goa and re-established its metropolitan status with all rights and privileges as if it had never been suppressed. In the apostolic letter *Romanus Pontifex* the Pope stated:

Since, however, as we have learnt, this suppression, extinction, reduction and subjection have caused distress among our beloved sons, the clergy and the people of the city of Angamaly, lest the Church of Angamaly should suffer any loss in temporal and spiritual matters on the pretext of this suppression, extinction, reduction and subjection, we, desiring to provide in right manner for the duties of our pastoral office, by our own initiative (*motu proprio*), and not at the petition of the said Bishop Francis or presented to us by any other person on his behalf, but of our own deliberation alone, by our own apostolic authority, by the advice of our venerable brethren the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church of the Consistorial Congregation, by this present letter, in the aforesaid Church of Angamaly restore in perpetuity the name and title of archbishop and metropolitan Church, as well as the archiepiscopal seat, dignity and pre-eminence and the metropolitan right in its entirety. Further likewise with the aforementioned authority and in the aforementioned terms in perpetuity we restore, reinstate, and fully reintegrate the same Church of Angamaly, contrary to its

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<sup>81</sup> ASV, Borghese 11, vol. 412, fol. 214; G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa caldea nel secolo dell'unione*, 272.

suppression, extinction and the letter of our predecessor Clement, and each and everything contained in it and elsewhere, to the full and original selfsame status it had before the aforesaid suppression and letter, in such a way that from henceforth and for all future times Bishop Francis and his successors in the said Church of Angamaly can and must use and enjoy perpetually the name and title of metropolitan Church, and archbishop, as well as the archiepiscopal seat, dignity, superiority and pre-eminence and the metropolitan right in its entirety, in each and every particular, just as if the suppression and the aforesaid letter had never been issued. We also restore the Church of Angamaly to the status and existence of an archiepiscopal and metropolitan Church as it was beforehand and by the same authority and in the same terms, we also exempt and liberate it perpetually from the suffragan status and from the superiority and metropolitan right of the Church of Goa and its archbishop.<sup>82</sup>

With this letter Pope Paul V restored in perpetuity to the see of St Thomas Christians “the name and title of archbishop and metropolitan Church” and the full and original selfsame status it had enjoyed before the suppression. However, he did not liberate the archdiocese of Angamaly from the “*ius patronatus*” of the king of Portugal. Hence the king continued to enjoy all the patronage rights including the presentation of a bishop to the see of Angamaly, whenever it remained vacant. Actually the Portuguese political and religious authorities, which considered the see of St Thomas Christians only as a titular archdiocese, effectively controlled the ecclesiastical affairs, as they desired, even after the theoretical restitution of its ancient title and rights. Though the metropolitan status was restored in principle, in practice Angamaly was treated as a suffragan of Goa and the Portuguese prelate of Goa began to nominate administrators to Angamaly during its vacancy just as he did for his other suffragan sees.

## 8. Suppression of All India Jurisdiction

Since the restoration of the metropolitan status to the see of St Thomas Christians only escalated the jurisdictional conflict, exacerbating tension between Archbishop Francis Ros and the

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<sup>82</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 8; IRD, 74-76.



bishop of Cochin, on 3 December 1609 Pope Paul V issued three letters: *Alias pro parte*, *Cum sicut* and *Cum nobis*. With the apostolic letter *Alias pro parte*, persuaded by the supplications of king Philip of Spain and Portugal, the Pope confirmed and ratified in perpetuity the separation and dismemberment of Cranganore from the jurisdiction of the bishop of Cochin and the transfer of the seat of the archdiocese of Angamaly to the said city.<sup>83</sup> With the intention of resolving the conflict, by the apostolic letters *Cum sicut* and *Cum nobis* of identical tenor the Pope mandated Aleixo de Menezes, the metropolitan archbishop of Goa, to set definite limits and boundaries for the archdiocese of Angamaly with respect to the dioceses of Cochin and Mylapore in India.<sup>84</sup> In the apostolic letter *Cum nobis* of 3 December 1609 the Pope stated:

Whereas it has become known to us, and not without great sorrow, that our venerable brother the bishop of Cochin together with certain stewards of the see of Angamaly have made bold to resist our apostolic letter given under the seal, by which, among other matters, we transferred the citadel of Cranganore and its parish church together with all its income from the diocese of Cochin to the former bishopric of Angamaly, now an archbishopric, a detachment and transfer to another diocese which our venerable brother, the bishop of Cochin, has tried on some pretext to prevent, whereby numerous disputes and controversies have arisen between the two bishops and on both sides acts of excommunication and ecclesiastical censures have been promulgated, causing no little scandal among the people:

We, who, on this very same day, by another document of this Apostolic See have confirmed this same transfer and detachment, striving to obviate the scandal in an appropriate way and to take measures for the future lest similar disputes should ever arise, and desirous of designating and defining a sure diocese for the archbishop of Angamaly and his successors, considering plain the tenor of our aforesaid document, in virtue of this present letter we commission, enjoin and command our venerable brother the archbishop of Goa and in the case of his absence, our beloved son or whosoever governs the Church of Goa, and if this latter were to be

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<sup>83</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 10-11; *IRD*, 80-87.

<sup>84</sup> The apostolic letters *Cum sicut* and *Cum nobis* in *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, pages 12-13 & 14-15 respectively.

legitimately impeded, our beloved sons the vicars provincial of the Order of St Dominic and the Order of the Hermits of St Augustine, that our venerable brother the archbishop of Goa, or the ecclesiastical person substituting for him, or in the aforesaid case, the vicars provincial acting conjointly, enquire diligently into these matters and if perchance they are not in agreement, that they seek advice from the eldest by birth of the inquisitors into the wickedness of heresy. Let these, by apostolic authority, assign for the future a sure diocese and a distinct territory to the archbishop of Angamaly, to or from which diocese and territory, should it seem opportune, they may divide, detach, annexe and transfer whatsoever place belonging to the dioceses of Mylapore or Cochin, even though they be situated within the boundaries of these latter, which places thus divided and detached, together with their inhabitants and parishioners, let them annexe and subject in perpetuity to the diocese of Angamaly; and whatever they may decide or decree they should place on public record, lest hereafter any dispute should arise once more concerning this matter.<sup>85</sup>

In accordance with the papal mandate, with the decree *Omnibus notum* of 22 December 1610 Archbishop Menezes decided the territorial boundaries of the archdiocese of Angamaly and the confines of the dioceses of Cochin and Mylapore.<sup>86</sup> With the apostolic letter *Alias postquam* of 6 February 1616, addressed to the archbishop of Goa, Pope Paul V approved and confirmed the delimitation of the territory of the archdiocese of Angamaly and the boundaries of the dioceses of Angamaly, Cochin and Mylapore effected by Archbishop Menezes and ordered the then archbishop of Goa, Christopher de Sà (1613-1622), to execute the decision.<sup>87</sup> In the apostolic letter, after calling to mind the mandate given to Archbishop Menezes on 3 December 1606 for effecting the division, the Pope decreed:

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<sup>85</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 14; IRD, 88-91.

<sup>86</sup> The decree *Omnibus notum* in *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 16-17; IRD, 94-101.

<sup>87</sup> The apostolic letter *Alias postquam* in *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 26-27; IRD, 102-107; Menezes was appointed archbishop of Braga in Portugal in 1612.

As recently exposed to us in the name of our most beloved son in Christ, Philip, the Catholic king of Spain, the said Archbishop Aleixo, in the act of executing the letter, after having made mature, serious and various handlings and deliberations, and after having summoned the persons concerned, passed his definitive sentence on 22 December 1610, which assigned, dismembered and separated a definitive diocese, district and territory for the aforesaid Church of Angamaly, which sentence, since no appeal was lodged or the legitimate period of time for appeal elapsed, became adjudged matter (*res iudicata*) as determined in the said sentence, the tenor of which by the present letter, we wish to render public in an adequate fashion, where the facts are more amply related.

Since it is useless to emanate sentences, unless there is someone, who will duly execute them, we too, swayed by the rightful supplications humbly presented to us by king Philip, entrust and command you our brother by means of this letter, to proceed to the execution of the said sentence according to its contents and tenor, by the same authority; repressing any opponents and rebels by sentences, censures and ecclesiastical punishments and by any other opportune remedies of law and fact and having been invoked for this, even the help of the secular arm, if necessary.<sup>88</sup>

With the apostolic letter *Alias postquam* the Pope explicitly confirmed and ratified the sentence of Aleixo de Menezes and thus the canonical process of defining and restricting the territory of the archdiocese of Angamaly terminated.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century there were only three Latin dioceses in India: the archdiocese of Goa and its two suffragans, Cochin and Mylapore. With the Synod of Diamper the Portuguese exterminated the Eastern jurisdiction in India and imposed Latin jurisdiction and Portuguese patronage upon the Church of St Thomas Christians. Consequently the St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Angamaly began to be considered simply as one of the four Latin dioceses that existed in India at that time under the Portuguese patronage. The territory of India was divided among the "four Latin dioceses", without considering the fact that the "apostolic see" of St Thomas, which had its inception in the very first century itself, constituted a separate individual Church

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<sup>88</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 26-27; IRD, 104-106.

having its own spiritual heritage and identity and which, headed by a metropolitan of all India and administered by an archdeacon of all India, had jurisdiction over the St Thomas Christians all over India for at least more than a thousand years.<sup>89</sup>

That the division was not effected on an ecclesial basis is also evident from the fact that some of the parishes of the St Thomas Christians such as Cochin, Mattancherry, Palluruthy and Purakkad came under the Latin diocese of Cochin, whereas the Latin parishes of Calicut, Cranganore and Pallippuram were placed under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Angamaly. With the determination of the boundaries of the archdiocese of Angamaly the all India jurisdiction of the Church of St Thomas Christians was terminated. According to the decree of Menezes the territory was limited to a small part of Malabar and to some places in Mysore, Madura and the Karnatic region. As we have seen, not even all the St Thomas Christians came under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Angamaly. Some of their parishes were placed in the diocese of Cochin. Thus the St Thomas Christians were divided between two Latin dioceses under Portuguese Padroado, although the vast majority remained in the archdiocese of Angamaly.

It is worth noting that because of the aforementioned transfer of the episcopal residence, over the course of time the see of the Thomas Christians came to be again known as the archdiocese of Cranganore instead of Angamaly. In order to avoid confusion from now on we will use only the title Cranganore for the see of the Eastern Christians.

## **9. The Revolt of the St Thomas Christians and the Oath against the Jesuits of Padroado**

The first three Latin Jesuit bishops who ruled the St Thomas Christians under Portuguese Padroado were Francis Ros (1599-1624), Stephen Brito (1624-1641) and Francis Garcia (1641-1659). Archdeacon George of the Cross died on 25 July 1640 and was immediately succeeded by Archdeacon Thomas Parampil. In

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<sup>89</sup> See chapter I, no. 3.

accordance with the decrees of the Synod of Diamper and the Portuguese project, all the aforementioned Latin archbishops tried their best to convert the St Thomas Christians to the Latin rite. In order to bring them under their direct and full authority all these archbishops, especially Francis Garcia SJ, attempted to exclude the archdeacon, who was by immemorial tradition the real head and ruler of the St Thomas Christians and general church assembly, completely from church administration. On the other hand, the archdeacon was fully determined to defend his ancient rights and privileges, as they existed among the St Thomas Christians before the sixteenth century. Hence from the very beginning Archbishop Garcia's rule was marked by a bitter and constant power struggle between himself and the archdeacon, which no religious or political authority, including the viceroy of Portuguese India, was able to resolve.<sup>90</sup> Such conflicts between the archbishop and the archdeacon finally led to the revolt of the St Thomas Christians, known as the *Coonan* Cross Oath (oath at the slant Cross).

### 9.1. The Principal Causes of the Revolt

Generally it is possible to affirm that everything that jeopardized the Eastern heritage and the autonomous self-governance of the Indian Church from the time of the arrival of the Western missionaries, contributed to the outbreak of the rebellion of the St Thomas Christians. The main tragic acts perpetrated from the beginning of the sixteenth century are: the arrest and deportation of Eastern Catholic bishops, the Synod of Diamper and the termination of the relationship with the Chaldean Church, the stigmatisation of the St Thomas Christians as heretics, schismatics and pagans, the imposition of Western jurisdiction against their will, the suppression of the autonomous metropolitan status of the ancient see of St Thomas, the reduction of the said see to a simple suffragan of the archdiocese of Goa, the imposition of Portuguese patronage, the restriction of all India jurisdiction, the curtailment of the special authority, privileges and prerogatives of the archdeacon and general church assembly, the strenuous attempts to suppress

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<sup>90</sup> For details, see J. Thekkedath, *The Troubled Days of Francis Garcia S.J., Archbishop of Cranganore (1641-59)*, Roma 1972, 21-40.

the law of Thomas and the Eastern rite, the elimination of immemorial traditions and Christianised Indian social customs, the monopoly of the Jesuits, excluding other religious Orders from Malabar, in spite of an explicit order of the Pope, and the measures taken to suppress the indigenous religious Congregation of St Thomas the Apostle founded on 5 February 1626 at Edappally.<sup>91</sup> All these sorrowful events caused great dissatisfaction, despair, affliction and agony among the St Thomas Christians and contributed to the outbreak of the final public revolt.

## 9.2. The Immediate Cause of the Revolt

In 1647 through some Carmelite missionaries the archdeacon sent letters to the Roman Pontiff and to Propaganda Fide concerning the problems of the Malabar Church. Since he did not receive any reply, during 1648-49 the archdeacon also wrote letters to the Oriental patriarchs, namely to the Chaldean patriarch in Mesopotamia, to the Syrian patriarch of Antioch and to the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria, describing the grievances of the St Thomas Christians. The patriarchs were also requested to send Oriental bishops to India, since these Christians were without a bishop of their own rite and ecclesial heritage. When the letter of Archdeacon Thomas requesting a bishop reached the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria in 1649, Cyril Mar Atallah (Adeodatus) Ibn Issa, a Catholic archbishop of the Antiochene Syrian Church, was staying in Cairo.<sup>92</sup> Giving the letter to Mar Atallah, who had

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<sup>91</sup> For a detailed study of the causes of Coonan Cross Oath, J. Kollaparambil, *The St Thomas Christians' Revolution*, 10-105 & 217-243; J. Thekkedath, *The Troubled Days of Francis Garcia S.J.*, 64-73; P. Pallath, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians and the Apostolic Mission of Sebastiani*, Changanassery 2006, 3-13; the articles of J. Perumthottam and M. O. John, in Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, *Papers and Joint Statements 1989-2000*, Koodapuzha X. & Panicker J. (eds.), Kottayam 2001, 511-530.

<sup>92</sup> Atallah, belonging to the Antiochene Jacobite Syrian Church, was born in Aleppo in Syria around the year 1590. He became a monk of the Order of St Anthony and later was appointed archbishop of Damascus, Homs and Nicodemia by the Antiochene Patriarch Ignatius Mar Hidayat-Allah. Due to the work of the Latin missionaries in Aleppo, on 18 October 1631 Archbishop Atallah and two priests made the profession of faith and became Catholics. Persecuted by the

no see at that time, the patriarch persuaded him to go to India. Mar Atallah accepted the suggestion of the patriarch and set out from Cairo, probably at the end of 1651 and arrived at Surat, north of Bombay in March 1652.

In August 1652 Atallah reached Mylapore, where he was detained at the Jesuit College, on the order of the Inquisition of Goa, which acted upon information furnished by the Jesuits. Already before the arrival of the said prelate three clerics (*samas*) and a layman from Malabar had reached Mylapore in July 1652 as pilgrims to the shrine of St Thomas. They happened to meet Atallah and to converse with him. When the pilgrims returned to Malabar in September 1652, they carried with them a letter of Atallah, addressed to the St Thomas Christians, in which he claimed himself to be the "patriarch of all India and China", sent by the order of "Pope Ignatius" and he had "all powers" to govern the St Thomas Christians.<sup>93</sup>

Based on the letter of Atallah, widely circulated by the archdeacon in the churches of Malabar and on the reports of the four pilgrims, who personally met and conversed with him, the St Thomas Christians formed their firm conviction that Atallah was a Catholic patriarch sent by the Roman Pontiff to govern the Malabar Church. The Portuguese authorities, however, decided to deport him to Goa via Cochin and then to Portugal. The St Thomas Christians held a general meeting at Diamper and decided to send a letter to Archbishop Garcia, requesting his collaboration in bringing their patriarch Mar Atallah to Malabar. Responding to the letter, the archbishop categorically stated: "Even if the patriarch were sent by the Supreme Pontiff, we cannot grant him to you, for

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Turkish authorities and maltreated by his own people for the sake of his Catholic faith, he lost his see and then had to shift his residence from place to place, Diarbekir, Husn-Ziad, Bagdad, and Isfahan in Persia. Finally, he reached Cairo in Egypt sometime in the year 1643.

<sup>93</sup> APF, *SOCC* 234, f. 355v, English trans., J. Kollaparambil, *The St Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653*, 108-109; Syriac copy in the same book, Appendix, no. 2, p. 252; Latin copy, *SOCC* 232, f. 2; printed Latin text in Eustachio di S. Maria, *Istoria della vita, virtù, e fatti illustri del ven. Monsignor Fr. Gioseppe di S. Maria Sebastiani*, Roma 1719, 25.

he has not brought the *benepacet* of our king".<sup>94</sup> The constant and ardent requests of the archdeacon and the Christian faithful to Archbishop Garcia and to other religious and political authorities for an occasion to visit "their patriarch" when the ship arrived at Cochin and to examine his credentials in order to verify if the Pope had sent him, did not produce any result. Such a disheartening attitude added fuel to the fire of agony already enkindled in the hearts of St Thomas Christians and aggravated the whole situation.

### 9.3. The Oath against the Jesuits of Padroado

The Portuguese exiled Atallah to Goa without showing him to the archdeacon and his collaborators who reached Cochin, although they had promised not to ask for the release of the "patriarch", if his credentials were found fictitious. Subsequently the outraged archdeacon, priests and Christians entered the Church of Our Lady of Life at Matancherry and in front of a crucifix with lighted candles, - the archdeacon and the leading priests touching a Bible - all of them together made the solemn oath that they would no longer obey Archbishop Garcia or any other prelate from the Society of Jesus, nor would they ever again admit the Jesuits into Malabar or to their churches. Further they chose Archdeacon Thomas as their governor and assigned to him four prominent priests as councillors; they promised to uphold his authority even at the cost of their lives, sanctioned the forfeiture of the high-caste status for non-observance of those resolutions and finally invited all to meet again at Edappally on the three-day fast of Jonas.<sup>95</sup> This event, which took place on Friday, 3 January 1653, is generally designated as the *Coonan* Cross Oath.

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<sup>94</sup> APF, SOCG, 234, f. 338; cf. also the sworn testimony of many witnesses, APF, SOCG 232, ff. 117, 120v, 124v, 132v, 137, 141v, 352v. According to the concept of the Portuguese, the Pope could not have nominated bishops in Portuguese territories, unless they were presented by their king.

<sup>95</sup> The content of the oath as gathered from several sources by J. Kollaparambil, *The St Thomas Christians' Revolution*, 140; with regard to the content of the oath see also, J. Thekkedath, *The Troubled Days of Francis Garcia S.J.*, 60; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 79; X. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 97; J. Perumthottam, *A Period of Decline of the Mar Thoma Christians*, (1712-1752), Kottayam 1994, 25; *Fonti*, II-VIII, 53.



The real oath took place inside the church as already described but, according to tradition, the vast majority of people that could not enter the church participated in the oath by touching ropes tied to the open air cross which stood in front of the church at Mattancherry. The cross was in a slanting position and hence in the course of time the pledge began to be known as the *Coonan* (Slant) Cross Oath.

#### 9.4. The Invalid Consecration of Archdeacon Thomas

In accordance with the aforesaid decision, a large number of priests and people gathered for the celebration of the feast of Jonas (*Moonnu Noyambu*) at Edappally, which lasted for three days. On 5 February 1653, the last and most solemn day of the feast, it was declared that through a letter patriarch Atallah had conferred upon Archdeacon Thomas all the powers of jurisdiction needed to govern the Malabar Church. From that moment the archdeacon began to exercise all powers of episcopal jurisdiction. With regard to the powers of Order, the people were told that the archdeacon had another letter from patriarch Atallah with directives to be implemented in case the patriarch were impeded by death or other causes from coming to Malabar. Hence they had to wait for definite news from Goa about the patriarch's fate.

After having received reliable reports about the deportation of Atallah from Goa to Portugal, on 22 May 1653 at the church of Alangad, during the celebration of the feast of Ascension twelve priests imposed their hands on the archdeacon and conferred on him "episcopal consecration", in accordance with the rite of a Chaldean Pontifical found in Malabar.<sup>96</sup> Thereafter the archdeacon began to be called Metropolitan Mar Thomas. The Christian faithful were made to believe that the twelve priests had the faculty to "consecrate" the archdeacon by virtue of the order of Atallah, whose false letter was also publicly read. At this juncture the archdeacon, the head of the community and the manoeuvring

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<sup>96</sup> For details, J. Kollaparambil, *The St Thomas Christians' Revolution*, 142-148; J. Thekkedath, *The Troubled Days of Francis Garcia S.J.*, 61-62.

priests did not realize that with such irresponsible and deceptive acts they were dragging the community into dark woods with no paths and no easy way of turning back.

After the false consecration, the archdeacon began to exercise all the episcopal functions, not excluding priestly ordination. At the beginning most of the St Thomas Christians adhered to the “new bishop” because they were made to believe that Archdeacon Thomas was made “bishop” at the order and command of Atallah, who came by the mandate of the Roman Pontiff.<sup>97</sup> But very soon many, including three of the four counsellors, realizing that the consecration of Archdeacon Thomas was not valid, deserted him. Ittithomman Anjilimoottil, the only counsellor who remained with the “bishop”, fabricated even pontifical documents to make the simple faithful believe that the Roman Pontiff had approved the aforesaid episcopal consecration, in order to prevent them from returning to the true fold.

### 9.5. Not against the Roman Pontiff

From the content of the *Coonan* Cross Oath itself it is evident that the oath was not in any way against the Pope or the Church of Rome, but against Archbishop Garcia and the Jesuits who, as the St Thomas Christians honestly believed, defied the Pope’s orders and became “schismatics” by deporting a Catholic patriarch to Portugal whom the Pope had sent to govern the Malabar Church. This is also evident from a letter of 13 priests and 31 laymen of the archdeacon’s group, written after the invalid episcopal consecration to the captain and governor of Cochin. The relevant parts of the letter follow:

[...] We therefore called meetings and resolved, ‘He who pays no attention to the order of the Supreme Pontiff and of the Holy Mother Church of Rome is not our prelate, nor shall we obey the said prelate. And with the Fathers of St Paul (Jesuits), enemies of us and of the Holy Mother Church of Rome, we shall have no friendship, nor shall we pay any attention to the archbishop of their Order, until we shall see the patriarch with our own eyes [...]. And we have made an archbishop by the order and command of the patriarch,

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 184-185; *Fonti*, II-VIII, 53.

who came by the mandate of the blessed Supreme Pontiff and of the Holy Mother Church of Rome [...]. Again we say to Your Grace for the sake of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of His divine wounds, for the sake of the Supreme Pontiff and of the Holy Mother Church of Rome work hard to get the patriarch back and to make us live in peace and tranquillity, because we always lived obedient as children of the Holy Mother Church of Rome, and so we desire very much to live as before [...].<sup>98</sup>

Three years after the oath against the Jesuits, the commissary of the Inquisition of Goa, Fr John de Lisboa OP, came to Malabar to mediate a solution. According to the advice of the commissary, on 30 June 1656 Archdeacon Thomas sent a letter to the Inquisitors of Goa, in which he admitted that he was not a validly consecrated bishop. He also confessed that the Christians and he did everything out of obedience to the letter of the patriarch sent by the Pope and they did not have the slightest intention to be disobedient or to break away from Rome.<sup>99</sup> We cite a relevant part of this letter:

As all the other Churches recognize the Holy Roman Church as mother and head, we as her children, do the same and will always obey all the successors, who sit on and preside at the Cathedra of St Peter. Since all the baptized have to obey the Roman Church and her Pontiffs and since we were told that the patriarch had been sent by His Holiness Innocent, all of us obeyed him in conformity with his letter. For this reason and not for distancing ourselves from the Roman Church that we did what is said. We affirm it by oath.<sup>100</sup>

Archbishop Francis Garcia, against whom the oath was mainly directed, writing to the apostolic commissary Fr Hyacinth of St Vincent OCD in 1658, stated that there was nothing against the

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<sup>98</sup> *Arquivo Histórico do Estado da Índia, Goa, Livros das Monções 25*, ff. 120-121; English trans., J. Kollaparambil, *The St Thomas Christians' Revolution*, 159-163; the Jesuits are called the Fathers of St Paul, because their famous college established at Goa in 1542 for the formation of missionaries, was named St Paul.

<sup>99</sup> See the letter of the archdeacon to the Inquisition of Goa, written on 30 June 1656. Two copies of the Italian version of this letter exist in the Propaganda Fide Archives. See APF, *SOCG 232*, ff. 12-15 & 233, ff. 285-288.

<sup>100</sup> This citation is from *SOCG 233*, f. 286.

Pope and even the leaders were publicly proclaiming their adherence to Rome. He specified:

I know also that they never denied obedience to the Supreme Pontiff, at least in the external forum. [...] it is sufficiently clear that they profess that the Armenian (Mar Atallah) was sent by the Supreme Pontiff of Rome, and that everything the archdeacon did he did in the name of the said Armenian (sic), sent as they say, by the Supreme Pontiff of Rome. Hence at least in the external forum it is needless to work for reducing them to the obedience of the Supreme Pontiff, for so far they have not denied it.<sup>101</sup>

Also the Carmelite missionaries, who were sent by the Roman Pontiff to resolve the problems and who personally investigated the whole matter, understood the oath simply as a protest against Archbishop Garcia and the Jesuit missionaries.<sup>102</sup> Thus all the protagonists of the tragic events were surprisingly unanimous in affirming that the oath was not against the Roman Pontiff. At that time those who took part in the oath had no intention of abandoning the Catholic faith or of breaking communion with the Roman Pontiff.

In brief the oath was not a schismatic act against the Roman Pontiff and the Church of Rome, nor against all Latin missionaries, but only against the Jesuit Archbishop Garcia and the Jesuit missionaries, who – as the St Thomas Christians perceived – acting as agents of Portuguese Padroado, jeopardized the Eastern rite, the law of Thomas, as well as the autonomy and ecclesial heritage of the Indian Church. Only several years later did the oath begin to be misinterpreted by some interested groups as a rebellion against the Roman Pontiff and the hegemony of the Roman Church for the purpose of justifying their erroneous positions.

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<sup>101</sup> See the letter of Archbishop Garcia SJ, ARSI, *Goa* 68, f. 326; see also the letter of Garcia to the Pope, dated 3 June 1659, APF, *SOCG* 232, 298r & v.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Giuseppe di Santa Maria Sebastiani, *Prima Spedizione all'Indie Orientali*, Roma 1666, 4-5, trans. in P. Pallath, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 58; Vincenzo Maria di S. Caterina da Siena, *Il viaggio all'Indie orientali*, Venezia 1678, 163-164.

## 10. The St Thomas Christians Divided under a Triple Jurisdiction

As we have seen above, the oath against the Jesuits took place under the jurisdiction of the Padroado Archbishop Francis Garcia SJ. Not all the St Thomas Christians took part in the oath; a small group remained under the authority of Garcia. Some of those who deserted the archdeacon also returned to the archbishop. So he governed the archdiocese of Cranganore until his death on 3 December 1659, although only a few remained faithful to him. Anyhow the archdiocese of Cranganore was not suppressed and the Padroado jurisdiction continued. Moreover, after the territorial division effected by Menezes, there were also St Thomas Christians in the Padroado diocese of Cochin.

### 10.1. The Apostolic Mission of Sebastiani and Hyacinth

In order to heal the bloody wounds opened in the heart of the Malabar Church, Pope Alexander VII (1655-1667) sent two groups of Carmelite missionaries under the jurisdiction of the Propaganda Congregation, headed respectively by the apostolic commissaries Fr Joseph of Saint Mary Sebastiani and Fr Hyacinth of St Vincent, both Discalced Carmelites (OCD). Both apostolic commissaries were granted equal powers, faculties, directives and instructions, as well as apostolic letters of identical content.<sup>103</sup> Sebastiani and his three companions travelled through the Middle East and reached Malabar in February 1657. The mandate given to Sebastiani was to lead back Archdeacon Thomas and his followers to the obedience of their legitimate pastor Archbishop Garcia and to reinstate them in their pristine state, after absolving them from censures and excommunications.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Pope Alexander VII issued a number of briefs concerning the mission of the Carmelites, specifying their mandate and recommending them to all concerned. See *Bullarium diplomatum et privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum*, vol. 16, 107-137; *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 78-85.

<sup>104</sup> Pope Alexander VII, apostolic brief *Cum sicut*, 24 January 1656, *Bullarium diplomatum et privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum*, vol.

After many attempts Sebastiani was able to meet with the archdeacon and his group, but without any tangible result, because they demanded that he be immediately consecrated bishop. However, Sebastiani made many understand that Atallah was not sent by the Pope and that the archdeacon, "consecrated" by twelve priests, was not a real bishop. Thanks to the efforts of Sebastiani many churches, priests and Christian faithful abandoned the archdeacon and returned to the mother Church, but they were unwilling to accept Francis Garcia, against whom the aforesaid oath was made, as their bishop. In these circumstances on 7 January 1658 Sebastiani left for Rome from Cochin to give a comprehensive report to the Roman authorities and to propose appropriate remedies for the resolution of the crisis in Malabar.<sup>105</sup>

The other apostolic commissary Fr Hyacinth of St Vincent OCD who travelled through Lisbon was unable to reach Malabar until March 1658, since the Portuguese authorities did not permit him to proceed to India for more than two years. His efforts to lead the archdeacon and more Christian faithful back to the true fold were rather fruitless owing to various ecclesiastical and political circumstances, such as the conflicts with Archbishop Garcia and the Jesuits, the machinations of the pseudo-bishop Thomas Parampil, etc. Because of serious sickness Fr Hyacinth went to Cochin, where he died on 10 February 1661 and was solemnly buried in the cathedral church.<sup>106</sup>

## 10.2. The Second Apostolic Mission of Sebastiani

On 22 February 1659 Sebastiani reached Rome and submitted his report about the Malabar Church to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide and, based on its recommendations, Pope

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16, 125-126, *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 79-80; P. Pallath, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 228-231.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Giuseppe di Santa Maria Sebastiani, *Prima Speditione all'Indie Orientali*, 163-167; P. Pallath, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 113-116.

<sup>106</sup> Giuseppe di Santa Maria Sebastiani, *Seconda Speditione all'Indie Orientali*, Roma 1672, 52-59; P. Pallath, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 133-138.

Alexander VII appointed him titular bishop of Hierapolis. On 15 December 1659 he was secretly consecrated bishop in the private chapel of the Pope at the apostolic palace, lest the king of Portugal might take offence, since his appointment was contrary to the prescriptions of *ius patronatus*, according to which the Pope could not appoint any bishop in Portuguese territory, unless presented by the same king.<sup>107</sup>

With the apostolic brief "Iniuncti nobis" of 17 December 1659 the Pope appointed Sebastiani apostolic commissary and administrator of the whole province of Malabar, whether Archbishop Garcia was dead or alive, granting him ample faculties to deal with the situation.<sup>108</sup> In fact, respecting the position of the St Thomas Christians that they would never again subject themselves to Archbishop Garcia, Pope Alexander VII decided to give them a non-Jesuit and non-Portuguese bishop in the person of Sebastiani, even in violation of the Padroado rights of the king of Portugal. This time Sebastiani was also granted the faculty to appoint one or two native priests as bishop(s) in Malabar and to confer on him or them episcopal consecration with the assistance of two priests and to appoint him or them as vicar(s) apostolic.<sup>109</sup>

In fully complying with the recommendations and suggestions of Sebastiani the Congregation of Propaganda Fide also granted him several instructions, of which we cite only numbers 29 and 40 which permit us to understand the strategic principle underlying his actions:

29: Although it will not be pleasing to the Sacred Congregation to divert the peoples from their rites, as they are laudable and approved

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. Giuseppe di Santa Maria Sebastiani, *Seconda Spedizione all'Indie Orientali*, 3; Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana seu series illustrium praesulum ecclesiasticorum ex Ordine Carmelitarum Discalceatorum*, Fasciculus IV, Romae 1939, 190; *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 186.

<sup>108</sup> *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 1, 314-317; P. Pallath, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 248-263.

<sup>109</sup> Alexander VII, apostolic brief *Pro commissa*, 14 December 1659, *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, pars prima, vol. 1, 317-318; *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 96; P. Pallath, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 264-267.

by the Church, nevertheless – since the ignorance of the people of Malabar makes them rather exposed to the danger of becoming imbued with the errors of the Syriac books, which currently are concealed by reason of the rite that is observed among them and gives access to the schismatic bishops from Babylonia to penetrate there and make them relapse into Nestorianism – taking advantage of the request they themselves make for masters to teach Latin, you by all means procure, either as bishop or only as the commissary apostolic, to introduce it there and stabilize it, and in that way to divert them imperceptibly from their rite and to introduce them to the Latin rite.

40: As administrator apostolic you shall be very cautious in conferring Holy Orders [...], but with those who shall embrace the Latin rite you shall be more liberal, nay more to allure them you shall dispense them from (canonical) age, provided His Holiness would be pleased to grant you the faculty to ordain them one year early.<sup>110</sup>

In fact, among other things the Pope granted Sebastiani the faculty to “dispense from the defect of age of one year on account of the penury of labourers”.<sup>111</sup> The defamation of the St Thomas Christians created by the missionaries in Rome and in the whole West after the Synod of Diamper (1599) was such that even going against the general policy of the Holy See of preserving the Eastern rites, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide officially mandated Sebastiani to substitute the Eastern rite of the Indian Christians with the Latin rite. Based on the reports of the missionaries, the root cause of all the perturbations among the St Thomas Christians, namely the attempts to suppress the law of Thomas and the Eastern rite, was proposed as the principal means to “save” them.

When Sebastiani reached Malabar in May 1661, Francis Garcia was already dead (on 3 December 1659). So his mission

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<sup>110</sup> APF, *SOCG* 233, ff. 33-34; J. Kollaparambil, *The St Thomas Christians' Revolution*, 229-230. The phrase “taking advantage of the request they themselves make for masters to teach Latin” refers to St Thomas Christians' supplication to Sebastiani for qualified persons to teach them Syriac and Latin and other ecclesiastical sciences lest they might fall into errors.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 1, 315; P. Pallath, *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 254-255.



became easier. Moreover, in the brief *Gratum Nobis* dated 20 January 1660 and addressed to the St Thomas Christians Pope Alexander VII officially informed them that he constituted Sebastiani as apostolic commissary and administrator, and advised them to reverently receive him. The Pope also officially clarified:

A certain person called Ignatius, alias Atallah or Adeodatus, asserted to be a patriarch, but a schismatic, who is said to have been captured in Mylapore, was not sent there by Innocent X of happy memory nor by any other Roman Pontiff our predecessor, but on the pretext of a forged apostolic legation he tried to deceive your simplicity, in order to implicate you in the errors in which he himself was miserably involved.<sup>112</sup>

Because of this apostolic letter, many of the Christian faithful who in good faith had followed the pseudo-bishop returned to the true fold after the arrival of Sebastiani as apostolic administrator and thus the vast majority remained in the Catholic Church.

As a consequence of the Western governance since 1599, by this time the St Thomas Christians were divided between three jurisdictions. A small group remained under the Portuguese Padroado jurisdiction in the archdiocese of Cranganore and in the diocese of Cochin. The vast majority accepted the authority of the Carmelite apostolic administrator Sebastiani of the Propaganda Fide jurisdiction. The rest of the Christian faithful followed the pseudo-bishop Mar Thomas I. Hereafter, we consider only the history of the Catholic St Thomas Christians and, hence, in the rest of this chapter the appellation St Thomas Christians indicates only the Catholics.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae*, tomus 2, 98; Giuseppe di Santa Maria Sebastiani, *Seconda Spedizione all'Indie Orientali*, 71; *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, pars prima, vol. 7, 40-41; P. Pallath, *Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 272-273.

<sup>113</sup> For the history of the non-Catholic community see chapter V, nos. 1 & 2.

## 11. Ratification of the Schism, St Thomas Christians united under Propaganda Fide

On 7 January 1663 the Dutch captured Cochin, the Portuguese stronghold on the Malabar Coast and ordered all non-Dutch Europeans to quit Malabar. Since all the endeavours of Sebastiani to remain in Malabar failed, for the pastoral care of those who had accepted his authority, in accordance with the faculties granted to him by the Pope Alexander VII, on 1 February 1663 he consecrated Alexander Parampil (de Campo), a native priest from among the St Thomas Christians, as titular bishop of Megara and commissary or vicar apostolic of Cranganore.<sup>114</sup> After the consecration, Sebastiani publicly and definitively excommunicated the pseudo-bishop Thomas Parampil and his companion Ittithomman Anjilimootil from the Catholic Church. He himself reported his last solemn act in Malabar:

Finally I described the extreme and obstinate malice of the Intruder, and of his companion Ittithomman, and I had the sentence that I gave against them read, declaring that they incurred the ecclesiastical censors, fulminated by the sacred canons, councils, and the apostolic constitutions against the rebels of the Holy Church, they being schismatics, heretics, and dogmatisers concerning the valid and legitimate election and consecration of bishops. I narrated their excesses and declared the punishments. In this matter I proceeded in the most juridical manner possible, in the fabric of the three trials against them, conducted by Fr Hyacinth and myself. After reading the sentence (for greater terror) I excommunicated them with the solemnity of the Roman Pontifical, that caused extreme fear in all people, old or young, who had dared to take some of the candles, which at the end of the act they threw on the ground and rather trampled on them with anger and contempt. Some schismatics who were present for all this, calling the Intruder imbecile and unfortunate, who having lost so great good, incurred in so many evils, kissed the hand of the new prelate

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<sup>114</sup> Cf. Giuseppe di Santa Maria Sebastiani, *Seconda Spedizione all'Indie Orientali*, 135-139 & 143-146; Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 193; for details concerning the life and activities of Mar Alexander Parampil, see T. Pallipurathukunnel, *A Double Regim in the Malabar Church (1663-1716)*, Alwaye 1982, 11-65.

and subjected themselves to him, as also did all others who remained in those churches on the following two days.<sup>115</sup>

After the excommunication, in the course of time Thomas Parampil and his followers became Syro-Orthodox or Jacobites, accepting the doctrine, liturgy and canon law of the Antiochene tradition. Thus the revolt of 1653 gradually deviated to a schism in the case of those who did not forsake the archdeacon.<sup>116</sup> Since all his efforts to remain in Malabar failed, Sebastiani left Malabar on 14 February 1663 and went to Goa. On 20 January 1664 he embarked from Goa for his return journey and reached Rome on 6 May 1665.

Mar Alexander Parampil, elected and consecrated according to the directives of Propaganda, was obviously of Propaganda Fide jurisdiction. Despite the troubles caused by the excommunicated pseudo-bishop, Mar Alexander governed his Church sufficiently well and the Christian faithful were fully satisfied with a bishop of their own rite and nation. He also brought back many from the separated community to the mother Church. In spite of the peaceful administration of Bishop Alexander Parampil, the Carmelites were not pleased with an indigenous bishop in Malabar. They always stressed the necessity of sending European bishops. Due to old age and sickness Mar Alexander could not fulfil his ministry satisfactorily and hence applied to Propaganda Fide for a coadjutor bishop. On 30 March 1675 Pope Clement X (1670-1676) deputed four Carmelites to elect a coadjutor for Bishop Alexander. By the apostolic brief of the same date the Pope ordered them to elect the archdeacon as bishop or, in his absence or unwillingness, to elect Fr George, the vicar of Muttam or any other Malabar priest, more suitable, reliable, prudent and zealous according to their

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<sup>115</sup> Giuseppe di Santa Maria Sebastiani, *Seconda Spedizione all'Indie Orientali*, 144; P. Pallath, *Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians*, 211-212.

<sup>116</sup> For details, see chapter V, no. 1.

conscience and insisted that whoever was elected should be an Indian.<sup>117</sup>

The four deputed Carmelites were Celestine of St Ludwina, Bartholomew of the Holy Spirit, Angelus Francis of St Therese and Agnello of Immaculate Conception. Unfortunately only two of them, Bartholomew of the Holy Spirit and Angelus Francis of St Therese reached Malabar. After a period of six months these two missionaries, together with another Carmelite, Bartholomew of Saint Anna, who accompanied them from Tripoli, reached the conclusion that it would be a great mistake to entrust the Malabar Church to an indigenous bishop.<sup>118</sup> Finally they elected Raffael Figueredo del Salgado, a Latin Portuguese priest born in India as titular bishop of Adrumentum and coadjutor to Bishop Alexander with the right of succession. The announcement was made on 3 March 1677.<sup>119</sup> Bishop Alexander refused to consecrate Raffael Figueredo because he was convinced of the fact that the bishop elect was not a worthy candidate. Moreover he was a Portuguese, while the papal letter had asked that a suitable Indian priest be elected. In these circumstances, Bishop Thomas de Castro, the vicar apostolic of Canara, who was at that time in Kerala constrained by the missionaries, consecrated Raffael Figueredo on 8 May 1677.<sup>120</sup> The election of Figueredo diminished the confidence of the St Thomas Christians in the Carmelite missionaries. In 1678 Bishop Alexander nominated Mathew Parampil as the archdeacon of Malabar and George of St John as his vicar general.

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<sup>117</sup> APF, SOCG 453, ff. 200r-201v; ASV, *Secr. Brev.* 1551, f. 47; T. Pallipurathukunnel, *A Double Regim in the Malabar Church*, 21; cf. also Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 201.

<sup>118</sup> T. Pallipurathukunnel, *A Double Regime in the Malabar Church*, 25.

<sup>119</sup> Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, 77-78; for full details concerning the election and consecration of Raffael Figueredo del Salgado, T. Pallipurathukunnel, *A Double Regim in the Malabar Church*, 23-37.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. T. Pallipurathukunnel, *A Double Regim in the Malabar Church*, 34-36; Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, 78.

The new coadjutor bishop acted independently of Bishop Alexander and provoked grave confusion and bewilderment in the archdiocese because of his imprudent, non-canonical, scandalous and criminal actions. He caused immense grief even to the Carmelites who elected him. In the meantime Bishop Alexander died on 2 January 1687. The crimes of Bishop Raffael Figueredo were reported to Rome and Propaganda Fide deputed Bishop Custodius de Pinho, vicar apostolic of Bijapur-Golconda (Great Mughal), to investigate the acts of Figueredo. Bishop Custodius submitted his report and on 11 January 1694 the Propaganda decreed to suspend Bishop Figueredo from office. Pope Innocent XII (1691-1700) approved the decision on 16 January of the same year. But on 12 October 1695 the bishop died, before the suspension order of Propaganda reached him.<sup>121</sup> After the death of Bishop Figueredo, Archdeacon Mathew Parampil administered the Church for about six years.

During this period the St Thomas Christians were practically under Propaganda Fide alone, because after the death of Francis Garcia SJ in 1659 the Padroado see of Cranganore remained vacant for about forty-two years. Those prelates whom the Portuguese government nominated to the archdiocese of Cranganore either did not accept the nomination or did not take charge of the office for various reasons.<sup>122</sup> Since there was nobody to exercise jurisdiction at the Padroado archdiocese of Cranganore, practically all the St Thomas Christians depended on Bishop Alexander and Figueredo of Propaganda jurisdiction.

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<sup>121</sup> Cf. Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 203-204; for the life and activities of bishop Raffael Figueredo, see T. Pallipurathukunnel, *A Double Regime in the Malabar Church*, 37-72.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, 66-67; D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 2, 72-87.

## 12. Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar: the Catholic St Thomas Christians Divided under Propaganda and Padroado

Because of the opposition of the Dutch, the Portuguese Padroado bishops of Cranganore and Cochin could not enter their dioceses, or exercise jurisdiction in territories under Dutch control. In the meantime the Carmelites and the Holy See negotiated with the Dutch government and, on 1 April 1698, obtained permission to send one bishop and twelve priests of the Carmelite Order, Italians, Germans or Belgians to reside in the territories controlled by the Dutch but not in the town of Cochin.<sup>123</sup> Upon the proposal of Propaganda Fide, on 20 February 1700 Pope Innocent XII appointed Angelus Francis of St Therese OCD, (one of the Carmelite missionaries who elected Figueredo) who had been in Malabar for twenty-four years, the titular bishop of Metellopolis and the vicar apostolic of Malabar till the archbishop of Cranganore and the bishop of Cochin had personally occupied their respective dioceses.<sup>124</sup>

The two Portuguese bishops present in India at that time – Augustine of Annunciation, the archbishop of Goa (1691-1713) and Pedro Pacheco, the bishop of Cochin since 1694 – refused to consecrate Angelus Francis, as they considered his appointment an infringement upon the rights of patronage held by their king. In this difficulty, being requested by the Carmelite missionaries, Mar Simon of Ada, a Chaldean Catholic bishop sent by the Chaldean patriarch in response to an application made by the St Thomas Christians after the death of Bishop Figueredo in 1695, consecrated

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<sup>123</sup> *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 189; for the complete text of the Amsterdam Decree, see Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 206-207; D. Ferrolli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 2, 132.

<sup>124</sup> “[...] donec et quousque Archiepiscopus (Cranganorensis), et Episcopus (Coccinensis) prefati ad suas respective Ecclesias personaliter accesserint, et interim ad Sedis Apostolicae beneplacitum”. ASV, *Secr. Brev.* 2024, f. 27; Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 205.

Angelus Francis on 22 May 1701.<sup>125</sup> He took up residence in Verapoly and began to exercise episcopal jurisdiction. The vicariate apostolic of Malabar was an interim device for the pastoral care of the Christian faithful in the archdiocese of Cranganore and the Latin diocese of Cochin, since the bishops of those sees could not enter their dioceses because of the opposition of the Dutch.

As we have indicated, the archiepiscopal see of Cranganore remained vacant for about forty-two years after the death of Archbishop Francis Garcia SJ in 1659. The king of Portugal considered the appointment of Angelus Francis as the vicar apostolic of Malabar as an infringement upon his rights. Very soon he presented the rector of the Jesuit seminary at Ambazhakad, John Ribeiro SJ as the archbishop of Cranganore to Pope Clement XI (1700-1721), who appointed him on 5 December 1701 according to the provisions of patronage. He was consecrated bishop only on 29 July 1703. As we have seen above, the essential point of the *Coonan* Cross Oath which the St Thomas Christians made in 1653 was that they would not obey any Jesuit bishop. Naturally the majority favoured the vicar apostolic but, in June 1704, Bishop John Ribeiro officially informed Bishop Angelus Francis that he was taking possession of the office and asked him not to exercise episcopal jurisdiction. Therefore from 29 June 1704, complying with the aforementioned papal directive Angelus Francis did not exercise jurisdiction but lived as a simple missionary.

Bishop Ribeiro, a Portuguese Jesuit, could not effectively take possession of the diocese especially because of the opposition of the Dutch officials, whose ecclesiastical policy was explicitly anti-

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<sup>125</sup> Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, 79; Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 209-210; *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 189-190; E. R. Hambye, *History of Christianity in India, Volume III, Eighteenth Century*, Bangalore 1997, 23. After the consecration, against the will of the St Thomas Christians, the Carmelite missionaries forced the Chaldean bishop Simon of Ada to go to Pondicherry, where after 19 years of quiet life he was found dead in a well on 16 August 1720. See *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 190-191; T. Pallipurathukunnel, *A Double Regime in the Malabar Church*, 90-101.

Portuguese and anti-Jesuit.<sup>126</sup> In fact, already in 1695, the Dutch had sent an edict to all the churches ordering them not to recognize any Portuguese bishop, and threatening to close the churches and to prohibit the administration of the sacraments if they acted otherwise. They would, however, permit a bishop depending on Rome.<sup>127</sup> In 1704 the Dutch authorities officially expelled Archbishop Rebeiro and the bishop of Cochin from their territories and the problem of ecclesiastical jurisdiction continued. On the other hand the king of Portugal was unwilling to relinquish his rights over the dioceses of Cranganore and Cochin.

The Jesuit bishop and the Carmelite missionaries accused each other for the tragic situation in Malabar. This gave rise to long standing jurisdictional conflicts and confrontations between the Portuguese Padroado, represented by the Jesuit archbishop of Cranganore together with the Jesuit missionaries, and the Carmelite missionaries of Propaganda Fide, causing bewilderment and utter confusion among the Christian faithful, who found it extremely difficult to ascertain who was their pastor.<sup>128</sup> During this period, the situation was further complicated by the presence of the Chaldean Bishop Mar Gabriel from 1708 to 1731, who also at times claimed jurisdiction over the St Thomas Christians with the support of the Dutch.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> For more about the anti-Portuguese policy of the Dutch, see J. Perumthottam, *A Period of Decline of the Mar Thoma Christians*, 112-116 & 118-121.

<sup>127</sup> APF, Congregationi Particolari 30/II, f. 801r & 109, f.63; J. Perumthottam, *A Period of Decline of the Mar Thoma Christians*, 113.

<sup>128</sup> For more about the confrontation between the Jesuits and Carmelites during this period, see J. Perumthottam, *A Period of Decline of the Mar Thoma Christians*, 125-128, 138-142 & 143-178; T. Pallipurathukunnel, *A Double Regim in the Malabar Church*, 102-128; cf. also E. R. Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, 26.

<sup>129</sup> For the life and activities of Mar Gabriel until his death in 1731, J. Perumthottam, *A Period of Decline of the Mar Thoma Christians*, 82-92, 131-138 & 178-184; E. R. Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, 46-48.



The Holy See evaluated the whole situation and, on the recommendation of Propaganda Fide, on 13 March 1709 Pope Clement XI confirmed the jurisdiction of the Vicar Apostolic Angelus Francis over those areas in which the archbishop of Cranganore and the bishop of Cochin were impeded from exercising jurisdiction.<sup>130</sup> Thus the St Thomas Christians were again divided between the conflicting and competing Padroado and Propaganda jurisdictions, always endeavouring to gain control over the majority of the parishes, which were at liberty to change allegiance. The permanent residence of Padroado prelates of Cranganore was in Puthenchira, because they could not enter Cranganore which was under Dutch control, while that of the Propaganda vicars apostolic was at Verapoly. Both of these jurisdictions continued almost until the end of the eighteenth century, and there were also bishops or administrators in both sees, although with some interruptions. The archbishops of Cranganore were Portuguese Jesuits until the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, while the vicars apostolic of Verapoly were all Carmelites of different nationalities.<sup>131</sup>

### 13. The Catholic Church of St Thomas Christians until Its Suppression in 1886

In this section we continue with the history of Catholic St Thomas Christians up to the definitive suppression of their ancient see of Cranganore. The division of Eastern Catholics under two

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<sup>130</sup> ASV, *Secr. Brev.* 2251, f. 29; cf. Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 216-217.

<sup>131</sup> The Portuguese Jesuit archbishops of Cranganore (Padroado) after John Ribeiro (1701-1716) were Emmanuel Carvalho Pimental (1716-1752), John Luis Vasconcellos (1753-1756) and Salvador dos Reis (1756-1773); after the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773 the latter continued as ex Jesuit bishop until his death in 1777. The Carmelite prelates of the vicariate apostolic of Malabar (Propaganda) after the death of Angelus Francis in 1712 were John Baptist Moltedi (1714-1750, Italian), Florence of Jesus (1750-1773, Polish), Francis Sales (1775-1779, Bavarian, resigned), and Aloysius Mary (1784-1802, Italian). See P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 147; D. Ferrolì, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 2, 97-93; Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 221-282; G. Sorge, *L'India di S. Tommaso*, 114-115.

conflicting and competing Latin jurisdictions, namely Propaganda Fide and Portuguese Padroado, and the frequent shift of allegiance engendered further confusion and bewilderment among the Christian faithful, who were divided into two groups even in the same parish in some places. Furthermore, the earnest desire of the Eastern Christians for bishops of their own rite and liturgical language, the unbearable predicament unleashed by the unchristian behaviour of the bishops and missionaries, unreasonable ecclesiastical censors and cruel punishments inflicted upon the priests and people,<sup>132</sup> the ignorance of the clergy due to the purposeful deprivation of education and formation in order to keep them under control, the prolonged vacancy of the archdiocese of Cranganore, as well as the conflicts between Rome and the Chaldean patriarchate provoked the schisms of Rokos and Mellus during this period.

### 13.1. Padroado Alone (1782-1800)

From the very day of the tragic oath of 1653 there were also attempts at reunion and reconciliation of all the St Thomas Christians under one head. Mar Thomas VI (alias Mar Dionysius I), the fifth successor of Mar Thomas I, with the whole separated community, sincerely desired to be received into the Catholic Church.<sup>133</sup> Since the missionaries in Malabar did not show any interest in the matter, in 1778 the Catholic St Thomas Christians sent a delegation under the leadership of Fathers Joseph Cariattil and Thomas Paremmakkal to Rome and Lisbon to negotiate directly with the Propaganda and Padroado authorities regarding the reunion of their brethren. While they were in Lisbon, on 16 July 1782 the Portuguese Queen Francesca Maria nominated Joseph Cariattil archbishop of the vacant Padroado see of Cranganore.<sup>134</sup> With the letter of 17 August 1782 the Queen requested Pope Pius VI (1775-1799) to confirm the nomination of Cariattil and the Pope did so on 16 December 1782. However, in

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. Chapter 4, no. 1.2.

<sup>133</sup> For details, see chapter V, no. 2. 1.

<sup>134</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 207.

the papal bull of confirmation not only was the rite of Cariattil changed into the Latin but he was also prohibited from returning to his own rite. The bull reads:

Upon the presentation of the most serene and most faithful Queen, His Holiness has made provision for the archdiocese of Cranganore in West Indies (sic), being vacant due to the death of Salvador dos Reys, its last archbishop of happy memory, died outside the Roman Curia, in the person of Rev. Joseph Cariattil, priest of Cranganore or another city or diocese and teacher of sacred theology, of recognized faith and having every virtue. His Holiness appointed him archbishop and pastor of the aforesaid Church of Cranganore, entrusting him with its pastoral care, with the indult that he can embrace the Latin rite, lawfully remain in it and receive episcopal consecration in it from a single bishop in India, assisted by two ecclesiastical dignitaries, notwithstanding any kind of eventual obligation on his part and whatever else to the contrary, and prohibiting him to return to his own native Syro-Chaldean rite and with the decision that he should take care to erect the dignities, the canonicate and the baptismal font in that holy Church as soon as possible [...].<sup>135</sup>

The rite of Cariattil was changed because, according to the concept of that epoch, no Oriental could be a bishop of a Latin diocese or of a diocese in which there were also Latin Christians. Following the imposition of Portuguese patronage, the archdiocese of Cranganore was considered one of the Latin dioceses in India. Moreover, after the territorial division effected by Menezes, there were also Latin Christians in Cranganore.

On 17 February 1783 Cariattil was consecrated bishop in Lisbon and was given the sacred pallium.<sup>136</sup> After a long stay in Lisbon, he received from the Roman Pontiff the necessary faculties to receive Mar Thomas VI and his community into the Catholic Church. In April 1785 both Cariattil and Paremakkal embarked on a ship for their return journey from Lisbon to India.

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<sup>135</sup> ASV, *Acta Camerari Sacri Collegi S.R.E. Cardinalium*, 39, f. 238v.

<sup>136</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 233-234.

Unfortunately, Cariattil died in Goa on 9 September 1786 before reaching the archdiocese.<sup>137</sup>

With the nomination of Cariattil as archbishop of Cranganore in 1782, all the St Thomas Christians passed over to the Padroado jurisdiction, although he never took possession of his see. After the sudden death of Cariattil, his companion Thomas Paremmakkal was nominated administrator of the vacant Padroado archdiocese of Cranganore in 1786 and all the Catholic St Thomas Christians remained under his jurisdiction until he breathed his last on 20 March 1799. During this period, there were only Latin Christians in the vicariate apostolic of Malabar under the Propaganda jurisdiction of the Carmelite bishop, Aloysius Mary of Jesus (1784-1802).

After the death of the last Jesuit archbishop, Dom Salvador dos Reis in 1773, there were only administrators in the archdiocese of Cranganore. Since there was no one to perform episcopal ministry, during the administration of Paremmakkal a delegation went to the Chaldean Catholic patriarch requesting a bishop, as was the custom before the sixteenth century. Archbishop Mar John Hormez, the administrator of the Church after the death of Patriarch Joseph IV (1757-1779), several times wrote to the Propaganda Fide seeking permission to consecrate a bishop to be sent to Malabar, but received no reply.

After considering the grievances of the Christians of the archdiocese of Cranganore, who remained without a bishop for such a long time, Mar John Hormez consecrated Paul Pandari, a member of the delegation, as titular bishop for the monastery of St Behnan near Mosul and sent him to Malabar together with two priests to teach Syriac. Thomas Paremmakkal, the ecclesiastical administrator of Cranganore, did not permit him to exercise any jurisdiction, although he was a native bishop from the flock, since he was ordained without the approval of the Roman Pontiff. However, after the death of Paremmakkal, Pandari began to exercise jurisdiction, pretending to be the head of St Thomas Christians and ordained some priests. The so-called Pandari

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<sup>137</sup> For details, chapter V, nos. 2.4-2.6.

schism, lasted only a few months and was terminated at the end of 1800 when the archbishop of Goa nominated a native priest, George Sankurikkal, as administrator. The new administrator died in 1801.<sup>138</sup>

### 13.2. Padroado and Propaganda Again (1800-1838)

The Catholic St Thomas Christians, who had been reunited into one flock under Thomas Paremakkal, were again divided, after his death, between Padroado and Propaganda jurisdictions for various political and ecclesiastical reasons. The parishes were permitted to select between the Propaganda vicariate apostolic of Malabar and the Padroado archdiocese of Cranganore. As before, Carmelite bishops occupied the vicariate apostolic of Malabar.<sup>139</sup> From the beginning of the nineteenth century the vacant Padroado archdiocese of Cranganore was put under the immediate jurisdiction of the archbishop of Goa, who at times nominated administrators. After the death of Sankurikkal in 1801, Portuguese priests were appointed administrators (*governadors*) to the see of Cranganore except for the short period of the Portuguese Bishop Thomas Aquinas OP (1821-1823).<sup>140</sup> The appointments were made simply to maintain the *status quo* and some of the administrators did not even come to the archdiocese. This was really a period of disorder and quarrelling, due also to the intervention of the bishop of Cochin who wanted to show the overlordship of Padroado over the archdiocese of Cranganore. The conflict of jurisdictions suffocated and confused the faithful, for whom there was no escape. Both jurisdictions were in search of victory and control over the greatest number of parishes.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> For details concerning the causes, origin and end of the "Pandari Schism", see J. Puliurumpil, *A Period of Jurisdictional Conflict*, 5-52.

<sup>139</sup> After the death of Aloysius Mary of Jesus in 1802, Raimond of St Joseph (1803-1816-suspended), with an intervening gap of five years Milesius Predergest (1821-1827, removed), Maurilius Stabellini (1827-1831) and Francis Xavier of St Anna (1831-1844) governed the vicariate apostolic. For details, Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 282-332.

<sup>140</sup> J. Puliurumpil, *A Period of Jurisdictional Conflict*, 100-109.

<sup>141</sup> J. Puliurumpil, *A Period of Jurisdictional Conflict*, 253.

### 13.3. Suppression of the Archdiocese of Cranganore, Propaganda Alone (1838-1860)

With the apostolic letter *Multa praeclare* of 24 April 1838 Pope Gregory XVI suppressed the Portuguese Padroado jurisdiction in India and China except in the archdiocese of Goa, and granted all the vicars apostolic of Propaganda exclusive and proper jurisdiction over their territories.<sup>142</sup> The archdiocese of Cranganore, the ancient see of the St Thomas Christians, was of Portuguese Padroado jurisdiction and hence it was suppressed together with the Padroado dioceses of Cochin and Mylapore and all the Christian faithful of these dioceses, both St Thomas Christians and Latin faithful, were ordered to become members of the vicariate of Malabar. The Portuguese religious and political authorities publicly and resolutely disobeyed the apostolic letter *Multa praeclare*, thus launching the so-called “Goan Schism” and a grave battle between the two jurisdictions.<sup>143</sup> Such difficulties did not affect the St Thomas Christians because, in accordance with the provision of the apostolic letter, all the parishes of the Portuguese archdiocese of Cranganore declared obedience to Bishop Francis Xavier of St Anna (1831-1844), the vicar apostolic of Malabar. Thus the Catholic St Thomas Christians, who had been divided under two conflicting jurisdictions, again came under one Latin bishop.

Gravely disappointed and frustrated by the suppression of the archdiocese of Cranganore, the St Thomas Christians desired to obtain at least the title of “archbishop” for their vicar apostolic of Malabar. The Vicar Apostolic Francis Xavier of St Anna OCD himself presented this desire to the Propaganda Fide, pointing out that since very ancient times the St Thomas Christians had had a head with the title of archbishop.<sup>144</sup> With the apostolic letter of 10 April 1840 the Pope granted the title and dignity of titular

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<sup>142</sup> *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 5, 195-198; *IRD*, 114-125; see also chapter II, no. 4.

<sup>143</sup> See chapter II, no. 4.

<sup>144</sup> See the letter of 12 January 1840, APF, *SC, Indie Orientali*, 7, fol. 345r.

archbishop of Sardes to Francis Xavier of St Anna.<sup>145</sup> After his death on 7 December 1844, Ludovicus of St Therese OCD (1844-1853) was appointed vicar apostolic of Malabar with the title of archbishop of Cyrrhus.

Since the vicariate apostolic of Malabar became very vast owing to the addition of the territories of the suppressed Portuguese Padroado dioceses, in 1845 it was divided into three, the vicariates apostolic of Quilon, Verapoly and Mangalore. The vicariates of Quilon and Mangalore were exclusively for Latin Christians. In the vicariate apostolic of Verapoly, which maintained the title of archbishop, together with the St Thomas Christians, there were also Latins as in the former vicariate. The vicariate apostolic of Malabar, originally constituted for the Catholic St Thomas Christians under the authority of Propaganda Fide, in the course of time mutated into the vicariate of Verapoly belonging to the Latin Church, in which both Eastern and Western Christians were found.

On account of sickness, vicar apostolic Archbishop Ludvicus of St Therese went to Rome in 1851. In his absence, after a brief governance of Bernardine of St Agnes as administrator, on 12 March 1853 Bernardine of St Therese (Bacinelli) OCD was appointed administrator and coadjutor to the vicar apostolic of Verapoly with the right of succession. In 1855 Ludvicus definitively resigned from office and on 20 June 1859 Bernardine of St Therese OCD (1859-1868) was appointed vicar apostolic of Verapoly, with the title of the archbishop of Pharsala.<sup>146</sup>

### 13.4. The Rokos Schism (1861-1862)

Even after several years of Latin governance the St Thomas Christians still nurtured a desire for bishops of their own rite and liturgical language and often sent petitions to the Chaldean Catholic patriarch and to Propaganda Fide. In 1853 under the influence of a Chaldean priest Denha Barjona (who reached Malabar in the same year), some St Thomas Christian leaders came

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<sup>145</sup> *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 5, 228-229.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 338.

together and resolved to send a delegation to Patriarch Mar Joseph VI Audo (1848-1878) to fetch a Chaldean bishop.<sup>147</sup> [Due to various adverse circumstances, the delegation consisting of Fr Antony Kudakkachira, Fr Antony Thondanat and Fr. Thomas Kumpidiyanmackel started for Baghdad only in 1857. They went there for intensifying the efforts for obtaining bishops of the same rite, but they could not realize their project, because Propaganda Fide did not grant the Patriarch permission to send or consecrate bishops for India.

After two years, in October 1856 Fr. Kudakkachira alone returned to Malabar for collecting money and for preparing new petitions. Upon his arrival in Malabar, Vicar Apostolic Bernardino suspended and then excommunicated him. After 15 months, in January 1857 he again went to Chaldea taking with him Fr. Sebastian Illickal from Kadanad, two cleric-students Abraham Pandiyamakel and Mathew Kuzhinjaly, as well as twelve youths or 'seminarians' for studying Syriac and Chaldean rite. Because of contagious fever, Fr. Antony Kudakkachira died and was buried in the church of Our Lady of Seven Dolours in Baghdad. The remaining 17 persons stayed in Baghdad for three months, during which Fr. Sebastian Illickal and four students also died. So there remained Frs. Antony Thondanatt, Fr. Thomas Kumpidiyanmackel and eleven students, who continued their efforts for obtaining a bishop of their own rite.<sup>148</sup>

In spite of numerous letters and requests Propaganda Fide did not grant permission to the Patriarch to ordain a bishop for the Malabar Church. However, the Malabar delegation insisted that after such a long time they would not return to Malabar without a

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<sup>147</sup> For the circumstances and other details of the Rokos Schism, see A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History of the Catholic Syrian Christians of Malabar*, Ernakulam 1920, 5-27; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 106-110; Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 718-722; *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 198; P. Pallath, *Rome and Chaldean Patriarchate in Conflict: Schism of Bishop Rokos in India*, Changanacherry 2017, 80-115.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Rome, Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Ponenze 1865*, 327.



bishop of their own rite. Finally constrained by political and religious circumstances on 12 September 1860 a patriarchal synod was held in Mosul and Thomas Rokos was elected bishop for Malabar. On 30 September 1860 Rokos was consecrated with the title of the bishop of Bassorah, because the decision was to send him only as a patriarchal visitor to Malabar.<sup>149</sup>

Bishop Rokos, accompanied by two Chaldean priests, the Indian priests Fr. Antony Thondanatt and Fr. Thomas Kumpidiyanmackel as well as the 11 Malabar students landed in Cochin on 9 May 1861. Rokos was welcomed with immense joy and great enthusiasm, since he claimed to have been sent by the patriarch with the permission of the Roman Pontiff; his supporters presented him as the legitimate head and pastor of the St Thomas Christians. He also visited many churches and ordained a few clerics and priests. The desire for a bishop of their own rite was so intense that, in spite of the threat of excommunication from Vicar Apostolic Bernardino, in the course of time 85 churches completely and 30 churches partially joined Rokos; only 42 parishes remained under the authority of the vicar apostolic.<sup>150</sup>

Vicar Apostolic Bernardine knew well that the driving force behind the movement and the adherence of so many parishes to Rokos was the lack of a native head. Forced by circumstances, on 8 June 1861 he appointed Kuriakose Elias Chavara, the founder and superior of the indigenous religious congregation, now known as Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI)<sup>151</sup> as vicar general and introduced him to the battle against Rokos. On 19 June 1861

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<sup>149</sup> For details, P. Pallath, *Rome and Chaldean Patriarchate in Conflict*, 285-337.

<sup>150</sup> See Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 726-728; A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History*, 17-20. Because of the enormous confusion existed at that time, the number given by different authors slightly varies.

<sup>151</sup> The first indigenous religious congregation canonically erected in 1855 and initially called "Servants of the Immaculate Mother of Mount Carmel", and afterwards the Tertiary Discalced Carmelite Order or in Latin *Tertius Ordo Carmelitarum Discalceatorum* (TOCD), is at present known as the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI).

Chavara sent a letter to Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) requesting precise information concerning the real canonical status of Rokos.<sup>152</sup> With the letter of 5 September 1861 Pius IX officially clarified that the patriarch had sent Bishop Rokos to Malabar against his explicit will and order, and hence he should not interfere in the affairs of the Malabar Church in any manner. Then the Pope continued:

Therefore, we would wish you to know that Bishop Rokos came there according to the arbitrary decision of the aforementioned Patriarch, against our express will, although we had already ordered the Patriarch not to interfere in the ecclesiastical affairs of Malabar in any manner. From this fact, beloved sons, you yourself understand that Bishop Rokos has no authority and jurisdiction over you and should be considered as an intruder who incurs ecclesiastical censures. [...] we also make known to you that without any delay we commanded Patriarch Joseph to immediately revoke Bishop Rokos.<sup>153</sup>

With another letter of the same date the Pope ordered Vicar Apostolic Bernardine to excommunicate Rokos, after previous warnings, if he did not return to his country.<sup>154</sup>

In the meantime Patriarch Joseph Audo was convoked to Rome for admonitions and because of the vigorous intervention of Propaganda Fide and Pope Pius IX, with the letter 7 of September 1861, he commanded Rokos to return to Chaldea.<sup>155</sup> The letter which Patriarch Audo wrote from Rome, revoking Rokos from Malabar, was sent to him through the vicar apostolic of Malabar,

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<sup>152</sup> The letter can be found in Rome, Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Ponenze* 1865, 690-691; P. Pallath, *Rome and Chaldean Patriarchate in Conflict*, 351-352.

<sup>153</sup> Pius IX, letter *Perlibenter vestras*, 16 September 1861, in *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 1, 335-336; P. Pallath, *Rome and Chaldean Patriarchate in Conflict*, 394-395.

<sup>154</sup> Pius IX, letter *Hisce literis*, 5 September 1861, *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 1, 336.

<sup>155</sup> The letter of the Patriarch in Rome, Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Ponenze* 1865, 694-695; P. Pallath, *Rome and Chaldean Patriarchate in Conflict*, 366-367.

but he did not consider it credible, since it did not conform to the usual style of patriarchal letters and since his name was not written on it. Rokos informed the vicar apostolic that he had written letters to the Pope and the Patriarch for clarifications and he could not return to Mesopotamia before the receipt of replies. He also specified that "in our life until today we have never ignored to obey the orders of our most illustrious Patriarch and the Supreme Pontiff, and still we continue to do the same".<sup>156</sup> Notwithstanding this explanation, after consulting the missionaries, the vicar apostolic excommunicated Rokos on 30 November 1861 in the church of Verapoly using the formula and ceremonies of the Roman Pontifical.

After the reception of another letter (or response) of the Patriarch asking him to return to Chaldea, Rokos departed from Malabar from the port of Cochin and reached Baghdad in June 1862. He was received in his country as a Catholic bishop and he regularly celebrated the sacred mysteries. Being informed of this, with the letter of 26 September 1862 the Pope officially ordered Patriarch Audo to consider Rokos as an excommunicated person; the Pope also reiterated the previous command that no bishop should be sent to Malabar under any title or pretext.<sup>157</sup> However, in April 1863, after obtaining permission from Rome, Rokos was absolved from excommunication and then he lived as a Catholic bishop until his death in 1885.

Fr Antony Thondanat accompanied Rokos and approached Patriarch Joseph Audo with the request to be consecrated bishop. Since the patriarch refused to consecrate him, because of the prohibition from Rome, on 17 October 1862 Thondanatt went to Nestorian Patriarch Mar Simon XVIII (1861-1903), who consecrated him bishop with the title Archbishop Abdiso.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Letter of Rokos to Vicar Apostolic Bernardino, 1 December 1861, in Rome, Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Ponenze 1865*, 724.

<sup>157</sup> Pius IX, letter *Nuper nobis*, 26 September 1862, *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 1, 383-384.

<sup>158</sup> Rome, Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Ponenze 1865*, 366-367.

Towards the end of 1863 Bishop Abdiso (Antony Thondanatt) returned to Malabar and resided in Plassanal, but only a very few followed him.

In June 1864 Thondanatt repented of his acts and sought the help of Kuriakose Elias Chavara, who consulted Vicar Apostolic Bernardino. According to their decision in February 1865 Thondanatt made a retreat in Mannanam Monastery, laid down his episcopal insignia and then he was absolved on condition that he would remain a simple priest. After sometimes, he received permission from Rome to celebrate holy Mass and subsequently he was appointed vicar at Edamattam and then at Vilakkumadam in the present diocese of Palai.<sup>159</sup>

### 13.5. Padroado and Propaganda Again (1860-1886)

Desiring to put an end to the violent and disastrous conflicts provoked by the suppression of the Portuguese Padroado throughout India, on 21 February 1857 the representatives of the Holy See and the Portuguese government signed a concordat, which was ratified on 6 February 1860 and published on 30 May 1860.<sup>160</sup> This concordat re-established all the Padroado dioceses suppressed on 24 April 1838. Consequently the archdiocese of Cranganore was also re-established together with the Latin diocese of Cochin.

The commissary apostolic Archbishop Salvator Saba, who came to Malabar in 1863 to execute the provisions of the aforementioned concordat, published an edict permitting the parishes which had followed Rokos to choose, within eighty days, between the Propaganda vicariate apostolic of Verapoly and the restored Padroado archdiocese of Cranganore. After the execution of this provision there were 104 parishes in the vicariate apostolic

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<sup>159</sup> Cf. Z. M. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: the Star of the East*, Kottayam 1993, 71; A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History*, 23.

<sup>160</sup> *Conventio inter Pium IX et Petrum V Regem Portugalliae, Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 7, 316-322; *IRD*, 126-129; see also chapter II, no. 4.

of Verapoly under Propaganda, 37 in the archdiocese of Cranganore under Padroado and 16 parishes under both jurisdictions.<sup>161</sup> Thus the St Thomas Christians were again divided between the Padroado and Propaganda jurisdictions. However, with the aforementioned division of parishes the Rokos schism came to a complete end. After the re-establishment of Padroado, in the archdiocese of Cranganore there were only administrators (1864-1886), while in the Propaganda vicariate of Verapoly, after the death of Bernardine of St Therese on 5 September 1868, Leonard Mellano of St Luis OCD was nominated archbishop vicar apostolic (1868-1886).<sup>162</sup>

### 13.6. The Mellus Schism (1874-1882)

The period after the Rokos schism was marked by bitter conflicts between Rome and the Chaldean patriarchate, especially with regard to the election of bishops and the jurisdiction of the Chaldean patriarch in India. With the apostolic constitution *Cum ecclesiastica disciplina* of 31 August 1869, Pope Pius IX reduced the synodal right of a bishop's election to the mere presentation of three candidates to the Holy See for appointment by the Pope, declaring that, "if, anything should be done contrary to these instructions, it should be null and void".<sup>163</sup> The tension between the Chaldean patriarchate and Rome exacerbated since Patriarch Joseph Audo, who always endeavoured to regain all the ancient privileges, refused to accept the dogmatic constitution of the First Vatican Council on the Church, especially the doctrine of the infallible teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff promulgated in the fourth session of the Council on 18 July 1870.

After much bickering, the patriarch adhered to the doctrine of the First Vatican Council only on 21 July 1872.<sup>164</sup> Subsequently, in the encyclical letter of 16 November 1872 the Pope enumerated

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<sup>161</sup> See Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 729-731.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 345-355.

<sup>163</sup> *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 32-35.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 162.

all the acts of disobedience perpetrated by Patriarch Joseph Audo and solemnly confirmed the long standing position of the Pope and the Propaganda Fide that the Chaldean patriarch had no jurisdiction in India.<sup>165</sup> However, the patriarch was determined to restore his authority in Malabar, which was arbitrarily suppressed by the Synod of Diamper in 1599.

As highlighted above, the St Thomas Christians always longed for a separate bishop for themselves, one who knew their own rite and liturgical language. Because of the absence of episcopal ministry in the Padroado archdiocese of Cranganore and the growing discontent of the Carmelite rule of Propaganda, the desire for a separate bishop for the Eastern Christians was very intense. Some St Thomas Christians, especially from the Padroado jurisdiction, heartened by the Chaldean monks Augustine and Philip Aziz who came to collect money, sent petitions to Patriarch Joseph Audo, requesting a bishop.<sup>166</sup>

Transcending the prescriptions of the constitution *Cum ecclesiastica disciplina* and the repeated warnings of the Holy See, on 24 May 1874 the patriarch consecrated two new bishops without informing the Propaganda Fide and subsequently decided to send Bishop John Elias Mellus, until then bishop of Aqra in Mesopotamia, to Malabar. The Dominican missionary Fr. Levy OP who was living in Mosul immediately informed Propaganda of the "illegitimate and sacrilegious consecration" of two new bishops and the plan of the patriarch to send Mellus to Malabar. From 10 July 1874 on, the Propaganda sent different messages to Patriarch Joseph Audo in which the Pope ordered him to impede the departure of Mellus, who was explicitly prohibited from going to Malabar, and both of them were threatened with ecclesiastical censures.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Pius IX, encyclical letter *Quae in Patriarchatu*, 16 November 1872, *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 306-310.

<sup>166</sup> For the context of the schism, see A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History*, 28-32; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 111-114; *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 199-200.

<sup>167</sup> For details, ACO, *Ponenze* 1874, 725-739.

Notwithstanding all the aforementioned attempts of the Pope and the Propaganda, Mellus and his companions left for Malabar. On being informed of this, Pope Pius IX sent the apostolic letter *Speculatores super* of 1 August 1874, addressed to the Vicar Apostolic Leonard Mellano, ecclesiastical superiors, clergy and people.<sup>168</sup> In this document the Pope stated: "All and each one of the Malabar Christians should know that Bishop John Elias (Mellus) and his sycophants are coming to those regions against our will and after our explicit prohibition and on account of this we have already suspended them from order and jurisdiction".<sup>169</sup> In the same letter faculty was granted to the vicar apostolic to excommunicate Mellus or any other Chaldean bishop eventually coming to India, if after due warnings they should refuse to obey.<sup>170</sup>

Mellus reached Trichur (Kerala) on 2 October 1874. In accordance with the papal order, Vicar Apostolic Leonard Mellano excommunicated him on 25 October 1874, but he remained in Malabar and continued his schismatic works. In the course of time Antony Thondanat (Bishop Abbdiso), who lived like a simple parish priest after his conversion, also joined Mellus. Even forged letters were circulated in which Pope Pius IX acknowledged the authority of the Chaldean patriarch over the Malabar Church.<sup>171</sup> About 31 parishes fully and 10 partially followed Mellus, who also ordained many priests.<sup>172</sup> Violating all the prescriptions of the Pope and discarding the threat of censures, Patriarch Joseph Audo "illegitimately and sacrilegiously" consecrated two more bishops on 25 July 1875. Up on the proposal of Mellus, one of the said bishops, Mar Philip Jacob Uraha, was sent to Malabar as his

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<sup>168</sup> Pope Pius IX, letter *Speculatores super*, 25 October 1874, *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 243-247.

<sup>169</sup> *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 246.

<sup>170</sup> *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 246.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 114-115.

<sup>172</sup> For the parishes which followed Mellus, A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History*, 31-32; Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 743-744.

auxiliary. No sooner had he arrived than the Vicar Apostolic Leonard Mellano excommunicated him.

Intimidated by the threat of major excommunication and deposition from the patriarchal throne,<sup>173</sup> after several years of bitter conflicts, Patriarch Joseph Audo, weakened by old age and sickness, made his definitive submission to the Pope and Propaganda Fide on 1 March 1877.<sup>174</sup> On 23 March 1877 the patriarch ordered bishops Mellus and Philip Jacob to return to Babylon immediately.<sup>175</sup> In August 1877 Bishop Philip Jacob was converted and on 28 September 1877 he left Malabar. After his arrival in Babylon he was appointed bishop of the Catholic diocese of Gazirah Ibn Omar.

Mellus departed from Malabar only on 5 March 1882. Before embarking he appointed Bishop Antony Thondanatt as his vicar and made the Chaldean monk Augustine the chorebishop and his assistant. Mellus arrived in Mesopotamia in April 1882. Later he was also converted and died as a Catholic bishop on 16 February 1908.<sup>176</sup> Thus all the three Chaldean Catholic bishops who provoked schisms in India, after their conversion and episcopal ministry under the patriarch, died as Catholics. But the obstinacy of the Indian schismatic leaders and the absence of a native Eastern Catholic bishop in India perpetuated the schism in Malabar. After the departure of Mellus, some of his followers returned to the mother Church. Those "Mellusians" who persisted in the schism, after several vicissitudes, established communion with the "Nestorian" Patriarch Simon XIX Benjamin in 1907 and became

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<sup>173</sup> See Pope Pius IX, letters *Responsum a te* of 15 November 1875 and *Inter ea* of 17 March 1876 in *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 276-283 & 290-292; for full details, ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 115-232 & 497-564.

<sup>174</sup> With the letter *Solatio nobis* of 9 June 1877 Pope Pius IX recognized the submission of the patriarch and absolved him from any censures inflicted by law and from all irregularities. *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 337-338.

<sup>175</sup> The letter of Patriarch Joseph Audo in Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 754-755.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 118-119; Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 761.



part of the Assyrian Church of the East.<sup>177</sup> Since then this Church, the headquarters of which is at Trichur (Kerala), has come under the patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East. This Church follows the original Syro-Oriental or Chaldean liturgical tradition, theology and discipline.<sup>178</sup>

It is to be noted that the principal cause of the schisms of Rokos and Mellus was the legitimate desire of the St Thomas Christians to have bishops of their own rite and liturgical language, and the impossibility of the clergy and the Christian faithful to verify the authenticity of the canonical mission of the bishops, sent by the Chaldean Catholic patriarch under the pretext of the ancient tradition, who claimed to exercise jurisdiction in the name of the patriarch at the order of the Roman Pontiff. The whole situation was further complicated by the general frustration engendered by the administration of the Latin bishops and the continuous jurisdictional conflicts between the ministers of Propaganda and the Padroado.

### 13.7. Final Suppression of Cranganore, Extinction of the Church (1886)

As indicated above, the concordat of 1860 re-established the Portuguese patronage in India and China. Even after this, negotiations between the Portuguese government and the Holy See continued and, consequently, a new concordat was signed on 23 June 1886. In accordance with this concordat, on 1 September 1886 Pope Leo XIII, with the apostolic letter *Humanae salutis auctor*, established the new Latin hierarchy in India under

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<sup>177</sup> Cf. P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 191-192 & 228-229; X. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 129-130; B. Wilhelm & D. W. Winkler, *Die Apostolische Kirche des Ostens*, Klagenfurt 2000, 104 & 130.

<sup>178</sup> This small Church evidently remains as a single unit and has only 30 parishes, of which five are outside Kerala. The present head of the Church is Mar Aprem Metropolitan who resides in Trichur.

Propaganda Fide.<sup>179</sup> The Portuguese Padroado archdiocese of Goa became the patriarchate *ad honorem* of the East Indies. The ancient St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Cranganore (Padroado) was definitively suppressed and its title was given to the Portuguese Padroado bishop of Daman, a new diocese erected near Goa in accordance with the concordat of 23 June 1886.<sup>180</sup> The vicariate apostolic of Verapoly was elevated to the status of a metropolitan archdiocese of the Latin Church with Quilon as its suffragan see. All the Catholic St Thomas Christians were obliged to become members of the new Latin archdiocese of Verapoly. The Vicar Apostolic Leonard Mellano OCD became the first metropolitan archbishop of the archdiocese of Verapoly.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered the tragic vicissitudes of the Church of St Thomas Christians from the time of the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries in the beginning of the sixteenth century, highlighting the deplorable events which led to the *Coonan* Cross Oath in 1653 and the subsequent schism and divisions. After the Synod of Diamper, with the suppression of the metropolitan status of the St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Angamaly (later called Cranganore) and the appointment of the first Latin bishop after its reduction to a simple suffragan diocese of Goa (1599) as well the imposition of Portuguese patronage (1600), it became part of the Portuguese Latin hierarchy in India and began to be considered simply as one of the Latin dioceses. From that time the Church of St Thomas Christians ceased to exist as a separate entity, although the Latin Portuguese Padroado archdiocese of Cranganore was mainly intended for the St Thomas

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<sup>179</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Humanae salutis auctor*, in *Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. 5, Romae 1886, 164-179; *IRD*, 152-173; chapter II, no. 5.

<sup>180</sup> When the diocese of Daman was suppressed in 1928, part of its territory was united with the archdiocese of Goa, thus becoming one diocese: Goa-Daman, this new diocese also received the title of Cranganore. See the title Goa-Daman in the *Annuario Pontificio* of any year.

Christians.<sup>181</sup> However, with the final suppression of the archdiocese of Cranganore in 1886 and the enrolment of all the Catholic St Thomas Christians in the Latin archdiocese of Verapoly it became all the more evident that the Church of St Thomas Christians (Catholic section) as a particular individual Eastern Church had canonically become extinct.

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<sup>181</sup> In accordance with the territorial division effected by Menezes in 1610 there were also Latin Christians in the archdiocese of Angamaly (Cranganore). See no. 8 in this chapter.

## Chapter Four

# THE REBIRTH OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS AS THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

### Introduction

In the previous chapter we have presented in a succinct manner the history of the Church of St Thomas Christians from the sixteenth century until the final suppression of their ancient see at the time of the erection of Latin hierarchy on 1 September 1886. On that occasion, as an interim arrangement, all the Eastern Catholics were enrolled in the Latin archdiocese of Verapoly. In fact, many years before the erection of the Latin hierarchy the preparations for a new origin of the Church of St Thomas Christians had already been initiated. In this chapter we will first delve into the events and circumstances which led to the rebirth of the Catholic section of the said Church as the Syro-Malabar Church, and then proceed to a brief overview of its growth and advancement. We place particular emphasis on the important milestones in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church such as the circumstances of the separation of the Eastern Christians from the Latin Catholics of the archdiocese of Verapoly and the erection of two separate vicariates, the appointment of native bishops, the constitution of the Syro-Malabar hierarchy, the phenomenal growth of this Eastern Catholic Church and its elevation to the rank of a major archiepiscopal Church as well as its present canonical and ecclesial status.

### 1. Early Preparations for a Rebirth

The St Thomas Christians always desired to have bishops of their own ecclesial tradition and liturgical language. After the *Coonan* Cross Oath, Carmelite missionaries governed the major section of the St Thomas Christians as vicars apostolic of Malabar (1700-1845) and later Verapoly (1845-1886). The last vicar

apostolic of Verapoly was Leonard Mellano of St Luis OCD (1868-1886). At that epoch the only means of information for the Propaganda Fide concerning the Malabar Church were the reports of the Carmelite missionaries, who were against a separate administration for the St Thomas Christians and absolutely opposed to the appointment of native bishops. It is comprehensible that the Vicar Apostolic Leonard Mellano and his missionaries did not want to divide the vicariate or to permit the majority of their flock, who were St Thomas Christians, to set up any separate administration.

Although the Rokos schism (1861-1862) was successfully quelled under the able leadership of Kuriakose Elias Chavara, the Chaldean Bishop Mar Elias Mellus arrived in 1874 and thus initiated another schism, provoking utter confusion and bitter conflicts. Though Mellus was immediately excommunicated, he remained in Malabar until 1882, disseminating his schismatic ideas.<sup>1</sup> The Rokos and Mellus schisms, though evils in themselves, served as an eye opener to the Propaganda Fide, which was induced to study the problems of the St Thomas Christians after the elapse of several years:

Notwithstanding the obstacles and hurdles placed by the missionaries, from 1875 on, St Thomas Christians began to send innumerable letters and petitions directly to Rome, highlighting the fact that the root cause of the divisions and schisms among them was the lack of a bishop of "their own rite". In such letters they requested the division of the vicariate of Verapoly and the constitution of a new vicariate for the Eastern Catholics, at least with a separate European bishop and a native bishop as auxiliary. The request was also made to send a visitor to study the problems in Malabar. The letters also contained several complaints against the Vicar Apostolic Leonard Mellano and the Carmelite missionaries, whose disastrous governance provoked great dissatisfaction, despair and spiritual decadence.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter III, no. 13. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Two of such letters are present in ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, ff. 223-228; some letters are also in A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the*

### 1.1. Apostolic Visit of Meurin (1876-1877)

After evaluating all the circumstances, on 21 February 1876 Propaganda Fide decided to send the German Jesuit Bishop Leo Meurin, the then vicar apostolic of Bombay, as apostolic visitor to Malabar to gather accurate and objective information, in spite of the objections of the Vicar Apostolic Mellano.<sup>3</sup> With the apostolic letter *Oportet Romanum Pontificem* of 24 March 1876, Pope Pius IX appointed Leo Meurin as the apostolic visitor of Malabar.<sup>4</sup> He was given the mandate to visit the persons and places concerned, to accurately ascertain the root cause of the problems, to examine the complaints against the vicar apostolic and the Carmelite missionaries, to evaluate various aspects of the possible division of the vicariate of Verapoly into two ecclesiastical units on the basis of rite, to propose means of repelling the Mellus schism and receiving into the Catholic Church those who followed him under some precise conditions and to propose suitable ways for establishing permanent peace and harmony in the vicariate.<sup>5</sup>

The apostolic visitor Meurin reached Malabar on 6 May 1876 and accomplished his mission with diligence and objectivity. He convoked assemblies, visited churches and monasteries, conversed with the priests and other leaders of the community and personally gathered correct and objective information about the whole situation, with the assistance of Emmanuel Nidiry, a polyglot and able native priest who functioned as the secretary.<sup>6</sup> Meurin and

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*History*, 1-37 in the documental part; for the punishments inflicted upon those who wrote to Rome, see pages 26-106.

<sup>3</sup> ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, f. 138; for details concerning the affairs of Malabar, ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, 126-134.

<sup>4</sup> The apostolic letter *Oportet Romanum Pontificem* of 24 March 1876 in *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 292-294.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Oportet Romanum Pontificem*, *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 292-294; for the directives of Propaganda Fide given to Meurin on 23 March 1876, ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, ff. 715-718.

<sup>6</sup> For details concerning the visit and activities of Meurin, see A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History*, 106-125; Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 766-778; for the important role of Nidiry during the apostolic visit, see G. Kanjirakkatt, *Emmanuel Nidiry: The*

Nidiry fought vigorously against the Mellus schism and converted Mar Philip Jacob, auxiliary bishop of Mellus.<sup>7</sup>

After due consultations and diligent investigation, considering the unanimous desire of the clergy and people, Meurin recommended that a separate diocese or vicariate should be immediately constituted for the Eastern Catholics and a separate bishop should be appointed for them. He informed the Propaganda Fide of his strong conviction that the unique and only effective means of re-establishing peace in the community, eradicating the Mellus schism and preventing future Babylonian incursions was to appoint an indigenous bishop. He also wrote about the general antipathy of the Suriani clergy and the people towards the Vicar Apostolic Leonard Mellano and the Carmelite missionaries, on account of their discriminative attitude, unchristian behaviour, cruel punishments and unreasonable ecclesiastical censures.<sup>8</sup> In spite of the bitter opposition of the vicar apostolic, he endeavoured sincerely to present to the Propaganda a clear picture of the tragic situation of the St Thomas Christians, specifying their difficulties and long-standing aspirations.

## 1.2. Secret Visit of Persico (1877)

The Vicar Apostolic Mellano and the Carmelites, who considered Meurin as an advocate of the St Thomas Christians, wrote letters to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, accusing him of championing their cause and of aggravating the whole situation instead of resolving the problems. The proposals of

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*Promoter of Autonomy and Unity of the Church of St Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 2011, 49-52.

<sup>7</sup> For details, G. Kanjirakkatt, *Emmanuel Nidiry*, 54-57; cf. Chapter III, no. 13.6.

<sup>8</sup> Leo Meurin wrote about fifty letters to Propaganda Fide concerning St Thomas Christians during his apostolic visit (1876-1877). ACO, *Scritture riferite nelle Congregazioni Malabaresi* (1862-1877) ff. 524-630. Some of the letters in ACO, *Ponenze* 1876, ff. 725-730, 744-755, 770-795, 805-807 and in SOCG, *Ponenze*, Luglio 1877. C. Payngot collected all these letters and published their Malayalam translation under the title: *Kerala Church in the Nineteenth Century, the Letters of Meurin* (Malayalam), Kottayam 1996.

Meurin were also unacceptable to the authorities of Propaganda Fide.<sup>9</sup> Since the reports of the Vicar Apostolic Mellano and the apostolic visitor Meurin were contradictory, the general assembly of Propaganda on 27 November 1876 discussed the matter again and decided to send another secret visitor to Malabar, but without revoking the mandate given to Meurin. On 19 December 1876 Pope Pius IX approved the decision and the task was entrusted to the Capuchin Bishop Ignatius Persico. On 9 January 1877 Propaganda Fide gave him twelve instructions, specifying that the scope of the visit was to ascertain the real state of things, propose the most suitable means both of repressing the Chaldean schism and of re-establishing calm among the Catholics. He had also to investigate the relationship of Meurin with the Carmelites and to examine whether the former had exceeded his mandate.<sup>10</sup>

Ignatius Persico reached Verapoly on 23 February 1877 and secretly collected information without visiting any of the parishes of the St Thomas Christians and without consulting their priests and other Christian leaders.<sup>11</sup> After about one month, on 26 March 1877 Persico returned from India and on 29 April of the same year submitted his long report to the Propaganda.<sup>12</sup> The analytical part of his report corresponded to the findings of Meurin, but the solutions he proposed were completely different and even contradicted his own observations.

Persico pointed out that, although the vicar apostolic was an eminently religious man and had good intentions, he was not suitable for his position. He was indolent, of limited vision and

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India: Her Quest for Autochthonous Bishops* (1877-1896), Kottayam 1995, 17-18.

<sup>10</sup> The Directives of the Propaganda given to Persico on 9 January 1877 can be found in ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, ff. 590-594.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 33-34; V. Vithayathil, *The Origin and Progress of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy*, Kottayam 1980, 54; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 116-117.

<sup>12</sup> Ignazio Persico, *Relazione sugli affari del Malabar*, 29 Aprile 1877, ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, ff. 595-637. For the full Malayalam translation of this report, C. Payngot, *Kerala Church in the Nineteenth Century, the Report of Ignatius Persico*, Kottayam 1997.



education, weak and condescending towards those who surrounded him, but rigid, inflexible and rigorous towards all those whom he considered contrary to the Carmelites. Moreover he used to inflict rigorous ecclesiastical censures and heavy taxes on the Eastern Christians.<sup>13</sup> All these provoked the antipathy of the Suriani Catholics towards the Vicar Apostolic Mellano, who never showed any concern on their behalf but, on the contrary, was known to prefer the Latin Christians to the Suriani Catholics. Both the Vicar Apostolic Mellano and the other Carmelites treated the Suriani ecclesiastics as if they were servants and not as priests.<sup>14</sup> There were only seven missionaries in Verapoly, two of whom knew the native language Malayalam and one a little of the liturgical language Syriac. Generally these missionaries were disinterested, idle, poorly educated and of uncivilized and rude manners.<sup>15</sup>

Persico acknowledged that the Suriani Catholics always desired a bishop of their own rite and made reiterated efforts to obtain this. Their earnest desire for indigenous bishops, certainly intense, general and exhibited many times, was accelerated by their estrangement from the missionaries on account of their bad comportment.<sup>16</sup> He observed that the apostolic visitor Meurin did not act according to the spirit of the instructions of Propaganda but exceeded his faculties and only contributed to intensify the desire for indigenous bishops.<sup>17</sup>

The solutions proposed by Persico did not correspond to his own findings. He judged that it was impossible to divide the vicariate of Verapoly into two, constituting a separate Eastern vicariate and a Latin one, and to give the Suriani Catholics a bishop of their own rite. He proposed to give them a separate Latin bishop, without effecting a territorial division of the vicariate, although he admitted that the primary reason for all the problems

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<sup>13</sup> ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, ff. 601-602.

<sup>14</sup> ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, f. 613.

<sup>15</sup> ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, ff. 617-618.

<sup>16</sup> ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, ff. 612-613.

<sup>17</sup> ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, ff. 596-600.

in Malabar was the desire for indigenous bishops.<sup>18</sup> He recommended that the Carmelites be allowed to continue the mission, since they had rendered memorable service for more than two centuries. Accordingly he suggested appointing Marcelline of St Therese OCD, one of the seven Carmelite missionaries at that time present in Veraploy as the vicar apostolic for the Suriani Catholics with the title and dignity of an archbishop, maintaining Mellano as the vicar for the Latin Christians only.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, he earnestly asked the Congregation to immediately terminate the apostolic visit of Meurin, ordering him to return to his vicariate of Bombay.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.3. New Provisions of Propaganda Fide (1877)

As we have seen in the third chapter, after a long period of pungent conflicts, on 1 March 1877 the Chaldean patriarch made his definitive submission to the Pope and Propaganda Fide and ordered Mellus to return Mesopotamia.<sup>21</sup> Considering this important fact, Propaganda enquired of Persico whether he would like to make any modifications to his report. With the letter of 7 June 1877 he confirmed all his proposals, including the appointment of a separate Latin Carmelite bishop for the Suriani Catholics, but observed that as an interim measure it would be enough to appoint a coadjutor to Vicar Apostolic Leonard Mellano, with the charge of Eastern Catholics.<sup>22</sup>

On the basis of the proposals of Persico, the general assembly of Propaganda Fide on 9 July 1877 resolved to appoint Marcelline of St Therese OCD as coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic Leonard Mellano, for the pastoral care of the Suriani Catholics.<sup>23</sup> With the

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<sup>18</sup> ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, ff. 628-629.

<sup>19</sup> ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, ff. 632 & 634.

<sup>20</sup> ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, ff. 635-636.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Charter III, no. 13. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Ignazio Persico, letter of 7 June 1877, ACO, *Ponenze* 1877, ff. 637-639.

<sup>23</sup> Antonio Giovanni Battista Berardi was born on 6 October 1829 at Imperia in the diocese of Ventimiglia. He made his religious profession on 15 October 1846 in the province of Genova and adopted the name Marcellino di

apostolic letter *Romani Pontifices* of 17 August 1877 Pope Pius IX appointed Marcelline as coadjutor with right of succession.<sup>24</sup> He was consecrated at Verapoly on 21 October 1877. With the letter of 21 August 1877 Propaganda ordered Leo Meurin, the official apostolic visitor, to quit Malabar and to return to his vicariate of Bombay. He departed from Malabar on 21 September of the same year, after 16 months of strenuous efforts for the good of the Eastern Catholics.<sup>25</sup>

The appointment of another European Carmelite with the charge of the Suriani Catholics did not satisfy them. They continued to send petitions to the Holy See claiming their right to have a bishop of their own rite and emphasizing that their community was exposed to schisms and dangers because of the lack of a leader of their own rite.<sup>26</sup> According to the directives of Propagnada Fide, Bishop Marcelline was obliged to appoint a vicar general and four counsellors from among the Suriani Catholic priests, to consult with them in all ecclesiastical affairs and to provide the Congregation with accurate information.<sup>27</sup> However, Marcelline did not follow the directives of the Congregation; he did not appoint the vicar general, nor four counsellors for a long time. Later, upon continuous insistence of Propagnada Fide he selected Fr Paul Kallara as his vicar general and appointed only a single counselor.<sup>28</sup> Marcelline had the pastoral care of the Suriani

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Santa Teresa. He came to Verapoly on 5 February 1854 and was rector of Puthenpally seminary from 1866 to 1877. Cf. Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 356-357.

<sup>24</sup> The apostolic letter of appointment in *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide*, vol. 6, pars 2, 370-371.

<sup>25</sup> The letter of Propaganda in Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 758-759.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 39-42.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. ACO., *Acta 1877-1878*, vol. 10, f. 232.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 44-47.

Catholics until their separation from the vicariate of Verapoly in 1887.<sup>29</sup>

#### 1.4. Visit of Apostolic Delegate Agliardi (1885)

On 23 September 1884 Bishop Antony Agliardi was appointed the first apostolic delegate of the East Indies, also because the Holy See desired to have a reliable source of information in those vast territories.<sup>30</sup> The apostolic delegate established his residence in Bombay, but in November 1885 he visited Verapoly and then the St Thomas Christians at Mannanam, where he was given a warm reception under the leadership of Fr Emmanuel Nidiry. At the end of the meeting, Agliardi was given a petition signed by eighty priests and some lay leaders and addressed to Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, Prefect of Propaganda Fide. The petitioners pointed out that the want of a bishop of their own nation and rite was the cause of deterioration in ecclesiastical and social affairs, disorders in divine worship in their rite, as well as of Jacobite and Chaldean schisms. They underlined that the appointment of a native bishop was the only efficacious remedy for the problems in Malabar.<sup>31</sup> On 18 December 1885 Agliardi submitted his report to the Propaganda Fide, in which he wrote:

It is certainly with regret I say that at present the vicariate of Verapoly on the part of the majority of the clergy and people is in a state of feverish excitement and disturbance. Perhaps the principal cause is the wish to have a bishop of their own rite at any cost, even without jurisdiction, but for the pontifical and for the ordinations in

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<sup>29</sup> Marcelline never became a diocesan bishop. He died in Verapoly on 21 March 1892 and was buried there. Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia carmelitana*, 358.

<sup>30</sup> Ex Actis Consistorialibus, ASS 17 (1884) 224.

<sup>31</sup> The petition dated 11 November 1885 can be found in Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 785-786; a brief description of the reception and the letter given to Agliardi can be seen also in A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History*, 133-139 in the documental part.

the Suriani rite, as there in Rome for the Greeks and for the Armenians who live there.<sup>32</sup>

In his report to Rome he also pointed out the advantages of dividing the Suriani Catholics of Verapoly into two separate vicariates. He stated that it did not seem to him prudent to appoint native bishops, because this would seem to be a victory of the Suriani Catholics over the Carmelite Order and it would have the appearance of being seen at that moment not as a favour from the Holy See, but as the vindication of one of their rights.<sup>33</sup> In order to satisfy also the Carmelite missionaries, he proposed the appointment of vicars apostolic from among them, but he was not completely opposed to the appointment of native bishops.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the reports and recommendations of Meurin, Persico and Agliardi, when the Latin hierarchy was erected on 1 September 1886, no special provision was made for the St Thomas Christians. The ancient St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Cranganore was suppressed and its title was granted to the new Latin diocese of Daman. Hence, all the Catholic St Thomas Christians remained members of the Latin archdiocese of Verapoly. Bishop Leonard Mellano OCD, until then vicar apostolic, was appointed the first metropolitan archbishop of the new archdiocese of Verapoly. Marcelline of St Therese continued as the coadjutor of Mellano with the special charge of the St Thomas Christians.

## 2. Two Separate Vicariates under Latin Bishops (1887)

It was only in the general meeting of Propaganda on 20 December 1886 that the cardinals discussed the measures to be adopted for the Suriani Catholics of Malabar, following the erection of the Latin hierarchy in India. To the question of whether it was expedient to separate the Suriani Catholics from the Latins,

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<sup>32</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1886, vol. 17, f. 547v; English trans., C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 80.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. ACO, *Acta* 1886, vol. 17, f. 552v.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 84-89.

forming one or two dioceses for them with one or two bishops of the Latin rite, the cardinals responded:

Affirmative about the separation of the Malabarians of the Suriani rite from the Latins, and having made the ritual or territorial division, let one or two apostolic vicariates be erected; to be entrusted to Latin bishops who should appoint Suriani Catholic vicars general and elect four other priests from that rite and people, whose counsel is to be made use of in all the ecclesiastical affairs.<sup>35</sup>

The intention of the Congregation was to inform the apostolic delegate Bishop Agliardi of the decision, along with the underlying reasons and to invite the apostolic delegate to examine with the prelates of the Bangalore meeting: 1) whether it was expedient that the apostolic vicariate be two or only one; 2) whether it was expedient to grant the vicar or vicars general the privilege of pontifical ceremonies including the faculty to confer chrism.<sup>36</sup>

The same general meeting of Propaganda had also taken important decisions concerning the relationship of the Suriani Catholics with the Chaldean Catholic patriarch and the jurisdiction of the Carmelite missionaries over them. With regard to the first, according to the Congregation, "The most reverend apostolic delegates of Mesopotamia and of East India must be informed that they are to be watchful to impede all relations between the Syro-Chaldean patriarch and Suriani Catholics of Malabar".<sup>37</sup> With regard to the second, "The mind of the Congregation is that the apostolic vicariate or the vicariates for the Suriani Catholics may be entrusted to a religious institute that may have the personnel and

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<sup>35</sup> "Affirmative quoad separationem Malabarensium Syriacibus a Latinis; ad peracta rituali vel etiam territoriali divisione constituentur unus vel duo Vicariatus Apostolici, committenti Episcopis Latinis, qui sibi assumere Vicarium Generalem Syro-Malabarenssem, et alios quattuor viros ecclesiasticos eiusdem gentis et ritus eligere, quorum consilio in omnibus Ecclesiae negotiis utantur". ACO, *Acta 1886*, vol. 17, f. 530.

<sup>36</sup> ACO, *Acta 1886*, vol. 17, f. 530; C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 85-86. The meeting of the bishops and archbishops was conducted in Bangalore according to the prescription of the Pope at the time of the erection of Latin hierarchy in India.

<sup>37</sup> ACO, *Acta 1886*, vol. 17, f. 530.

other means proportionate to the actual needs of the mission; they will especially be entrusted with the charge of instructing the Suriani clergy and the people; the Carmelites are to be excluded, however worthy of that mission they may be".<sup>38</sup>

The meeting of the archbishops and bishops of Central and South India, held on 22 January 1887 in Bangalore under the presidency of the apostolic delegate Agliardi, discussed the two questions concerning the St Thomas Christians and declared their full support for Propaganda's resolutions. The report of the meeting dated 25 January 1887 and sent to the Propaganda stated:

The archbishops and bishops praised the aforementioned resolution of the Sacred Congregation, declared it the appropriate means for resolving the present dissensions in Malabar and judged that two Suriani apostolic vicariates under Latin bishops should be erected as early as possible. According to them the division should not be made on the basis of castes, but according to the natural boundaries of the river Alway which from the town of Malayattoor divides the region till the sea near the town of Cochin, so that the first vicariate will be of the north with the principal residence in the city of Trichur and the second will be in the south with the principal residence in the city of Kottayam.<sup>39</sup>

In the letter of 25 January 1887, the apostolic delegate Agliardi favoured the Carmelites as future vicars apostolic and proposed the coadjutor Bishop Marcelline and Fr. Polycarp OCD as candidates.<sup>40</sup> By this time Agliardi had been transferred from India and Andrea Aiuti was nominated the new apostolic delegate of East Indies on 31 March 1887.<sup>41</sup> Aiuti, who took up residence in the city of Ooty (Oottacamund), played an active role in determining the fate of the nascent Eastern Catholic Church.

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<sup>38</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1886, vol. 17, f. 530.

<sup>39</sup> The copy of the letter in Latin with the names of 11 bishops, including those of Mellano and Marcelline, can be found in ACO, *Acta* 1887, vol. 18, ff. 263v-264r; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam: Acts and Facts*, Kottayam 2011, 23-24.

<sup>40</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1887, vol. 18, f. 262v.

<sup>41</sup> Subsequently, on 9 May 1887 Agliardi was appointed pro-secretary of the then Congregation for *Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari*.

In accordance with the resolutions of Propaganda Fide and the opinion of the assembly of bishops in Bangalore, through the apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* of 20 May 1887, Pope Leo XIII separated the Eastern Catholics from the Latin Christians of the archdiocese of Verapoly and constituted for them two Syro-Malabar vicariates apostolic: Trichur and Kottayam.<sup>42</sup> We give here the full translation of this important apostolic letter:

Leo XIII Pope. For perpetual memory.

What had long been the wish of our predecessors, namely the constitution of an ecclesiastical hierarchy in the East Indies, we have undertaken to accomplish in virtue of the apostolic office, which albeit unworthy we exercise. After we had executed this with the apostolic letter *Humanae salutis auctor*, given on 1 September last year, in our solicitude for all the Churches divinely committed to us, we wish to have particular care of the Catholics of the Syro-Malabar rite, in this matter following closely in the footsteps of our same predecessors, who left nothing undone in order that the faithful of the aforesaid rite dwelling in those regions, might be brought back to Catholic truth and unity and that they might not permit themselves to be separated from it afterwards by any efforts of heretical and schismatic perversity. Wherefore, in order to reward their faith, obedience and devotion to the Apostolic See in a better possible manner than at present the circumstances of things permitted and in order that the true Church of Christ may increase among them day by day, after asking and obtaining the consent of the archbishops and bishops of central and southern India, collegially assembled in the city of Bangalore, presided over by our venerable brother the apostolic delegate of the East Indies and the opinion of our venerable brothers the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, appointed at the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith for the Affairs of Oriental Rite, we have decided to establish what follows. And thus by our own initiative (*motu proprio*), with a sure knowledge and after mature deliberation, by force of the present letter we order that, after a ritual separation of the Syro-Malabar Catholics has been made from the Latin Christians, two vicariates apostolic be constituted for them to be committed to Latin bishops, who should each appoint a Syro-Malabar vicar general to

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<sup>42</sup> The apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* of 20 May 1887 in *Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. VII, Romae 1888, 106-108; *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, vol. 19, 513-514; *IRD*, 190-193.



whom should be given the privilege of exercising in his own rite pontifical ceremonies, and of conferring the sacrament of confirmation, with chrism nevertheless consecrated by a bishop; and they shall choose four ecclesiastics of the same nation and rite and shall avail themselves of their advice in all ecclesiastical affairs. Moreover, we order that the territorial division of the said vicariates apostolic be made according to the natural boundaries of the river Alway which from the town of Malayattoor divides the region of Malabar till it flows into the sea near the town of Cochin, so that the first vicariate is of the north with the ordinary residence of the vicar apostolic in the city of Trichur, from which city it will take its name; the second will be in the south with the ordinary residence in the city of Kottayam from which it will derive its name. We decree that this present letter is and will always be firm, valid and efficacious and that it will obtain and maintain full and complete effect and will provide the fullest support in all things and in every respect for those whom it concerns or will concern at any time in the future, and that it would be null and void if anyone should presume to do otherwise over these decisions by any authority, knowingly or unknowingly. Notwithstanding apostolic constitutions and ordinances, including those of our predecessor Benedict XIV of happy memory concerning the division of matters and other things, even if deserving special and particular mention and derogation and whosoever does the contrary. Yet we wish that the same credit, which would be accorded to this letter itself, if it were displayed or exhibited, shall be bestowed on the transcriptions of the present letter, even printed ones, signed by a public notary and sealed by a person constituted in an ecclesiastical dignity.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's under the ring-seal of the Fisherman on 20 May 1887, the tenth year of our Pontificate.

In harmony with the apostolic letter, the Catholic St Thomas Christians were separated from the Latin archdiocese of Verapoly and the vicariates apostolic of Trichur and Kottayam were constituted exclusively for them. In the apostolic letter *Quod iampridem*, for the first time in an official papal document, the name "Syro-Malabar" is coined to designate the Catholic Church of St Thomas Christians. The name Syro-Malabar would be consistently used in the future in such a way that the expressions "Syro-Malabar Church" and "Syro-Malabar rite" would become common.

Although the quest of the St Thomas Christians for bishops of their own rite and nation had not been quenched, their separation from the Latin archdiocese of Verapoly and the erection of two vicariates apostolic exclusively for them marked the rebirth of the Catholic section of the Church of St Thomas Christians as the Syro-Malabar Church. In truth, after several years, the separate identity of the St Thomas Christians was in a way again recognized, although it was deemed inappropriate to appoint native bishops.

### 2.1. Two Non-Carmelite Latin Vicars Apostolic

Even though the Holy See decided to constitute two vicariates exclusively for the St Thomas Christians, two Latins were to be appointed vicars apostolic. Based mainly on the various reports of the Carmelites who governed the St Thomas Christians for more than two centuries, the strange decision of entrusting two Oriental vicariates erected exclusively for Orientals to Latin prelates was taken, since it was judged that these Christians were naturally incapable of governing themselves because of low intellectual and moral levels, hereditary priesthood as well as divisions and factions.<sup>43</sup> Though the papal document erecting the two vicariates was promulgated, Propaganda Fide had not yet decided on the apostolic vicars to be appointed. The St Thomas Christians made it clear to the papal delegate Andrea Aiuti that they appreciated the care and solicitude of the Holy Father, but they did not want to be under the yoke of the Carmelites any longer.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. ACO, *Lettere e Decreti 1886*, vol. 19, ff. 496v-499; C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 87-91. Under the leadership of the archdeacon of all India the St Thomas Christians governed themselves without any division or faction amongst them until the arrival of the Western missionaries. If the St Thomas Christians were incapable of governing themselves at the end of about three centuries of Latin jurisdiction, the bishops and missionaries sent by Propaganda Fide, who adopted the policy of keeping the local clergy ignorant and uneducated so that they might not be a threat to the Western governance, were uniquely responsible for the tragic situation.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 101-102.

Although previously Propaganda Fide had decided to terminate the Carmelite government over the Suriani Catholics, owing to various circumstances the general assembly held on 25 July 1887 resolved to propose to the Holy Father two Carmelites as vicars apostolic: Marcelline, who had been coadjutor of Verapoly for the pastoral care of the Eastern Catholics since 1877, for the Vicariate of Trichur and Fr Polycarp for the vicariate of Kottayam. But Pope Leo XIII, being informed of the desire of the St Thomas Christians, personally intervened in the matter and annulled the decision of the Congregation. On 23 August 1887 the Pope decided to appoint Fr Charles Lavigne SJ, vicar apostolic of Kottayam and Fr Adolf Medlycott, vicar apostolic of Trichur.<sup>45</sup>

Adolf Medlycott was born on 15 June 1835 in Bengal (India) of European parents. After his ecclesiastical studies at the Urban College of Propaganda Fide he was ordained a priest on 17 March 1861. He was consecrated bishop by the apostolic delegate Aiuti in the city of Ooty on 11 December 1887 and took possession of his vicariate on 18 December 1887. Charles-Louis Lavigne was born on 6 January 1840 at Marvejols in France. After his theological studies he was ordained a priest on 17 December 1864. Later he became a Jesuit in the province of Toulouse. He received episcopal consecration on 13 November 1887 at Marvejols, his native parish. He reached his vicariate on 30 April 1888. Thus, in attune with the apostolic letter two Latins Adolf Medlycott (Trichur) and the French Jesuit Charles Lavigne (Kottayam) became the first vicars apostolic of the Syro-Malabar Church.

## 2.2. Appointment of Native Vicars General and Councillors

According to the apostolic letter each Latin vicar apostolic “should appoint a Syro-Malabar vicar general to whom should be given the privileges of exercising in his own rite pontifical ceremonies”. Similarly the letter prescribed that the vicars apostolic choose four councillors from the Syro-Malabar Church, who were to be consulted in all ecclesiastical affairs. Both vicars

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<sup>45</sup> For details concerning the appointment of vicars apostolic, C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 103-111.

apostolic were very reluctant to appoint the vicars general with pontifical insignia and privileges, including the faculty to administer Confirmation.

As a result of the intervention of the apostolic delegate Aiuti and Propaganda Fide, at the start of 1889 Medlycott, the vicar apostolic of Trichur, appointed George Mampally as his vicar general and Frs Paulos Malieckal, Francis Alappatt, Marcelline Menacherry and Devasia Manavalan as councillors. Lavigne, the vicar apostolic of Kottayam, nominated four councillors: Frs Emmanuel Nidiry, Alexander of St Joseph, Aloysius Pareparambil (Pazheparambil) and Joseph Tharayil (Southist), but further deferred the appointment of a vicar general. He wanted to avoid the natural candidate to that office, namely Fr Emmanuel Nidiry, a versatile genius and the most able and distinguished priest among the Suriani clergy. However, because of the strong insistence of apostolic delegate Aiuti, upon the order of Propaganda Fide, surrendering to "Ignatian obedience" he reluctantly appointed Nidiry as his vicar general for the Northists on 8 September 1889, together with Mathew Makil as vicar general for the Southists.<sup>46</sup> Thus three native vicars general with pontifical privileges and the faculty to administer the sacrament of Confirmation were finally appointed to the satisfaction of Eastern Catholics.

### 2.3. A Separate Vicar General for the Southist Community

From the year 340 to 401, there was violent persecution in the Persian Empire against Christians, who were accused by the Zoroastrian Emperors of aiding and abetting the Roman Empire.<sup>47</sup> According to tradition, in 345 AD seventy-two Babylonian Christian families, under the leadership of a merchant called Thomas Kinayi, immigrated to South India and settled in Cranganore. The Southists claim that they are descendants of these

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<sup>46</sup> For details concerning the appointment of vicars general, C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 125-126 & 165-177; G. Kanjirakkatt, *Emmanuel Nidiry*, 169-192; for details concerning the appointment of a separate vicar general for the Southists, see no.2. 3.

<sup>47</sup> For details see S. H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 137-145; S. Rassam, *Christianity in Iraq*, 31-32.

families of Babylonian origin and have kept their blood pure without intermingling with the natives.<sup>48</sup>

According to Jacob Kollaparambil, a historian from the Southist community, the said immigrants observed a rule of endogamy, marrying only within their own community. They had their own priests and churches.<sup>49</sup> He confirms: "The Southists do preserve their ethnic identity through a strict practice of endogamy".<sup>50</sup> Mathew Moolakkatt, at present the archbishop of the Southist archdiocese of Kottayam wrote in his doctoral dissertation: "Two ethnic groups, the Southists and the Northists, have existed among the Thomas Christians for many centuries. There is no intermarriage between them. If a Southist boy or girl chooses a Northist as spouse, the Southist spouse becomes a member of the Northist community, and not vice versa. The Southists are strictly endogamous to this day".<sup>51</sup>

As Archbishop Moolakkatt indicated, the Southists continue even today in these endogamous practices, and consequently those Southists who marry non-Southists automatically lose their membership in the community. Moreover, with the intention of preserving ethnic purity, they do not admit converts into their community, although they engage in evangelising ministry for the Catholic Churches in India. Similarly they have separate parishes and pastors. However, apart from the peculiar traditions and particular norms intended to preserve ethnic purity, one does not find any striking difference between the Southists and the St Thomas Christians in what is called rite, namely in liturgy, theology, spiritual life and canonical discipline. This cannot but be so, since the ancestors of the Southists, according to their tradition, had come from Babylon or Mesopotamia, where the Syro-oriental

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. J. Kollaparambil, *The Babylonian Origin of the Southists among the St Thomas Christians*, OCA 241, Roma 1992, xxiii & 133; M. J. Moolakkatt, *The Book of Decrees of Mar Mathew Makil*, UDD, PIO, Romae 1992, 10-13.

<sup>49</sup> J. Kollaparambil, "Knanaya o Sudisti", E. G. Farrugia, a cura di, *Dizionario enciclopedico dell'Oriente cristiano*, Roma 2000, 413.

<sup>50</sup> J. Kollaparambil, *The Babylonian Origin of the Southists*, 135.

<sup>51</sup> M. J. Moolakkatt, *The Book of Decrees of Mar Mathew Makil*, 10.

or Chaldean tradition originated, which was also received by the St Thomas Christians in the course of time.

As we have seen above, the archbishops and bishops assembled in Bangalore on 22 January 1887 welcomed the decision to erect two separate vicariates for the St Thomas Christians and proposed that “the division should not be made on the basis of castes, but according to the natural boundaries of Always river”. In fact, accepting such a proposal, in the apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* of 20 May 1887 erecting the two vicariates, Pope Leone XIII decreed: “[...] we order that the territorial division of the said vicariates apostolic be made according to the natural boundaries of the river Always”. Accordingly the Southists, who at that epoch numbered about 15,000, with 21 priests and 12 parishes, had to remain in the vicariate of Kottayam.

The appointment of non-Carmelites as vicars apostolic infuriated Archbishop Leonard Mellano, his coadjutor bishop Marcelline and other Carmelite missionaries, who delineated a project for a third vicariate for the Southist community under a Carmelite vicar apostolic. When Marcelline was appointed coadjutor with special charge of the Suriani Catholics in 1877, he chose his former student at Puthenpally seminary, the Southist priest Mathew Makil, as his secretary, through whom the Southist priests became more attached to the Carmelites of Verapoly and received many favours.<sup>52</sup>

The Carmelites stirred up the Southist leader Fr Mathew Makil and other priests, who in 1887 went to the apostolic delegate Andrea Aiuti in Ooty with recommendation letters and requests, demanding that the Southists be placed under a separate Carmelite vicar apostolic. The apostolic delegate sent them back saying that he would consider the matter and would find a solution in consultation with the new bishops after their arrival.<sup>53</sup> With the letter of 21 November 1887 the majority of the Southist parish

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<sup>52</sup> A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History*, 138.

<sup>53</sup> For details, A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History*, 139-140.

priests requested the Holy Father to place them under Leonard Mellano OCD, archbishop of Verapoly.<sup>54</sup> After briefly describing the history of the Southist community and its endogamous nature, they stated: "Therefore Most Holy Father, as we have often done, with hope we request Your Holiness to be deigned to permit us to be governed and ruled under the illustrious Lord Archbishop of Verapoly by his coadjutor, so that we may be able to enjoy peace of soul and mind in the bosom of the Church".<sup>55</sup>

As indicated above, Archbishop Mellano, bitterly disappointed by the separation of the St Thomas Christians from his archdiocese and the appointment of non-Carmelites as vicars apostolic, desired to keep at least the Southists in the archdiocese of Verapoly or to create a separate vicariate to be entrusted to the Carmelite Bishop Marcelline.<sup>56</sup> On 14 November 1887 the apostolic delegate Aiuti presented to the Prefect of Propaganda Fide the Carmelite project for a third vicariate for the Southists and dispatched also a letter from Archbishop Mellano, indicating the same.<sup>57</sup> In his forwarding letter the apostolic delegate affirmed:

Msgr. Mellano and Msgr. Ossi, bishop of Quilon, when they were here in Ooty to deal with the matters concerning the concordat, they openly told me that the Carmelite Fathers cannot be at peace with two things: 1. the archdiocese of Verapoly has been reduced to the lowest expression by the agreement, so that people make fun of them; 2. they have been given not even one of the two new vicariates for the Surianis.

In his attempts to temper the situation Msgr. Mellano has even supported the plan lately conceived, I do not know by whom, in

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<sup>54</sup> Letter signed by ten parish priests, ACO, *Scritture riferite nei Congregazioni Malabaresi 1878-1889*, ff. 1300 r -1301v; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam*, 31-34.

<sup>55</sup> "Quare Beatissime Pater, ut saepius fecimus ad Sanctitatem Tuam cum fiducia rogamus ut nos sub Illrmo D. Archiepiscopo Verapolitano ab ejusdem coadjutore regi et quubernari permittere dignetur, ut in sinu Ecclesiae qua animae qua mentis pace perfrui valeamus". ACO, *Scritture riferite nei Congregazioni Malabaresi 1878-1889*, f. 1300v.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. ACO, *Acta* 1889, vol. 20, ff. 284v-285r.

<sup>57</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1889, vol. 20, ff. 284r-v.

accordance with which the Holy Father should constitute a third vicariate for the Southists of Malabar and appoint Msgr. Marcelline or Msgr. Archbishop of Verapoly himself as its vicar apostolic. I demonstrated to this prelate the impossibility of realizing the plan now, seeing the recent and precise provisions of the brief *Quod iampridem*, but at the same time I begged him to inform me of this matter in writing. He did so, as Your Eminence can see from the attached letter which I submit to you in original.<sup>58</sup>

Having received the aforementioned letters, after evaluating the project for a new vicariate for the Southists, on 15 December 1887 Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of the Congregation, responded to the apostolic delegate. In the letter among other things he stated:

It is not possible to make modifications in the disposition of the most recent Brief *Quod iampridem*; and much less would it be possible to modify them in the sense of erecting a third Suriani vicariate apostolic exclusively for the *Southists*, because in such a way it would, I would say almost, canonize the division of caste which is a grievous sore of that country, and for which one should have all the interest to eliminate it, if that is possible. Moreover Msgr Mellano cannot ignore that the Prelates of Central and South India in the meeting held in Bangalore in February (1887) agreed that it was not prudent to divide the two new vicariates apostolic on the basis of castes.<sup>59</sup>

Being aware of the fact that Mellano was behind the project for a third vicariate exclusively for the Southists, the cardinal pointed out that it was against the decision of the bishops of the Bangalore meeting at which Mellano himself and his coadjutor Marcelline had been present. Although he rejected any modification in the disposition of *Quod iampridem*, he was not contrary to other provisions such as the appointment of a separate vicar general.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1889, vol. 20, f. 284r; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam*, 29-30.

<sup>59</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1889, vol. 20, f. 285v; also in *Lettere e Decreti 1887*, vol. 20, f. 439r; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam*, 35.

<sup>60</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1889, vol. 20, f. 285v; also in *Lettere e Decreti 1887*, vol. 20, f. 439v; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam*, 35-36.



Even after the rejection of a third vicariate, the Southists continued to send letters to the apostolic delegate and to Rome, expressing their desire to be placed under a Babylonian or Maronite bishop or under the Latin archbishop of Verapoly or at least under a separate Southist vicar general.<sup>61</sup>

The vicar apostolic of Kottayam Lavigne fully supported the Southist demand for a separate vicar general, also because he wanted to humiliate Emmanuel Nidiry, the priest destined to the office of vicar general, who happened to be more prominent than the vicar apostolic himself.<sup>62</sup> In fact Lavigne postponed the appointment of Nidiry as vicar general, since he wanted to coincide it with the nomination of separate vicar general for the Southist community, after obtaining the permission of Propaganda Fide. In February 1889 both the Apostolic Delegate Aiuti and the Vicar Apostolic Lavigne wrote to Propaganda Fide that the only way to solve the problem once and for all, and to avoid future disharmony was to give a separate administration for the Southists, granting them a vicar general and two councillors. They also hoped that this measure would lead to the conversion of many Jacobite Southist priests and about 20,000 faithful.<sup>63</sup> On the basis of such recommendations the general meeting of Propaganda Fide on 15 July 1889 studied the question of a special organization for the Southists and decided:

The two apostolic vicariates remaining stable it is granted to the Suriani Catholics called Southists a distinct vicar general with two councillors, with the same norms, equal attributions and privileges already granted to the other two vicars general.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. ACO, *Acta* 1889, vol. 20, ff. 281 & 287; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam*, 39-40.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. G. Kanjirakkatt, *Emmanuel Nidiry*, 193-213.

<sup>63</sup> Letter of Ajuti, 16 February 1889, ACO, *Acta* 1889, vol. 20, ff. 287v-288v; letter of Lavigne, 14 February 1889, ACO, *Acta* 1889, vol. 20, ff. 288v-289r.

<sup>64</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1889, vol. 20, f. 283r; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam*, 55-56.

The Holy Father approved the resolutions of the Congregation on 16 July 1889.<sup>65</sup> In accordance with this decision, on 8 September 1889 Vicar Apostolic Charles Lavigne nominated Fr Matthew Makil, the leader of the Southist community as his vicar general for the Southists, together with Emmanuel Nidiray as vicar general for the Northists. The Southist priests Joseph Pallikunnel and Mathew Pallikunnel were nominated as councillors. The official ceremony of taking possession of the office of Makil took place only on 8 January 1890 at Kaipuzha parish under the presidency of Lavigne. As Prof. G. Nedungatt observes, with the appointment of a separate vicar general for Southists, the Northist-Southist divide, which until then had been chiefly sociological, obtained an ecclesiastical stamp and structure.<sup>66</sup>

#### 2.4. Subsequent Events in the Vicariate of Kottayam

The apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* fixed the permanent residence of the vicar apostolic in the city of Kottayam. However, the vicar apostolic wanted to transfer his residence to Changanacherry, because Kottayam was a stronghold of Jacobites and very few Catholics resided there. Because of his continuous insistence, the general meeting of Propaganda Fide on 15 September 1890 decided to permit Lavigne to transfer the residence to Changanacherry.<sup>67</sup> The decision approved by the Pope on the following day stated:

Lavigne was granted the faculty to reside in Changanacherry instead of Kottayam, however the brief *Quod iampridem* remained unchanged. He would retain the title of the vicar apostolic of Kottayam and try to ameliorate the conditions of Kottayam, which could be the ordinary residence of the vicar apostolic in the future.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1889, vol. 20, f. 283.

<sup>66</sup> G. Nedungatt, "Manikathanar in Centenary Prospect", *OCP* 70 ( 2004) 333.

<sup>67</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1890-1891, vol. 21, f. 287.

<sup>68</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1890-1891, vol. 21, f. 287; C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 187.

After obtaining the official permission of the Holy See, on 19 March 1891 Lavigne transferred his residence from Kottayam to Changanacherry, which had been a Catholic centre since very early times.<sup>69</sup> He established his headquarters and other necessary structures in Changanacherry. Even though the residence was shifted to Changanacherry, the official name of the vicariate remained Kottayam.

In the beginning of 1892 the Prefect of Propaganda Fide Simeoni and the apostolic delegate Aiuti were replaced respectively by the Polish Cardinal Mieczyslaw Halka Ledochowski and the Polish Bishop Ladislao Michele Zaleski, who had his headquarters at Kandy in Sri Lanka.<sup>70</sup> Although the apostolic vicar Lavigne appointed Emmanuel Nidiry as vicar general for the sake of obedience to the Holy See, the antipathy of the bishop towards Nidiry augmented, also because of the latter's great popularity. Cardinal Simeoni and the apostolic delegate Aiuti who obliged Lavigne to appoint Nidiry disappeared from the scene. The vicar apostolic constantly endeavoured to humiliate his vicar general and to remove him from office. Finally in May 1892 Nidiry was constrained to submit his resignation. On 11 May 1892 Lavigne issued an edict granting Nidiry exoneration from office for reasons of sickness and appointing him parish priest of Kuravilangad.<sup>71</sup> Subsequently Fr Joseph Thayyil was appointed vicar general of the Northist community.

### 3. Three Vicariates and Native Bishops (1896)

A few peaceful years after the erection of two separate vicariates, the endeavours of the St Thomas Christians to obtain

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<sup>69</sup> For details concerning the historical context and causes of the transfer of residence, see A. Pareparambil, *An Account of a Very Important Period of the History*, 142-151.

<sup>70</sup> On 24 July 1891 the apostolic delegate Aiuti was appointed the secretary of the Propaganda Fide for Oriental Affairs. Fr Zaleski was already in India as secretary to Aiuti. On 5 March 1892 he was appointed titular archbishop of Thebae and apostolic delegate of the East Indies.

<sup>71</sup> For full details, G. Kanjirakkatt, *Emmanuel Nidiry*, 202-222.

native bishops were resumed. The Western missionaries, the Propaganda Fide Congregation and the apostolic delegates of East Indies were aware of the fact that the root cause of all the troubles among the St Thomas Christians was their legitimate desire for native bishops. On 30 November 1892 the new apostolic delegate Zaleski wrote to Cardinal Ledochowski, Prefect of Propaganda Fide:

The source of the continuous disturbance among the Suriani (Catholics) of Malabar is their desire to have native bishops and in the disordered tendency to wish to arrive at this purpose through means of agitation and intimidating the Holy See with the menace of a schism. Now it is absolutely impossible to grant them these native bishops, because: 1) among their numerous clergy there is not even a single man capable of being elevated to the episcopate [...]. 3) A native bishop granted today to the Suriani Catholics would signify first of all the decadence and the destruction of this Christianity.<sup>72</sup>

However, in another letter to the Prefect of Propaganda dated 7 October 1893 the apostolic delegate recognized the truth: "It cannot be denied that the Suriani (Catholics), governed by Latin bishops find themselves in an abnormal and transitory condition and that in some way they have the grounds and the right to demand bishops of their own rite".<sup>73</sup>

Around the years 1892-1894, a movement began under the leadership of some prominent priests, with the objective of obtaining native bishops at any cost. The main thrust of their project was to bring a Chaldean Catholic bishop to India and to consecrate two or three native bishops. It was almost certain that if a Chaldean bishop had come and consecrated native bishops, the majority of the clergy and Christian faithful would have followed them. The result would have been another major schism.<sup>74</sup> In this context, the general assembly of Propaganda Fide on 7 January

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<sup>72</sup> ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, vol.1, fascicolo 1, f. 1v.

<sup>73</sup> ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, vol. 1, fascicolo 1, f. 3v.

<sup>74</sup> For details see, C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 363-374 & 380-384.

1895 considered various options and decided positively on the question of granting native bishops, as follows:

*Affirmative et ad mentem*: the *mens* is to write to the apostolic delegate and to the apostolic vicars for the Suriani (Catholics) to ascertain whether among the secular or religious clergy and especially among the priests called by them to fulfil the office of vicar general, there are subjects worthy to be adorned with the episcopal character. Then to invite the apostolic delegate, if he considers it opportune and if there is no fear of major tumults and agitation, to make it known to the Suriani (Catholics) prudently that the Sacred Congregation is disposed to give them native bishops and that such a design would be put in to effect as early as possible.<sup>75</sup>

On 17 January 1895 the Holy Father approved the decision of Propaganda Fide and Cardinal Prefect Ledochowski communicated this to the apostolic delegate Zaleski and the apostolic vicars Medlycott and Lavigne.

The apostolic delegate Zaleski was absolutely and intransigently against granting the St Thomas Christians native bishops. In his response of 8 February 1895 he reiterated his well-known position that among the numerous Suriani clergy there was not even a single one capable of being elevated to the episcopate and that "the concession of native bishops for the Suriani Catholics would be the greatest disaster, not only for Malabar but for all the missions in India; the destruction of these missions".<sup>76</sup> He insisted that the concession of native bishops to Suriani Catholics would be the beginning of the ruin of the Catholic Church in India.<sup>77</sup> In conformity with his position, the apostolic delegate did not present any candidate to the Holy See.

Responding to the letter of the Cardinal Prefect, on 22 February 1895 Lavigne, the vicar apostolic of Changanacherry, proposed the Southist vicar general Fr Matthew Makil as the first and best candidate. He presented his Northist vicar general Joseph

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<sup>75</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1895, vol. 25, f. 51.

<sup>76</sup> ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, vol. 1, fascicolo 14, f. 1.

<sup>77</sup> ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, vol. 1, fascicolo 14, f. 1.

Thayyil, without even mentioning his name, as a useless, uneducated, ignorant person whom he could not recommend. Then he suggested his secretary Aloysius Pareparambil as a good candidate for episcopacy.<sup>78</sup> The former vicar general Fr Emmanuel Nidiry, the true promoter of autonomy and unity of all the St Thomas Christians, was not even considered as a candidate for episcopacy. Medlycott, the vicar apostolic of Trichur, responded to the Prefect on 18 February 1895 and proposed four candidates: his vicar general George Mampally, one of the councillors Francis Alappatt and his secretary John Menacherry from the diocesan clergy, and Fr Joseph of St John of the Cross TOCD from among the religious priests.<sup>79</sup>

On several occasions some members of the Malabar clergy wrote letters to the Chaldean patriarch requesting bishops. On the basis of such letters, being aware of the possibility of granting native bishops to St Thomas Christians, the Chaldean Patriarch Mar George Ebed-Jesus Khayyath revealed to the Holy see that the desire of the St Thomas Christians was for bishops of “their own rite”, namely the Chaldean rite and not so much for native bishops. In order to resolve the problems in Malabar he suggested the appointment of Chaldean bishops or native bishops under his jurisdiction. The apostolic delegate Zaleski also agreed that granting St Thomas Christians Chaldean bishops would be a lesser evil than conceding native bishops.<sup>80</sup>

The general meeting of Propaganda Fide, assembled on 23 March 1896 to resolve the problems of St Thomas Christians had to discuss and decide between the two proposals: the concession of some native bishops or the annexation of the Church to the Chaldean patriarchate. After considering the pros and cons of both projects as well as evaluating the history and circumstances of the places and people, the general assembly decided to concede the St

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<sup>78</sup> ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, vol. 1, fascicolo 4, ff. 77-80; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam*, 66-69.

<sup>79</sup> ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, vol. 1, fascicolo 14, N° 3546.

<sup>80</sup> For the Chaldean position and the opinion of the apostolic delegate, see C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 405-410 & 413-418.

Thomas Christians some bishops of their own rite and nation directly dependent on the Holy See. The decision was also taken to divide the territory of the vicariate of Kottayam into two apostolic vicariates, erecting the vicariate of Ernakulam, and to appoint three native priests John Menacherry for Trichur, Matthew Makil for Changanacherry and Aloysius Pareparambil for Ernakulam as vicars apostolic.<sup>81</sup> On 28 March 1896 Pope Leo XIII approved and ratified the decisions of the cardinals.<sup>82</sup> The apostolic brief *Quae rei sacrae* erecting the three vicariates apostolic of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry was published on 28 July 1896.<sup>83</sup> The full translation of the apostolic brief follows:

Leo XIII Pontiff. For perpetual memory.

In virtue of the office of the supreme apostolate entrusted to us, we willingly accomplish those things which can enhance the procuration of the sacred (thing) in a better manner and which may fruitfully, prosperously and benevolently affect the Catholic name and the eternal salvation of the faithful, and especially we direct all our attention and thoughts to that which, in regions separated (from us) by vast areas of lands and seas, after an increase in the number of pastors, may surely contribute to the safety and good of the Christian flock in a more adequate manner. Indeed having been prompted by this consideration, in order to provide for the spiritual government of the Syro-Malabar faithful, in the apostolic letter given on 20 May 1887, we ordered that after a ritual separation of the Syro-Malabar Catholics had been made from the Latin Christians, two vicariates apostolic should be constituted for them to be committed to Latin bishops and at the same time we enjoined that the territorial division of the said vicariates apostolic should be made according to the natural boundaries of the river Alwaye which from the town of Malayattoor divides the region of Malabar till it flows into the sea near the town of Cochin, so that the first vicariate should be in the north with the ordinary residence of the vicar apostolic in the city of Trichur; the other should be in the south with

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<sup>81</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1896, vol. 26, ff. 82-83; for full details concerning the proposals, arguments and decisions, see C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 410-438.

<sup>82</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1896, vol. 26, f. 83.

<sup>83</sup> Ap. Const. *Quae rei sacrae* of 28 July 1896 in *Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Acta*, vol. XVI, 1897, 229-232; *IRD*, 194-197.

the ordinary residence of its vicar apostolic in the city of Kottayam. Now indeed, especially given the number of the faithful and having considered the particular circumstances of the places and the peoples, since it seemed to us very opportune to constitute three vicariates apostolic for the Syro-Malabar people, in order to provide more adequately for the spiritual benefit of the faithful of those regions, after we had examined by careful and sedulous study all things of importance together with our venerable brothers the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, appointed at the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith for the Affairs of the Oriental Rite, in decreeing what follows in accordance with the favourable opinion of our same brothers, we judged that a new proof of our benevolence towards the Syro-Malabar Church should be manifested. Hence, by our own initiative, with a sure knowledge and after mature deliberation, from the fullness of our apostolic power, by force of the present letter, after effecting a new division of the entire region, we constitute three vicariates apostolic immediately dependent on the Holy See for the Syro-Malabarians, namely the vicariates of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry, whose territory we wish to extend so far as that of the two former vicariates, namely Trichur and Kottayam. We order that the boundaries of each of these vicariates be defined in the following manner. First of all, the vicariate apostolic of Trichur with the ordinary residence of the vicar in the town commonly known as Trichur, shall extend from the boundaries of the dioceses of Mangalore and Coimbatore as far as the river Chalakudy, which flows into the Ocean near Cranganore. Secondly, the vicariate apostolic of Ernakulam with the ordinary residence of its vicar in the city of Ernakulam, embraces the remaining churches of the former vicariate of Trichur to the left bank of the river Chalakudy, as well as the three deaneries of Edappally, Arakuzha, and Pallippuram along with the three churches of the Southists, namely Chumkam, Caringott and Brahmamangalam. Thirdly, the vicariate apostolic of Changanacherry with the ordinary residence of the vicar in the city of Changanacherry comprises the five deaneries of Anakkallumkel (Bharananganam), Palai, Muttuchira or Kuravilangad, Changanacherry and Kalloorkatt with all the churches and chapels of the Southists, situated within the limits of this territory. We decree that this letter of ours is and will be firm, valid and efficacious and that it will obtain and maintain full and complete effect and will provide the fullest support in all things and in every respect to those whom it concerns or will concern at anytime, and thus it must be judged in the matters set above by whomsoever judges, ordinary or delegated, and it would be null and



void if anyone should presume to do otherwise concerning these matters, by any authority, knowingly or unknowingly. Notwithstanding our regulation and that of the apostolic chancellery on the acquired right that cannot be abrogated and other constitutions and apostolic ordinances, and whatsoever else to the contrary.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's under the ring-seal of the Fisherman, on 28 July 1896, the nineteenth year of our Pontificate.

The quest of the St Thomas Christians for bishops of "their own rite" had already begun in 1599 when the Portuguese Padroado jurisdiction was imposed up on them. In the course of time this quest mutated into the desire for bishops not only of "their own rite", but also of "their own nation". After 286 years of Latin jurisdiction, in spite of the intransigent opposition of the apostolic delegate Zaleski and the Western missionaries, especially the Carmelites of Verapoly, and notwithstanding the desire of the Chaldean patriarch to re-establish his jurisdiction in India, the Propaganda Fide was in a way forced to recognize and ratify the right of the St Thomas Christians to have bishops of "their own rite and nation".

The action of Propaganda must also be evaluated in the light of the fact that at that time all the Latin bishops in India were Europeans. Without paying heed to the opposition and pressure from different quarters and surmounting a multitude of problems, the Prefect of the Propaganda Fide faithfully and meticulously implemented the decision of the Congregation to grant native bishops to St Thomas Christians without any modifications or via media adjustments. Because of the expressed wish of the Cardinal Prefect, on 25 October 1896 the apostolic delegate Zaleski himself consecrated the three Indian bishops in the cathedral church of Kandy in Sri Lanka. Thus the strenuous efforts of the St Thomas Christians for bishops of "their own rite and nation", which had continued for three long centuries, finally reached a happy conclusion.

We have seen that in 1891 the vicar apostolic of Kottayam transferred his residence to Changanacherry, but without officially changing the name of the vicariate. In this apostolic brief the vicariate was officially designated Changanacherry and hence the

name Kottayam disappeared. The new name "Syro-Malabar", which had appeared in *Quod iam pridem*, was again confirmed in this document. The Pope explicitly stated that the three vicariates immediately depended on the Holy See, thus not on the Chaldean patriarch, nor on the archbishop of Verapoly. In fact, with the erection of three vicariates and the appointment of native bishops, the Chaldean claims for jurisdiction over the Malabar Church were permanently terminated.

Another important aspect of the reorganization concerned the territory of the Syro-Malabar Church. When two vicariates were erected in 1887 the exact outer limits of the vicariates were not determined. The apostolic delegate Zaleski, expressing his opinion regarding the new division of territory, in his letter of 25 May 1896 asked Cardinal Ledochowski, the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, to clearly define the territorial limits of the three vicariates to be constituted. He wrote:

As the Suriani vicars apostolic, following the example of Padroado, would lay claim to exercise at least personal jurisdiction in all places where a Suriani (Catholic) would settle, since this would result in continuous disturbances and complaints, I believe that it would be necessary to delineate clearly the limits which encompass their jurisdiction.<sup>84</sup>

Conforming to such a suggestion, in the apostolic brief *Quae rei sacrae* well-defined territorial limits were set out for the Syro-Malabar Church. As a result, from that epoch the faithful of this Church outside the territory of the three vicariates remained subject to the Latin Ordinaries of the place and in the course of time many of them were enrolled in the Latin Church.

#### 4. New Vicariate of Kottayam for the Southists (1911)

Although the Northist-Southist distinction had existed in Malabar since time immemorial the Southists never asked for a separate administration until the constitution of two vicariates in 1887. Towards the end of the Carmelite rule the rift and antipathy

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<sup>84</sup> ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, vol. I, fascicolo 4, ff. 123-124; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam*, 80.

between the two groups widened and headed towards a division, since the Carmelites favoured the Southists, who seemed very obedient and submissive, whereas the St Thomas Christians aimed at the autonomy of the Malabar Church and obtaining native bishops. Although in 1887 the Carmelites could not realize their dream of creating a separate vicariate under a Carmelite bishop, their project, later supported by Lavigne, led to the appointment of a separate vicar general and two councillors for the Southists.<sup>85</sup>

On 28 July 1896 when the Holy Father constituted the three vicariates apostolic of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry, the Southists were found only in the last two vicariates. At that epoch there were about 90,000 St Thomas Christians (Northists) and 13,000 Southists in the vicariate of Changanacherry; 65,000 Northists and 2,000 Southists in the vicariate of Ernakulam. As we have seen above, Vicar Apostolic Lavigne presented only two candidates worthy of episcopate: his Southist vicar general Matthew Makil and his secretary Aloysius Pareparambil. Since the latter was chosen for the vicariate of Ernakulam, the only possibility was to appoint Fr Mathew Makil, the leader of the Southist community as the vicar apostolic of Changanacherry, although the vast majority of the priests and Christian faithful of the said vicariate were Northist St Thomas Christians.

The rift between the Northist-Southist groups widened and the antipathy between them intensified during the last period of Carmelite rule. The situation only exacerbated after the Southist attempts for a separate vicariate under the Carmelites and the appointment of Southist leader Mathew Makil as a separate vicar general. In these peculiar circumstances the selection of Makil as the vicar apostolic of Changanacherry was considered as a tragedy by the St Thomas Christians of the vicariate, who mainly militated for bishops of their own rite and nation since the suppression of Eastern jurisdiction. Spontaneous protests and revolts started against the appointment of Makil.

However, the priests and people were calmed down by the timely intervention of the former Vicar General Emanuel Nidiry

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<sup>85</sup> See no. 2.3. in this chapter.

and they agreed to adopt only lawful means to inform the Holy See of the tragic situation and to obtain a just solution. On 10 October 1896 a telegram was sent to the Holy See requesting that Makil's consecration be postponed or that he be consecrated only for the Southist community.<sup>86</sup> Then on 15 October 1896 a bilingual (Syriac-Latin) letter was sent to Pope Leo XIII, in which the Northists referred to the causes of the commotion and confusion in the vicariate of Changanacherry after the appointment of Makil and demanded a bishop from their own community, indicating the reasons supportive of such a request.<sup>87</sup> In spite of all protests, petitions and doubts expressed by apostolic delegate Zaleski, Propaganda Fide ordered him to consecrate all the three native vicars apostolic.<sup>88</sup> Propaganda even authorized the apostolic delegate to excommunicate any disobedient parish after three consecutive warnings with a time interval of ten days between the warnings.<sup>89</sup> Anyhow Makil was also consecrated together with the other two vicars apostolic on 25 October 1896.

After the constitution of two vicariates in 1887 the Southists began to request a separate Southist vicariate and they never rescinded from their demand. Again, after the consecration and enthronement of Makil, the Northists of Changanacherry also continued to send innumerable letters, telegrams and petitions to the Pope, the main organs of the Holy See, apostolic delegate of East Indies and all other important persons, in which they requested the appointment of a Northist bishop in the vicariate of Changanacherry. In some of them Makil was even accused of negligence in the administration of the vicariate, harshness of

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<sup>86</sup> ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, vol. 2, Prot NN. 18139, 29174.

<sup>87</sup> ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, 1889-1900, vol. 1bis, fasc. 5, ff. 408-415.

<sup>88</sup> ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, vol. 2, Prot N. 5915.

<sup>89</sup> "A tale effetto qualora alcune parrocchie soriane ricusassero di ricevere il proprio il Viario Apostolico essa deba per tre volte ammonire quei fedeli (in modo che fra l'uno e l'ltra monizione decorsa l'intervallo di 10 giorni) e se decorsa questa termine non faranno atto di sottomissione siano scomunicati". ACO, *DISM 1889-1900*, rubr. 109, vol. 1 bis, fascicolo 5, 271-273, Prot N. 5972.

treatment, partiality towards Southists and violation of justice.<sup>90</sup> The tumult, agitation and troubles in the vicariate of Changanacherry continued for about fourteen years.

Several proposals were made to the Holy See by the apostolic delegate and Syro-Malabar vicars apostolic for a definitive and acceptable solution for re-establishing peace and harmony in the vicariate. After due discussions and consultations, on 1 March 1911 all the three Syro-Malabar vicars apostolic, Menacherry, Makil and Pareparambil sent a letter to the Prefect of Propaganda, in which they explained the whole situation and made unanimous proposals for resolving the crisis. They pointed out that not only the Northists but also the Southists had asked several times for a bishop from their own community only for them and “as long as this vicariate apostolic of Changanacherry comprised both communities, there would not be any progress in it, nor the bishop, either Southist or Northist would be at peace, but he would be in such a position that he must always endure a grave cross as they were taught by the experience of fifteen years”.<sup>91</sup>

The Syro-Malabar vicars apostolic proposed three possible solutions, but they presented as the first and most effective remedy the division of the vicariate of Changanacherry into two separate vicariates: one for the Northists, the other for the Southists. The three prelates pointed out that it would be opportune to erect a new vicariate in Kottayam for the Southists residing in the vicariate of Changanacherry and to annex to it the few Southist churches in the vicariate of Ernakulam. Bishop Makil would be transferred to the new vicariate of Kottayam, the main centre of the Southists, and for the Northists a new vicar apostolic of the same nationality would be appointed with residence in Changanacherry, the principal centre of the Northists.<sup>92</sup> After the reception of this letter the

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. n. 30391, 1; many of such letters can be found in ACO, Fascicolo Prot. No. 495/33, *Malabaresi Affari Generali*.

<sup>91</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. N. 30391, Sommario, n. 1; also in ACO, Fascicolo Prot. No. 495/33, *Malabaresi Affari Generali*.

<sup>92</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. N. 30391, Sommario, n. 1; also in ACO, Fascicolo Prot. No. 495/33, *Malabaresi Affari Generali*.

Cardinal Prefect asked the apostolic delegate Zaleski and the three Syro-Malabar vicars apostolic to present the names of three candidates from the Northist community for an eventual appointment, which all of them did with their respective letters.<sup>93</sup>

On 31 July 1911 the general assembly of Propaganda considered all the options and practically accepted the unanimous proposal of the three Syro-Malabar vicars apostolic, namely the erection of a separate vicariate in Kottayam for the Southists and the transfer of Bishop Makil to that vicariate. They also decided to propose to the Holy Father for appointment Fr Thomas Kurialassery as the new vicar apostolic of Changanacherry, since the votes of all the three Syro-Malabar vicars apostolic converged upon his name and hence he enjoyed universal esteem.<sup>94</sup> On 28 August 1911 Pope Pius X approved all the aforementioned decisions of Propaganda Fide without any modification.<sup>95</sup> Thus with the apostolic brief *In Universi* dated 29 August 1911 the Pope separated all the Southist parishes and churches from the vicariates of Changanacherry and Ernakulam and erected the new vicariate of Kottayam exclusively for the Southist community.<sup>96</sup> The apostolic letter follows:

Pope Pius X. For perpetual memory.

In the office of governing the universal Christian flock divinely entrusted to us, we consider it especially our task to determine those boundaries to the Churches, which correspond fully to the desires of those who govern them and to the good of the Christian faithful. Having been prompted by this intention, in order to provide better for the faith and piety of the Syro-Malabar people, we have resolved to constitute a new vicariate apostolic in their region. Indeed, in this

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<sup>93</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. N. 30391, Sommario, nn. 2-5; also in ACO, Fascicolo Prot. No. 495/33, *Malabaresi Affari Generali*.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. N. 30391, 15 and additional notes, 1-2.

<sup>95</sup> ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. N. 30391, additional note, 3; also ACO, *Ponenze* 1911, 557-558.

<sup>96</sup> For the apostolic letter *In Universi*, see Canc. Brev. Ap. Pius X an. 1911, Divers., lib. IX, pars 2, p. 607; V. Vithayathil, *The Origin and Progress of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy*, appendix III, 115, *IRD*, 198-201.

nation, our predecessor Pope Leo XIII of happy memory by a letter similar to this dated 28 July 1896 established the three vicariates apostolic of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry, deciding and taking care to appoint three bishops chosen from the Syro-Malabar community itself. Now however, since the three vicars apostolic of the same vicariates, which we have mentioned above, after they had made consultation among themselves, by the letter of 1 March of this year insistentlly petitioned us to erect a new vicariate apostolic in the city commonly called Kottayam, in order to provide in a more satisfactorily manner for the spiritual good of those regions and to pacify the minds of the dissidents, We, after having examined sedulously and opportunely all matters of importance together with our venerable brothers the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church in the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Christian Name for the Affairs of the Oriental Rite, decided to accept their requests benignly and to exhibit a new proof of our benevolence to the said nation. Therefore, by our own initiative, with sure knowledge and with the plenitude of our power we dismember from the vicariates apostolic of Ernakulam and Changanacherry all the Southist parishes and churches, and we constitute them into a new vicariate apostolic in the city commonly called Kottayam for the Southist people, which therefore encompasses all the churches and chapels belonging to the deaneries of Kottayam and Kaduthuruthy in the vicariate apostolic of Changanacherry together with the Southist churches in the vicariate apostolic of Ernakulam. We wish and prescribe these things, decreeing that the present letter is and will be always firm, valid and efficacious and that it will obtain and maintain full and complete effect and will provide full support in all things and in every respect for those whom it concerns or will concern in the future, and thus it must be judged concerning the matters set above and it would be null and void, if anyone should attempt to tamper with these decisions, by whatever authority, knowingly or unknowingly. Notwithstanding the regulation of our apostolic chancellery on the acquired right that cannot be abrogated and whatever other apostolic constitutions to the contrary.

Given in Rome, at St Peter's under the ring-seal of the Fisherman, on 29 August 1911, the ninth year of our Pontificate.

As had already been decided, with two decrees dated 30 August 1911 the vicar apostolic of Changanacherry, Mar Matthew Makil was transferred to the new Southist vicariate of Kottayam and Fr Thomas Kurialacherry was appointed the vicar apostolic of Changanacherry. By this provision, the vicar apostolic of

Kottayam was granted the faculty of personal jurisdiction over all the Southists within the boundaries of the vicariates of Changanacherry and Ernakulam. As we have seen above, Southists were not found in the vicariate of Trichur.

## 5. Erection of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy (1923)

After the erection of the four vicariates and the appointment of native bishops, the Syro-Malabar Church remained under the Roman Congregation of the Propaganda Fide like all the other Churches in the mission countries. When Pope Benedict XV erected the 'Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church' with the *motu proprio Dei providentis* of 1 May 1917 the Syro-Malabar Church came under its authority.<sup>97</sup> This indicates that even after three centuries of Latin governance the Syro-Malabar Church was considered an Oriental Church.

Following the appointment of native bishops the Syro-Malabar Church made marvellous progress in the number of Christian faithful, spiritual life, priestly and religious vocations, as well as in its social, charitable and educational activities.<sup>98</sup> After considering the progress of the Syro-Malabar Church, upon the recommendation of the 'Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church', by the apostolic constitution *Romani Pontifices* of 21 December 1923 Pope Pius XI established the Syro-Malabar hierarchy with Ernakulam as metropolitan see and Trichur, Changanacherry and Kottayam as suffragan dioceses.<sup>99</sup>

In the first part of the apostolic constitution the Holy Father underlined the motives for granting a stable hierarchy: able administration of indigenous prelates, high moral life, singular devotion of the Syro-Malabar Christian faithful towards the Blessed Virgin Mary as well as deep reverence for the clergy,

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<sup>97</sup> Benedict XV, *Motu Proprio Dei providentis*, AAS 9 (1917) 529-531.

<sup>98</sup> For details concerning the erection of Syro-Malabar hierarchy, see P. Pallath, *Constitution of Syro-Malabar Hierarchy: A Documental Study*, Changanacherry 2014.

<sup>99</sup> Ap. Const. *Romani pontifices*, AAS 7 (1924) 257-262; IRD, 206-219.



bishops and the Apostolic See. The Holy Father, then, traced the history of the Syro-Malabar Church from the time of the preaching of the Apostle Thomas until the creation of vicariates and the appointment of indigenous bishops. In the central part of the constitution the Pope decreed:

Wherefore having before our eyes the outstanding symmetry of Catholic affairs among the Syro-Malabar Christian faithful, and their morals truly agreeing with the profession of Christian faith, their singular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and their very deep reverence towards the clergy, bishops and above all towards this Apostolic See, after obtaining the sentence of our beloved sons, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, appointed to the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church, who unanimously expressed the view that the constitution of an ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar rite should at last be achieved, we have decreed that those requests made to us must be approved.

Therefore, having supplied for the consent, as far as necessary, of those whom it concerns or those who presume it to be of concern, by the fullness of our apostolic power, we constitute the four Syro-Malabar vicariates apostolic into so many residential sees, of which one, namely that of Ernakulam, we promote and raise to the rank and dignity of metropolitan Church thus granting to it, and to its bishops, every single right, privilege, honour and prerogative, which belongs to them by common law and according to legitimate prescriptions and lawful customs of the Syro-Malabar Church, but especially the faculty for archbishops to use the pallium according to liturgical laws after having asked for it beforehand in a sacred consistory.

We likewise promote to the rank and dignity of cathedral Churches, the three other sees, namely those of Changanacherry, Trichur and Kottayam, and we grant to them and their bishops, the rights, privileges, honours and prerogatives which belong to them by common law and according to the legitimate prescriptions and lawful customs of the Syro-Malabar Church. And these cathedral Churches and their bishops, we constitute suffragans to the metropolitan Church of Ernakulam.

The boundaries, both of the archdiocese of Ernakulam and of the dioceses of Changanacherry, Trichur and Kottayam, shall be the same as hitherto belonged to each of the vicariates apostolic, now promoted to residential sees.

As regards the rights and obligations of clerics and faithful, as well as the government of both the archdiocese and the dioceses, in case of a vacancy and other similar matters, we order the observance of what the sacred canons and the lawful customs of the Syro-Malabar Church determine and prescribe.

It will then be the responsibility of the archbishop of Ernakulam and the bishops of Changanacherry, Trichur and Kottayam to choose the more suitable church in the cities of Ernakulam, Changanacherry, Trichur and Kottayam, in which should be set up the see and cathedra, whether of the archbishop or of the bishop. And therefore we raise from now on those churches to the rank and dignity whether of metropolitan or of cathedrals; and we order at the same time to keep those churches as parochial in the future as well, if they have hitherto been parochial.<sup>100</sup>

The hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church was not constituted in the manner of an Eastern hierarchy with a common head (patriarch, catholicos or major archbishop) and a synod of bishops, consonant with the "sacred canons" and authentic Eastern traditions, but as a metropolitan province in accordance with the Latin *Code of Canon Law* of 1917. Like the other metropolitan provinces of the Latin Church, the Syro-Malabar Church in 1923 remained a province directly dependent on the Holy See. Although the new Syro-Malabar hierarchy remained *de iure* Oriental, in its form and hierarchical grades of order and jurisdiction it was similar to the Latin hierarchy, and as in the Latin Church the Roman Pontiff directly appointed the metropolitan and bishops. The metropolitan had to receive the pallium of the Roman Church. Practically, the metropolitan and the bishops had all the rights, privileges and obligations prescribed in the Latin Code.<sup>101</sup>

The erection of an indigenous hierarchy contributed to the phenomenal growth of the Syro-Malabar Church, and hence Pope Pius XII erected three more dioceses for the Syro-Malabar Church. He bifurcated the diocese of Changanacherry and created the diocese of Palai on 25 July 1950 by the apostolic constitution *Quo*

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<sup>100</sup> *Romani pontifices*, AAS 7 (1924) 260-261; IRD, 212-215.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. V. Vithayathil, *The Origin and Progress of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy*, 76-83.

*Ecclesiarum*.<sup>102</sup> On 31 December 1953 the Pope erected the diocese of Tellicherry for the Syro-Malabar Christian faithful who had immigrated to the northern parts of Kerala.<sup>103</sup> With the erection of the diocese of Tellicherry, the proper territory of the Syro-Malabar Church, which was restricted to a small part of South Kerala was extended to the north for the first time.<sup>104</sup> On 29 July 1956 the same Pope divided the archdiocese of Ernakulam and erected the diocese of Kothamangalam.<sup>105</sup>

## 6. Extension of the Territory of the Syro-Malabar Church (1955)

Until the sixteenth century the metropolitan of all India had jurisdiction over the St Thomas Christians in *tota India*.<sup>106</sup> When, in 1610 Archbishop Menezes, deputed by Pope Paul V (1605-1621) determined the territory of the archdiocese of Cranganore (Angamaly) with respect to the dioceses of Goa, Cochin and Mylapore, the territory was practically limited to a small part of Malabar. Even then the archbishop of Cranganore had jurisdiction in some parts of the modern-day civil states of Tamilnadu and Karnataka.<sup>107</sup> When two vicariates were constituted for the Syro-Malabar Church in 1887 the territory was determined as the two sides of the river Alwaye in Kerala, without any indication of the external boundaries, which were precisely determined only with the creation of the three vicariates in 1896. As mentioned above, with the erection of the diocese of Tellicherry the territory was extended to the northern part, but by this not even the whole of

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<sup>102</sup> Ap. Const. *Quo Ecclesiarum*, AAS 43 (1951) 147-150.

<sup>103</sup> Ap. Const. *Ad Christi Ecclesiam*, AAS 46 (1954) 385-387.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Ap. Const. *Ad Christi Ecclesiam*, AAS 46 (1954) 385-387; X. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 109.

<sup>105</sup> Ap. Const. *Qui in Beati Petri*, V. Vithayathil, *The Origin and Progress of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy*, appendix VIII, 129-131; this apostolic constitution is not found in AAS.

<sup>106</sup> See chapter I, no. 3.

<sup>107</sup> See chapter III, no. 8.

Kerala was covered. Hence many Christian faithful of this Church, whose number steadily increased owing to immigration in search of better job and land prospects, were found outside the proper territory.

In order to cater to the spiritual needs of the Christian faithful outside the proper territory and to foster the missionary activities of the Syro-Malabar Church in its own rite, with four decrees dated 25 April 1955 and made public on 25 July 1955 with the approval of Pope Pius XII the 'Congregation for the Oriental Church' considerably extended the territory of this Church.<sup>108</sup> The decree *Multorum fidelium* extended the jurisdiction of the bishop of Changanacherry to the south as far as Cape Camorin, covering the Latin dioceses of Quilon, Trivandrum and Kottar, and including the civil districts of Thovala, Agasteeswaram, Kallukulam and Vilavancode which are found in the state of Tamilnadu.<sup>109</sup> With the decree *Saepe fideles* the diocese of Trichur was enlarged to include the whole territory of the neighbouring Latin diocese of Coimbatore, comprising the regions of Palghat, Malluvanad, Chittur, Nelliampathy and Karur.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, the decree *Pro fidelibus* amplified the territory of the diocese of Tellicherry to encompass the neighbouring Latin dioceses of Mysore, Mangalore and the civil districts of South Kanara, Mysore, Hassan, Chikmaglore, Shimoga, together with the provinces of Coorg and Nilgiri.<sup>111</sup>

The fourth decree *Suddistica gens* granted personal jurisdiction to the bishop of Kottayam over the Christian faithful of the Southist community in the whole territory of the Syro-Malabar Church.<sup>112</sup> It is to be noted that the bishop of Kottayam does not

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<sup>108</sup> This was done due to the efforts of the Secretary of the Oriental Congregation, Cardinal E. Tisserant, a great lover and benefactor of the Syro-Malabar Church, whose authoritative work, *Eastern Christianity in India* still remains today one of the best studies concerning the Eastern Churches in India.

<sup>109</sup> AAS 47 (1955) 784-785; IRD, 220-221.

<sup>110</sup> AAS 47 (1955) 787-788; IRD, 222-225.

<sup>111</sup> AAS 47 (1955) 786-787; IRD, 225-227.

<sup>112</sup> AAS 47 (1955) 785-786; IRD, 227-229.

enjoy any authority in the dioceses and parishes erected outside the proper territory of the Syro-Malabar Church, even if there Southists can be found in these places. In any case, the extension of the territory enabled the St Thomas Christians in such vast areas to live their faith in harmony with their own ecclesial heritage and to conduct the evangelising ministry without abandoning their mother Church.

## 7. Constitution of the Second Ecclesiastical Province (1956)

Pope Pius XII accomplished another important step towards the progress and advancement of the Syro-Malabar Church when he decided to constitute the new ecclesiastical province of Changanacherry on 29 July 1956 with Changanacherry as the metropolitan see and Palai and Kottayam as suffragans.<sup>113</sup> However, the apostolic constitution *Regnum caelorum* erecting the new province was published only by his successor Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) on 10 January 1959.<sup>114</sup> In the constitution the Pope decreed:

We promote the diocese of Changanacherry to the rank of archdiocese, with all rights and honours, duties and obligations which belong to such Churches; at the same time we establish a new ecclesiastical province, whose capital shall be the see of Changanacherry itself and Palai and Kottayam shall be suffragan dioceses. The sacred prelate of this archdiocese, both the first and his successors shall have all the rights and obligations proper to that dignity. We wish to enumerate this privilege among others: he can carry the cross in front of him within the boundaries of the province and use the pallium, provided that he has obtained it in a public consistory.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Ap. Const. *Regnum caelorum*, AAS 51 (1959) 580.

<sup>114</sup> Ap. Const. *Regnum caelorum*, AAS 51 (1959) 580-581. Even though the apostolic constitution was published on 10 January 1959, the date of the constitution of the archdiocese of Changanacherry is considered that of the decision, namely 29 July 1956. See the entry Changanacherry in the *Annuario Pontificio* of any year.

<sup>115</sup> Ap. Const. *Regnum caelorum*, AAS 51 (1959) 580; *IRD*, 230-233.

Obviously, even after the creation of the ecclesiastical province of Changanacherry, the dioceses of Trichur, Tellicherry and Kothamangalam remained suffragans of the metropolitan see of Ernakulam as before. Thus, from this time, the Syro-Malabar Church began to be governed by two independent metropolitans, who directly depended upon the Holy See.

Just like the ecclesiastical province of Ernakulam, the new ecclesiastical province of Changanacherry was constituted according to the provisions of CIC 1917, without providing the Syro-Malabar Church with an Eastern hierarchical structure. Hence, the two provinces of the Syro-Malabar Church, directly subjected to the Holy See, functioned like the other metropolitan provinces of the Latin Church, without a common head and a synod of bishops for collegial governance in accordance with the authentic Eastern tradition. With regard to the juridical nature of the Syro-Malabar Church at that time Prof. George Nedungatt observes:

When the SMC (Syro-Malabar Church) ecclesiastical hierarchy was established in 1923 with Ernakulam as metropoly, its pre-Latin status was not restored with the autonomy of a metropolitan Church according to oriental canon law; it was instead organized as an ecclesiastical province according to the canonical model of the Latin Church. This pattern of canonical latinization of the hierarchy did not change when in 1956 Changanacherry was raised to an archdiocese and thus a second ecclesiastical province was created with two suffragan dioceses. These two ecclesiastical provinces being Latin in hierarchical structure made of SMC a canonical hybrid [...].<sup>116</sup>

The case of the Syro-Malabar Church is an example of a real “resurrection of a Church from the catacomb”. At least from the time of the final suppression of the archdiocese of Cranganore on 1 September 1886 until the constitution of two vicariates on 20 May 1887, the Catholic Church of St Thomas Christians juridically did not exist. Hence the erection of vicariates, dioceses and provinces are to be considered only as different steps towards the gradual progress and hierarchical perfection of the Syro-Malabar Church.

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<sup>116</sup> G. Nedungatt, *The Spirit of the Eastern Code*, Bangalore 1993, 143.

After about three hundred years of Western jurisdiction and the consequent hierarchical, liturgical, canonical and spiritual westernization, both the Holy See and most of the Christian faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church were not aware of the Eastern nature and identity of this Church. Moreover, at that time a common code, which regulated the ecclesial life of the Eastern Catholic Churches, did not exist; the “sacred canons” and the Eastern traditions were condemned to remain in oblivion until the celebration of the Second Vatican Council. In these circumstances it is comprehensible that the hierarchy and ecclesiastical provinces of the Syro-Malabar Church were erected in harmony with the prescriptions of Latin canon law.

## 8. Promulgation of Oriental Canon Law (1949-1957) and the Syro-Malabar Church

On 17 July 1935, Pope Pius XI instituted the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Oriental Canon Law under the presidency of Cardinal Luigi Sincero.<sup>117</sup> By 1948, the Pontifical Commission had prepared the complete draft of the Code of Oriental Canon Law (CICO), and Cardinal Gabriel Acacius Coussa, Secretary of the Commission, presented the entire text to Pope Pius XII. The Pope promulgated 1590 canons as 4 *motu proprios* between 1949 and 1957, but the Code was not published in its entirety.<sup>118</sup> Of these four *motu proprios*, *Cleri sanctitati*, which dealt with the hierarchical structuring and synodal

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<sup>117</sup> *Notificatio de constituenda Pontificia Commissione ad Redigendum “Codex Iuris Canonici Orientalis”* with the names of cardinal members and other councillors in *AAS* 27 (1935) 306-308.

<sup>118</sup> The four *motu proprios* are: *De disciplina sacramenti matrimonii pro Ecclesia Orientali, Crebrae allatae*, *AAS* 41 (1949) 89-117, 131 canons; *De iudiciis pro Ecclesia Orientali, Sollicitudinem nostram*, *AAS* 42 (1950) 5-120, 576 canons; *De religiosis, de bonis Ecclesiae temporalibus, de verborum significatione pro ecclesiis orientalibus, Postquam Apostolicis litteris*, *AAS* 44 (1952) 65-150, 325 canons; *De ritibus orientalibus, de personis pro Ecclesiis orientalibus, Cleri sanctitati*, *AAS* 49 (1957) 433-558, 558 canons. For information about the non-promulgated texts see *Nuntia* 1 (1975) 23-31.

functioning of the Eastern Churches, was promulgated on 2 June 1957 and came into force on 25 March 1958.

According to *Cleri sanctitati*, there were three kinds or grades of Oriental Churches: patriarchal Churches (CS cc. 216-323), (major) archiepiscopal Churches (CS cc. 324-339) and metropolitan Churches (CS cc. 321-322). In accordance with the ancient tradition the patriarch or archbishop, "as father and head" of the Church over which he presided, had jurisdiction over all the other bishops, including metropolitans, the clergy and the faithful within the proper territory (cf. CS cc. 216 & 324). The patriarchal and archiepiscopal synods had electoral, legislative and judicial powers.<sup>119</sup>

In addition to patriarchal and archiepiscopal Churches one can find in *Cleri sanctitati* the juridical figure of a metropolitan who was outside the territory of a patriarchal or archiepiscopal Church and not subject to a patriarch or archbishop, but directly depended upon the Roman Pontiff.<sup>120</sup> Such a metropolitan headed a province, and this dignity was united to an episcopal see by decree or recognition of the Roman Pontiff or an ecumenical council (CS c. 315). These metropolitans had special powers, prerogatives, rights and obligations which the metropolitans within the territory of a patriarchal or archiepiscopal Church did not enjoy.<sup>121</sup>

According to *Cleri sanctitati* canon 340, the provincial synod assisted the metropolitan outside a patriarchal or archiepiscopal Church in the governance of the Church. The provincial synod was the assembly of the bishops and other hierarchs of an ecclesiastical province who were constituted outside the territory of a patriarchate or archiepiscopate.<sup>122</sup> Such a synod was convoked and

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<sup>119</sup> Cf. CS cc. 222-239, 251-257, 340-341.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. CS cc. 315, 317, 320, 322 & 346; see also *Nuntia* 19 (1984) 13-14.

<sup>121</sup> CS cc. 320, 321, 340, etc.

<sup>122</sup> "Episcopi ceterique Hierarchae provinciae ecclesiasticae extra patriarchatus et archiepiscopatus constituti, conveniunt in Synodum provincialem. Hanc Synodum Metropolita Patriarchae vel Archiepiscopo non subiectus convocat, locum eiusmet celebrationis, auditis omnibus qui assistere debent cum



presided over by a metropolitan who was not subject to a patriarch or (major) archbishop. The provincial synod had to be held as often as the metropolitan, with the consent of the bishops of the province, deemed it necessary and at least every twenty years (CS c. 344). The membership, obligation to attend the synod, the necessary quorum, the manner of the promulgation of decrees and other procedural matters were regulated by common law (CS cc. 341-350). Therefore, in *Cleri sanctitati* itself one can find the figure of a metropolitan who was not subject to a patriarch or archbishop and an episcopal body, namely the provincial synod for the collegial governance of the province under the supreme authority of the Church.

It is evident that the hierarchical structure of the Syro-Malabar Church was not compatible with any of the three forms of the Eastern Churches envisaged in *Cleri sanctitati*. However, the only possibility was to number it among the metropolitan Churches. On the impact of the new legislation on the Syro-Malabar hierarchy Varkey Vithayathil stated:

The existing Hierarchy has been so Latin in form that it had hardly any claim to be ranked among the Oriental hierarchies, except for its liturgy. This latinization was no doubt the result of the circumstances in which the Malabar Church found itself in its contact with missionaries from the West. But now the new legislation, at one stroke, has restored to the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy the Oriental character it had lost.

It places the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy in one of the categories of Oriental hierarchies. In the Syro-Malabar Church there are at present two metropolitans, that of Ernakulam and that of Changanacherry, independent of each other and immediately dependent on the Holy See. Each of these metropolitans has his suffragan bishops. Hence the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy comes under the category of a metropolitan institution existing outside patriarchates and archiepiscopates. Thus it is in the lowest grade of Oriental hierarchies.<sup>123</sup>

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suffragio deliberativo, intra provinciae territorium, designat, eique praeest". CS c. 340 § 2.

<sup>123</sup> V. Vithayathil, *The Origin and Progress of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy*, 96-97.

In fact, the figure of quasi-autonomous metropolitan Churches was invented only to accommodate those ecclesiastical provinces erected by the Holy See outside the territory of the patriarchal Churches for the pastoral care of emigrants.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, the juridical figure of the metropolitan Church was suitable for small Christian communities which came into full communion with Catholic Church and which existed as a single metropolitan province.<sup>125</sup> But the Syro-Malabar Church, which was divided into two provinces under two equal metropolitans, without a common hierarchical head, within its own territorial boundaries, was in truth not compatible with the juridical figure of the autonomous metropolitan provinces constituted outside the territory of a patriarchal or archiepiscopal Church, as envisioned in *Cleri sanctitati*. At the same time the canons concerning the patriarchal or (major) archiepiscopal Churches and synodal governance could not have been applied to the Syro-Malabar Church, since the hierarchical status of this Church was not upgraded to make it fit the juridical figure of those kinds of Churches. Hence the only possibility was to consider the Syro-Malabar Church as two independent metropolitan provinces directly under the Roman Pontiff, in the manner of the ecclesiastical provinces of the Latin Church, if the canons of *Cleri sanctitati* had to be applied to it.

In brief no real change occurred with regard to the hierarchical structure and juridical status of the Syro-Malabar Church with the promulgation of the Eastern legislation. The two metropolitan provinces functioned under two independent metropolitans just like those of the Latin Church. The metropolitans of the Syro-Malabar Church never exercised any special powers in accordance with the Eastern law over their suffragans. Their names were not commemorated in divine Liturgy in accordance with *Cleri sanctitati* canon 317. Similarly no provincial synod was celebrated (cf. CS c. 340 § 2). Hence even

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<sup>124</sup> For example, the ecclesiastical provinces of the Ukrainian Church in Winnipeg (Canada) and Philadelphia (USA).

<sup>125</sup> For example, Ethiopian and Ruthenian Churches; Rumenian and Syro-Malankara Churches before their elevation to the status of major archiepiscopal Churches in 2005.

the canons which differentiated the Eastern metropolitans from their Latin counterparts were not in vogue in the Syro-Malabar Church.

## 9. Further Progress of the Syro-Malabar Church

Since the territory of the Syro-Malabar Church was circumscribed within the boundaries of the two ecclesiastical provinces in Kerala, those Christian faithful who desired to evangelize outside the delimited territory had to join the dioceses or religious congregations of the Latin Church, abandoning their mother Church and ecclesial heritage. In order to remedy this situation, after 1962 six Syro-Malabar apostolic exarchates were established in North India, all of which were later raised to the status of eparchy. Thus on 31 March 1962 the Oriental Congregation established the Syro-Malabar ordinariate of Chanda by the decree *Ad lucem Sancti Evangelii*.<sup>126</sup> On 29 July 1968 Pope Paul VI raised the ordinariate of Chanda to an exarchate and erected the new apostolic exarchates of Sagar, Satna and Ujjain.<sup>127</sup> The same Pope erected two other apostolic exarchates on 23 March 1972, Bijnor and Jagdalpur, to stimulate the evangelization endeavours of the Syro-Malabar Church.<sup>128</sup>

In the course of time new suffragan eparchies were also erected under both ecclesiastical provinces of the Syro-Malabar Church. By the apostolic constitution *Quanta gloria* of 1 March 1973 Pope Paul VI bifurcated the eparchy of Tellicherry and erected the eparchy of Mananthavady as a suffragan of the

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<sup>126</sup> This decree is found in the Archives of the Generalate of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) in Ernakulam, printed text in V. Vithayathil, *The Origin and Progress of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy*, Appendix XI, 134.

<sup>127</sup> The apostolic decrees: Chanda - *Qui benignissimo*, in V. Vithayathil, *The Origin and Progress of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy*, Appendix XI, 135; Sagar - *Quo aptius*, AAS 61 (1969) 20-21; Satna - *In more*, AAS 61 (1969) 21-22; Ujjain - *Apostolicum munus*, AAS 61 (1969) 23-24.

<sup>128</sup> The apostolic decrees *In beatorum apostolorum similitudinem* (Bijnor) and *Indorum Gentes* (Jagdalpur) AAS 64 (1972) 416-419.

archdiocese of Ernakulam.<sup>129</sup> On 27 June 1974 the eparchy of Trichur was divided and the same Pope created the eparchy of Palghat in the ecclesiastical province of Ernakulam.<sup>130</sup> On 26 February 1977 Pope Paul VI raised the six apostolic exarchates, Chanda, Sagar, Satna, Ujjain, Bijnor and Jagdalpur to the rank of eparchies and erected the new mission eparchy of Rajkot.<sup>131</sup> On the same day the Pope divided the archdiocese of Changanacherry, creating the eparchy of Kanjirapally as its suffragan.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, Pope Paul VI partitioned the eparchy of Trichur by the apostolic constitution *Trichuriensis eparchiae* of 22 June 1978 and constituted the eparchy of Irinjalakuda as a suffragan of the see of Ernakulam.<sup>133</sup> Thus, during the pontificate of Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) nine eparchies were erected for the Syro-Malabar Church.

The growth of the Syro-Malabar Church continued during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. On 11 September 1984 he erected the mission eparchy of Gorakhpur by the apostolic constitution *Ex quo divinum*.<sup>134</sup> The Pontiff constituted the eparchy of Thamarasserry on 28 April 1986 as a suffragan of the archdiocese of Ernakulam.<sup>135</sup> The eparchy of Kalyan was erected on 30 April 1988 for the pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar emigrants in the Bombay, Pune-Nasik region.<sup>136</sup> By this time the Syro-Malabar Church had 21 eparchies: 12 eparchies organized into two ecclesiastical provinces, 8 eparchies outside the proper territory for evangelization and one eparchy (Kalyan) for the pastoral care of emigrants.

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<sup>129</sup> Ap. Const. *Quanta gloria*, AAS 65 (1973) 228-229.

<sup>130</sup> Ap. Const. *Apostolico requirente*, AAS 66 (1974) 472.

<sup>131</sup> The 7 apostolic constitutions can be found in AAS 69 (1977) 241-248.

<sup>132</sup> Ap. Const. *Nos, Beati Petri*, AAS 69 (1977) 249-250.

<sup>133</sup> Ap. Const. *Trichuriensis eparchiae*, AAS 70 (1978) 447-448.

<sup>134</sup> Ap. Const. *Ex quo divinum*, AAS 1976 (1984) 945-946.

<sup>135</sup> Ap. Const. *Constat non modo*, AAS 78 (1986) 908.

<sup>136</sup> Ap. Const. *Pro Christifidelibus*, AAS 80 (1988) 1381-1382.

## 10. Promulgation of the Eastern Code and the Major Archiepiscopal Status of the Syro-Malabar Church

Pope John Paul II with the apostolic constitution *Sacri canones* promulgated the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* on 18 October 1990, which began to have the force of law from 1 October 1991. The new Eastern Code clearly defined the status and relative autonomy of the three kinds or grades of Churches that already existed in *Cleri sanctitati*: patriarchal Churches, (major) archiepiscopal Churches and metropolitan Churches, and introduced the juridical figure of another lower grade of Churches, namely the so-called “other Churches *sui iuris*”, in order to accommodate small Christian communities which entered into full communion with the Catholic Church.

The Code revised and updated the patriarchal and synodal institution in harmony with the ancient tradition and the directives of Vatican II.<sup>137</sup> Canonizing the conciliar prescription: “What has been said about patriarchs holds true also, in accordance with the norm of law, of major archbishops” (OE 10), the Code almost equated major archbishops and major archiepiscopal Churches with patriarchs and patriarchal Churches.<sup>138</sup> Hence at present the patriarchal and major archiepiscopal Churches have the same structure and juridical autonomy. In comparison with the former legislation the Code clearly determined the juridical figure of the metropolitan *sui iuris* Churches and its collegial episcopal body, designated the council of hierarchs.<sup>139</sup> The so-called “other *sui iuris* Churches”, headed by a single bishop or another hierarch like an exarch or vicar apostolic, depend immediately on the Holy See in the manner of the dioceses of the Latin Church.<sup>140</sup> After the

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 7-9; CCEO, cc. 55-150.

<sup>138</sup> *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 10; CCEO cc. 151-154; the only canonically and ecclesiologically relevant difference is that the election of a major archbishop needs confirmation by the Roman Pontiff (c. 153), while that of a patriarch requires no such juridical act.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. CCEO, cc. 155-173.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. CCEO, cc. 174-176.

promulgation of the Code, all the Eastern Catholic Churches had to conform to one of the four forms or grades of *sui iuris* Churches envisaged therein.

### 10.1. Constitution as a Major Archiepiscopal Church

At the time of the promulgation of the new Eastern Code in 1990 the Syro-Malabar Church existed as two independent metropolitan provinces, which directly depended upon the Holy See like the provinces of the Latin Church. The Syro-Malabar Church had twenty-one eparchies. Twelve eparchies were within the delimited territorial boundaries of this Church: seven were suffragans of the ecclesiastical province of Ernakulam and three those of Changanacherry. Eight mission eparchies and the eparchy of Kalyan erected for the pastoral care of the migrants were considered suffragans of the Latin archdioceses of the place. This Church had no common "father and head", who had jurisdiction over the whole Church. The Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference, constituted in the manner of the regional bishops' conferences of the Latin Church, was a mere consultative body, which had no legislative, judicial, electoral or administrative powers.<sup>141</sup>

Although the hybrid and anomalous juridical situation of the Syro-Malabar Church, namely an Eastern Church with a Latin hierarchical structure, gained the attention of the Commission *De Ecclesiis Orientalibus* of the Second Vatican Council and the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Eastern Canon Law, no decision was made to provide this Church with an Eastern hierarchy.<sup>142</sup> However it was evident that an intervention of the supreme authority of the Church, restructuring the Syro-Malabar Church in accordance with the juridical figure of the patriarchal or major archiepiscopal Churches envisioned in the new Code, was

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. P. Pallath, "The Syro-Malabar Church: Juridical Status and Synodal Functioning", in F. Eluvathingal (ed.), *Syro-Malabar Church since the Eastern Code*, Rome 2002, 37-38.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparando, Series II Praeparatoria*, vol. 3, pars 2, Vatican 1967, 194-224; *Nuntia* 29 (1989) 52-53; *Nuntia* 30 (1990) 58.

necessary to resolve the peculiar juridical situation of this Church.<sup>143</sup>

It was only after the promulgation of the new Code that the Holy See gradually initiated procedures to rectify the hierarchical irregularity of the Syro-Malabar Church. However, by this time the Syro-Malabar bishops, who formerly petitioned the dignity of a patriarchate for their Church and requested for its hierarchical upgrading, were divided in opposing camps on the question of liturgical identity, restoration of Eastern heritage and ongoing inculturation. The liturgical dispute had its repercussions on the position of the bishops even with regard to hierarchical restructuring of the Syro-Malabar Church.

On 9 June 1992 the Congregation for the Oriental Churches discussed the juridical status of the Syro-Malabar Church in an ordinary session which recommended the appointment of a pontifical commission. Pope John Paul II approved the proposal of the Congregation to constitute an ad hoc commission, whose mandate was to go to India and to directly receive the proposals of the bishops for advancing the double process of canonical structuring and liturgical reform on the basis of their wide, possible consensus.<sup>144</sup> The Congregation constituted the commission on 2 September 1992, with archbishop Thomas A. White, pro-nuncio apostolic in New Zealand and Fiji as president, Prof. Robert F. Taft SJ and Fr Miguel Angel Batiz OCD as members.

The pontifical commission reached Kerala on 4 September 1992 and met with the bishops collegially and individually, as well as with many groups of priests, religious and lay people. Archbishop White, the president of the commission, submitted the final report of the visit to the Congregation on 1 October 1992. The commission succeeded in hammering out a basic consensus among the bishops for upgrading the status of the Syro-Malabar Church in accordance with the Eastern Code, but with some special provisions for safeguarding the liturgical heritage and ecclesial

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<sup>143</sup> *Nuntia* 29 (1989) 52-53.

<sup>144</sup> *Servizio Informazioni per le Chiese Orietnali* (SICO), nn. 485-556 (1992) 79.

patrimony.<sup>145</sup> On the basis of the report of the commission, the decision was made to elevate the Syro-Malabar Church to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church, but with some restrictions and extraordinary regulations, in view of the special predicament of the said Church at that epoch.

In accordance with the proposals of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, on 16 December 1992 by the apostolic constitution *Quae maiori* Pope John Paul II constituted "the Syro-Malabar Church as a major archiepiscopal Church under the title of Ernakulam-Angamaly, along with all the rights and duties incumbent on the same in terms of the Sacred Canons of the Eastern Churches".<sup>146</sup> In the apostolic constitution the Pope decreed:

John Paul Bishop, Servant of Servants of God. For perpetual memory.

In virtue of our most important office as pastor of the entire flock of the Lord, we, with sedulous assiduity, endeavour to do whatever is helpful for the greater advantage of the Christian faithful. Therefore, since the Syro-Malabar Church, as the constant tradition holds, owed its origin to the preaching of the Apostle St Thomas, and having been enriched by a proper, venerable and spiritual patrimony, has grown up to a firm stature by tiding over crises of every kind throughout the course of centuries, it seemed to us quite opportune to upgrade the same as a major archiepiscopal Church. In consultation therefore with our venerable brother Achille Silvestrini, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, and making use of our apostolic authority we constitute the Syro-Malabar Church as a major archiepiscopal Church under the name of Ernakulam-Angamaly, along with all the rights and duties incumbent on the same in terms of the Sacred Canons of the Eastern Churches. It is ordered that the territory of the same shall be limited to the confines of the ecclesiastical provinces of Ernakulam and Changanacherry and the permanent residential see of the major archbishop shall be situated in the very

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<sup>145</sup> Cf. *Servizio Informazioni per le Chiese Orietnali* (SICO), nn. 485-556 (1992) 79.

<sup>146</sup> Ap. Const. *Quae maiori*, AAS 85 (1993) 398-399; *Synodal News*, no. 1 (August 1993) 10 & 12; *IRD*, 234-235.



same town of Ernakulam. What we have ordered shall be duly put into effect, and after discharging the task the customary documents shall be drawn up and transmitted to the Congregation we have mentioned. Finally we wish to confirm and ratify this apostolic constitution of ours for the present and the future, notwithstanding whatsoever to the contrary.

Given in Rome at the St. Peter's, on the 16th day of the month of December, in the year of the Lord 1992, in the 15th year of Our Pontificate.

In the apostolic constitution the Pope indicated three reasons for the elevation of the status of the Syro-Malabar Church: the apostolic origin, the possession of a venerable spiritual patrimony, as well as the growth of this Church up to a firm stature by tiding over the crisis of every kind all through the course of centuries. The Syro-Malabar Church was constituted as a major archiepiscopal Church under the new name of Ernakulam-Angamaly and it was ordered that the permanent residential see of the major archbishop should be situated in the town of Ernakulam.<sup>147</sup>

Despite constant requests from the Syro-Malabar Church to re-establish the all India jurisdiction of the St Thomas Christians, in the apostolic constitution *Quae maiori* Pope John Paul II ordered that "the territory of the same (Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church) shall be limited to the confines of the ecclesiastical provinces of Ernakulam and Changanacherry". Consequently the eight mission eparchies and the eparchy of Kalyan constituted outside the ecclesiastical provinces of Ernakulam and Changanacherry were considered extra territorial eparchies in accordance with canons 146-150 of the Eastern Code. Practically, the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church could not enjoy any legislative (with the exception of liturgical laws), judicial or electoral powers in the eparchies outside its

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<sup>147</sup> In the *Annuario Pontificio* under the title "Arcivescovati Maggiori", the entry "Ernakulam-Angamaly dei Siro-Malabaresi" is found since 1993. However, at present the designation "Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church" or "Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church of Ernakulam-Angamaly" is generally used.

proper territory. Similarly the major archbishop could not exercise any administrative powers.

## 10.2. The Major Archbishop and the Papal Delegate

On 16 December 1992, with the apostolic letter *Venerabili fratri* Pope John Paul II “from the plenitude of our apostolic power” nominated, declared and constituted “Our venerable brother Mar Antony Padiyara, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, until now Metropolitan Archbishop of Ernakulam” as the first major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church.<sup>148</sup> The Pope clearly stated that although the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church had “all the rights and duties enjoined to this office”, some “peculiar norms” were established for the time being.

After about four centuries of westernization, there was no accord among the bishops either on the basic liturgical tradition of the Syro-Malabar Church or on the question of restoration, renewal and inculturation, despite the directive principles stipulated by the Vatican Council II and subsequently detailed and elucidated by the Holy See. Considering the lack of communion and concord among the bishops and the identity crisis within the Syro-Malabar Church, the Holy Father did not grant to this Church all the powers which the synod of bishops with its head, the major archbishop can exercise according to the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. So when he elevated the Syro-Malabar Church to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church some “peculiar norms” were established *ad tempus*. According to the decree of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches dated 16 December 1992,

His Holiness Pope John Paul II in order to facilitate the establishment of the pastoral and legislative organs of the newly constituted Major Archiepiscopal Church, decided to reserve temporarily to himself the functions of pastoral governance proper to the Archbishop Major, excepting only the prerogatives of a

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<sup>148</sup> See the original Latin text and the English translation of the apostolic letter in *Synodal News*, no.1 (1993) pp. 11 & 13 respectively.

strictly liturgical character, entrusting the exercise of these functions to a special Delegate.<sup>149</sup>

On the same date the Pope appointed as his special delegate Mar Abraham Kattumana, originally from the archdiocese of Ernakulam, but at that time titular archbishop of Cebardes and apostolic nuncio in Ghana, Benin and Togo. The powers of the papal delegate were well defined in the aforementioned decree:

The Papal Delegate shall exercise, for the duration of his mandate, the functions of pastoral governance proper to Archbishops Major in the manner, and within the limits, defined by Canon Law (cf. CCEO cc. 152; 78-111).

Specifically, he shall have the faculty to convoke and to preside over the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church (cf. CCEO cc. 152; 102-113), to establish the Permanent Synod and other pastoral and legislative organs of this Church (CCEO cc. 152; 114-125), and to invigilate over the functioning of the "St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary" Vadavathoor, Kottayam.<sup>150</sup>

According to this decree the papal delegate was invested with all the supra-episcopal powers and faculties which normally belong to the major archbishop. Mar Antony Padiyara, the major archbishop enjoyed only the liturgical prerogatives belonging to that office according to the Eastern Code.

### 10.3. The Reservations

In addition to the special provisions already indicated, the Roman Pontiff reserved to his own person all that concerned episcopal elections and the liturgical order.<sup>151</sup> Therefore, the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church could not elect the major archbishop (cf. cc. 63-77) or bishops (cf. cc. 180-189) as stipulated in the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. The Roman Pontiff as before appointed the major archbishop, metropolitans

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<sup>149</sup> Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus, *Decretum*, Prot. No. 11/93, *Synodal News*, no.1 (1993) 8.

<sup>150</sup> *Synodal News*, no.1 (1993) 8-9.

<sup>151</sup> *Synodal News*, no.1 (1993) 9.

and bishops. According to the Eastern Code, for a serious reason, the major archbishop can, with the consent of the synod of bishops and having consulted the Apostolic See, erect provinces and eparchies, modify their boundaries, unite, divide, or suppress them, modify their hierarchical rank and transfer eparchial sees (c. 85 § 1). Similarly, with the consent of the synod of bishops, the major archbishop can give an eparchial bishop a coadjutor bishop or an auxiliary bishop, transfer a metropolitan, eparchial bishop or titular bishop to another metropolitan, eparchial or titular see (c. 85 § 2). Moreover, with the consent of the permanent synod, the major archbishop can erect, modify and suppress exarchies (c. 85 § 3). He can also accept the resignation of bishops from pastoral governance and other offices with the consent of the permanent synod (c. 210 § 1-3). At the time of the elevation of the Syro-Malabar Church to the rank of major archiepiscopal Church, all these powers were reserved to the Roman Pontiff, although the synod could make its suggestions and recommendations to the Holy See for consideration.

Similarly everything concerning liturgical order was reserved to the Holy See. This meant that the major archbishop and the synod did not obtain the liturgical powers defined in canon 657 of the Eastern Code. According to the canon in a major archiepiscopal Church the approval of liturgical books, after a prior review by the Apostolic See, is the competence of the major archbishop with the consent of the synod of bishops. The same authorities are also competent to approve the translations of these books meant for liturgical use, after sending a report to the Apostolic See (c.657 §§ 1-2). Since the Syro-Malabar Church did not obtain the liturgical powers, as before the Holy See would continue to approve the liturgical books of this Church.

Explaining the significance and purpose of the reservation of liturgical powers, in the letter of 31 March 1993, addressed to the pontifical delegate, the Congregation for the Oriental Churches underlined:

This Congregation, in fact, is urged to remind the Syro-Malabar Episcopate that, for a more authentic rooting in the tradition and for the necessary adaptation to the demands of the contemporary world, the question of the revision of the liturgical patrimony of that

Church, remains as one of the primary duties on its path; it is all the more important, given the fact that it has been raised to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church. For this reason the Holy See wants to keep up particularly close connection of co-operation with the bishops, in view of taking the decisions in such matters that are within your competence.<sup>152</sup>

The reservation of the liturgical powers did not mean that the Congregation for the Oriental Churches would prepare the liturgical books of the Syro-Malabar Church. The task of preparing liturgical books and presenting them to the Holy See for approval was the competence of the major archbishop and the synod. The Congregation for the Oriental Churches established a special commission for the Syro-Malabar Liturgy, whose task was not to prepare the liturgical books of this Church, but only to stimulate, encourage, follow and evaluate the work of the Syro-Malabar liturgical commission.<sup>153</sup> The Congregation made it clear that "Regarding the Qurbana, the Commission should have already made a strategy of work in view of the expiry of the experiment, foreseen for 3rd April 1994, in such a way that it can study and then submit to this Dicastery in time, the 'optiones, immutationes et ameliorationes' that are held to be important according to the instruction of the decree of this Congregation".<sup>154</sup> In brief, the reservation meant that the Syro-Malabar liturgical commission had to act in collaboration with the liturgical commission of the Congregation and that the final canonical approval of the liturgical texts would be the competence of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.

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<sup>152</sup> The letter of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches dated 31 March 1993, Prot. N. 955/65, *Synodal News*, no. 2 (February 1994) 14.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. *Synodal News*, no. 2 (February 1994) 8 & 14.

<sup>154</sup> *Synodal News*, no. 2 (February 1994) 8 & 14.

## 11. Synodal Functioning in the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church

In the Eastern tradition the patriarchal (major archiepiscopal) and synodal institution exists as one and the same inseparable entity, which manifests the primatial and the collegial dimensions of the episcopate. There is only one supreme power in a patriarchal or major archiepiscopal Church, namely the synod of bishops, convoked and presided over by the patriarch or major archbishop, who as *primus inter pares* and as a minister of unity and communion, coordinates and guides the activities of the bishops for the *bonum commune* of the entire Church. By the very fact of the elevation of a Church to the patriarchal or major archiepiscopal status, that Church obtains a common “father and head” in the person of the patriarch or major archbishop and a synod of bishops for collegial governance. Thus from the very moment of the constitution of a patriarchal or major archiepiscopal Church, the synod of bishops juridically comes into being, which the patriarch or major archbishop can convoke at any time after his enthronement and the reception of ecclesiastical communion from the Roman Pontiff.

As we have seen above, one of the faculties granted to the papal delegate was “to convoke and to preside over the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church (cf. CCEO cc. 152; 102-113), to establish the Permanent Synod and other pastoral and legislative organs of this Church (CCEO cc. 152; 114-125)”. In the additional communication from the apostolic nunciature in India, dated 27 January 1993 the role of the pontifical delegate with regard to the synodal functioning was further specified:

The Pontifical Delegate will have the power to convoke and preside over the Synod of Bishops, regulated by canons 102-113, which will have all the rights and duties established by law, with the exception of those regarding matters which the Holy Father for the time being reserves for himself, e. g. the election of bishops and matters liturgical.

The Pontifical Delegate shall promote with particular care the drafting and adopting of the Statutes of the Synod of Bishops of the

Syro-Malabar Church according to canon 113, as well as the definition of the 'corpus iuris particularis Ecclesiae Syro-Malabarensis [...]'.<sup>155</sup>

After the installation of Mar Antony Padiyara, the first major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church on 20 May 1993, the first session of the synod of bishops was conducted from 20 to 25 May 1993. In accordance with the peculiar norms established by the Holy See, the papal delegate presided over the synod. The first synod itself elected the secretary of the synod, the members of the permanent synod and those of the superior tribunal of the Syro-Malabar Church. Moreover, the synodal commissions for particular law, liturgy, ecumenism, catechism, evangelization and pastoral care of the migrants, as well as Catholic doctrine were formed.<sup>156</sup> Thus the synodal structure began to function fruitfully in the Syro-Malabar Church.

In the second session of the synod held from 22 November to 4 December 1993 under the presidency of the papal delegate Abraham Kattumana, the draft of "The Synodal Statutes of the St Thomas Christians (Syro-Malabar) Major Archiepiscopal Church of Ernakulam-Angamaly", drawn up by the synod "in line with the authentic tradition of the Oriental Churches in general and the Church of the St. Thomas Christians in particular and the norms of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches", was approved.<sup>157</sup> According to the Statutes all the ordained bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church whether eparchial, titular or emeritus, constituted inside or outside the territorial limits of this Church are members and they enjoy a deliberative vote in the synod.<sup>158</sup> Bishops of

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<sup>155</sup> *Synodal News*, no. 2 (February 1994) 3.

<sup>156</sup> *Synodal News*, no. 1 (August 1993) 6-7.

<sup>157</sup> The draft of the synodal statutes can be found in *Synodal News*, no. 2 (February 1994) 53-67; with the necessary modifications the "Statutes of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church", was promulgated in the year 2000. See *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 44-64.

<sup>158</sup> See Statutes, Art. 3.1.

Syro-Malabar origin, whether in office or emeriti, of other *sui iuris* Churches will not have membership in the synod.<sup>159</sup>

The period since the elevation of the status of the Syro-Malabar Church has been marked by intense synodal activity.<sup>160</sup> As we have seen above the first session of the synod (20-25 May 1993) itself elected the members of the permanent synod and those of the superior tribunal of the Syro-Malabar Church as well as forming various synodal commissions foreseen in the Eastern Code. The synod of bishops in its third session held from 7 to 23 November 1994 approved the statutes of the permanent synod and the superior tribunal of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church. On 1 January 1995 the pontifical delegate to the Syro-Malabar Church, Mar Abraham Kattumana promulgated them *ad experimentum* for a period of three years.<sup>161</sup> The Syro-Malabar major archiepiscopal ordinary tribunal was erected on 1 September 1994, the statutes of which were promulgated on 1 January 1995 for a period of three years.<sup>162</sup> The draft of the statutes of the major archiepiscopal assembly was also promulgated on the same day.<sup>163</sup> After the expiry of the period of three years the statutes of the permanent synod, superior tribunal and ordinary tribunal of the Syro-Malabar Church were definitively promulgated on 1 August 2000.<sup>164</sup> In brief, the synod of bishops itself and all the organs of

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<sup>159</sup> See Statutes, Art. 3. 2; thus bishops of Syro-Malabar origin, but ordained for the Latin Church in India or for the Holy See are not members of the Syro-Malabar Synod.

<sup>160</sup> For details concerning the legislative, judicial, liturgical and pastoral activities of the synod, see F. Eluvathingal (ed.), *Syro-Malabar Church since the Eastern Code*, Rome 2002.

<sup>161</sup> See *Synodal News*, no. 4 (February 1995) 22-39.

<sup>162</sup> *Synodal News*, no. 4 (February 1995) 40-52.

<sup>163</sup> *Synodal News*, no. 4 (February 1995) 108-116.

<sup>164</sup> The decrees of promulgation can be found in *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 65-68.



the synod began to function regularly and properly in the Syro-Malabar Church.<sup>165</sup>

## 12. Juridical Perfection and Further Advancement of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church

After the death of the papal delegate Mar Abraham Kattumana on 4 April 1995, "in order to facilitate the pastoral governance of the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church", Mar James Pazhayattil, bishop of Irinjalakuda was appointed as an assistant to the major archbishop on 31 May 1995.<sup>166</sup> The decree of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches specified that "For the duration of his mandate, the Assistant to the Major Archbishop shall exercise, in conjunction with the Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly, the functions of pastoral governance proper to the Major Archbishop according to the faculties granted and herein enclosed. The Roman Pontiff, however, continues to reserve to His own person all that concerns episcopal elections and the liturgical order".<sup>167</sup> The "Faculties of the Assistant to the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church" enclosed with the decree were so exhaustive that they practically left nothing to the major archbishop, who had only the liturgical prerogatives as before.<sup>168</sup>

On 11 November 1996 the Holy Father accepted the resignation of Antony Cardinal Padiyara, the first major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. On the same day he appointed Father Varkey Vithayathil C.S.S.R. as apostolic administrator *sede vacante et ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*, elevating him to the rank of

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<sup>165</sup> For the major powers, rights and obligations of the synod of the Syro-Malabar Church, cf. P. Pallath, *Local Episcopal Bodies in East and West*, 125-239.

<sup>166</sup> Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Decretum*, Prot. N. 99/95, *Synodal News*, nos. 7 & 8 (April 1996) 87-88.

<sup>167</sup> *Synodal News*, nos. 7 & 8 (April 1996) 87.

<sup>168</sup> See the eleven faculties granted to the major archiepiscopal assistant, *Synodal News*, nos. 7 & 8 (April 1996) 89-90.

titular archbishop of Acrida.<sup>169</sup> Father Varkey Vithayathil was consecrated by the Holy Father at St Peter's Basilica in Rome on 6 January 1997 and was installed on 18 January of the same year in Ernakulam.

### 12.1. Concession of Liturgical Powers

As we have seen above, when the Syro-Malabar Church was raised to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church on 16 December 1992, those matters pertaining to the episcopal elections and the liturgical order were reserved to the person of the Roman Pontiff. Having evaluated the progress made, on 19 January 1998 the Pope determined to confer on the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church the full exercise of the faculties foreseen in the Eastern Code in liturgical matters.<sup>170</sup> The Congregation for the Eastern Churches with its decree dated 19 January 1998 communicated this fact to the apostolic administrator on 16 March 1998. The decree of the Congregation stipulated:

All things duly considered, following the indication of the Members of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches at their Ordinary Session held on 16 January 1998, at the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of this same Congregation, on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of January 1998, His Holiness Pope John Paul II hereby ceases to reserve to the person of the Roman Pontiff the liturgical order of the Syro-Malabar Church.<sup>171</sup>

In the letter, issued on the occasion, after highlighting the need for a more profound communion and concord among the bishops for a truthful and consistent liturgical action, Pope John Paul II affirmed:

[...] the Successor of Peter considers that the moment has come to entrust to you, the Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, the full exercise of the liturgical faculties provided for by the *Code of*

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<sup>169</sup> See the decree of appointment in *Synodal News*, no. 9 (February 1997) 45-46; later, on 19 April 1997 the titular see of Antinoe was assigned to the apostolic administrator. See *Synodal News*, no. 10 (August 1997) 33.

<sup>170</sup> See *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 10-11.

<sup>171</sup> *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 11.

*Canons of the Eastern Churches.* This action is intended as an expression of the great confidence which I have in each one of you and in your Synod, through which you work together to serve the truth in charity.<sup>172</sup>

Together with its decree the Congregation also communicated to the bishops some *Fundamental Orientations concerning the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, “drafted with the consultation of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which has expressed its approval”.<sup>173</sup> It is evident that the synod of bishops has to take to heart these fundamental orientations in exercising its liturgical powers, especially when it strives to reform, renew and inculturate the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church. Thus since that time the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, with the consent of the synod of bishops, can approve the liturgical books of this Church, after a prior review by the Apostolic See (cf. c. 657 § 1). The same authorities are also competent to approve the translations of books meant for liturgical use (c. 657 § 2).

## 12.2. Further Progress and the First Real Major Archbishop

On 18 May 1995 Pope John Paul II established the metropolitan provinces of Trichur and Tellicherry, raising the said eparchies to metropolitan status, but without making any change in the territorial boundaries of the Syro-Malabar Church.<sup>174</sup> During the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, in addition to the three eparchies already mentioned, five more eparchies were erected for the Syro-Malabar Church: Thuckalay (11.11.1996), Belthangady (26.5.1999), Adilabad (16.7.1999), Chicago in USA (13.3.2001) and Idukki (19.12. 2002).<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 April 1998, 7; *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 8.

<sup>173</sup> *Synodal News*, no. 12 (December 1998) 12-17.

<sup>174</sup> The apostolic constitutions *Ad augendum spirituale* (Trichur) and *Spirituali bono* (Tellicherry) in *AAS* 87 (1995) 984-986; *IRD*, 236-239.

<sup>175</sup> The apostolic constitutions in the chronological order: *Apud Indorum*, *AAS* 89 (1997) 745-746; *Cum ampla*, *AAS* 91 (1999) 1025-1026; *Ad aptius*, *AAS* 91 (1999) 1031, *Congregatio pro*, *AAS* 93 (2001) 423-424 and *Maturescens Cattolica*, *AAS* 95 (2003) 381-382.

The attempts of the apostolic administrator to resolve the liturgical crisis in the Syro-Malabar Church and to strengthen communion among the bishops gained momentum in the seventh session of the synod (15-20 November 1999), when on 19 November 1999 the bishops unanimously decided to adopt a uniform mode of celebrating holy *Qurbana* in the whole Syro-Malabar Church. The essential content of this unanimous decision consisted of the agreement to celebrate the holy *Qurbana* from the beginning to the Anaphora facing the people, from Anaphora until the holy Communion inclusive facing the altar and after the Communion again facing the people.<sup>176</sup>

The apostolic administrator informed the Holy See of this great achievement with his letter of 21 November 1999 and forwarded to the Congregation for the Eastern Churches the text of the decision. The Congregation expressed its joy and satisfaction especially for the unanimous nature of the decision on the basis of common consensus and stated that "This Dicastery has not any objections with regard to the decision adopted, which it considers a new and important step in the identity consciousness of the Syro-Malabar Church and a fundamental contribution to ecclesial communion, through an homogenous pastoral praxis".<sup>177</sup>

Having taken into account the three years of service of the apostolic administrator Varkey Vithayathil, especially in engendering communion among the bishops and resolving the longstanding liturgical crisis, on 18 December 1999, Pope John Paul II appointed him to the dignity and office of the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. The decree of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches issued on 18 December 1999 stated:

Desiring to guarantee to the Syro-Malabar Church a Head who might guide Her, who would facilitate Her pastoral activity and

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<sup>176</sup> Cf. *Synodal News*, vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2 (December 1999) 60-61, 72-73 and the common pastoral letter in pages 117-123.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Letter from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches dated 17 December 1999, Prot. N. 1796/99, *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 2 (December 2000) 45.

represent Her with dignity, having taken into account the veneration and the respect of the Apostolic Administrator from his years of ecclesial service, and having heard the Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, His Holiness Pope John Paul II at the Audience granted to the undersigned Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, this 18<sup>th</sup> day of December 1999, in His pastoral solicitude, decided to elevate His Excellency the Most Reverend Varkey Vithayathil, of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer to the dignity and Office of the Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly, transferring him from the titular see of Antinoe, with all the rights, honours and privileges of the Office of the Major Archbishop according to the norms of the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches and the norms of the Holy See.<sup>178</sup>

From the covering letter of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, dated 24 December 1999 one can clearly understand that “the special effort which has been made towards a unanimous agreement on the mode of celebrating the Holy Qurbana” was one of the reasons which prompted the Holy See to elevate the apostolic administrator to the dignity of the major archbishops. We cite the relevant part of this letter:

I wish, also, to recognize and honour the work which you have accomplished during your three years as Apostolic Administrator of Ernakulam-Angamaly. In circumstances which were at times difficult, Your Grace has led the Syro-Malabar Church into a new period of growth and communion. Without denying the fact that a great deal has yet to be accomplished, I am confident to say that these three years of your work as Apostolic Administrator have seen the essential first steps towards ever-increasing stability and ecclesial communion for the future. These first steps include the special effort which has been made towards a unanimous agreement on the mode of celebrating the Holy Qurbana. The agreement of November last in the Synod augurs well for the continued convergence and ecclesial communion in the functioning of the Synod.<sup>179</sup>

Unfortunately the major archbishop himself and a few other bishops did not implement the uniform mode of celebrating holy

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<sup>178</sup> The Decree of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Prot. N. 140/99, *Synodal News*, vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2 (December 1999) 99.

<sup>179</sup> *Synodal News*, vol.7, nos. 1 & 2 (December 1999) 97.

*Qurbana* on 3 July 2000, the feast of St Thomas, as unanimously determined by the Synod. In accord with those bishops who did not implement the synodal decision, the major archbishop, “while adhering faithfully to the Synodal decision”, granted a general dispensation to all the priests in his archdiocese on the basis of canon 1538 § 1 of the Eastern Code, “so that an explosive pastoral situation and grave spiritual harm to the faithful may be avoided”.<sup>180</sup>

In the synod of bishops held from 10 to 22 July 2000 the major archbishop admitted that in some eparchies the unanimous decision concerning the *Qurbana* could not be implemented on account of “the stiff opposition of the clergy”.<sup>181</sup> However, the synod reiterated its decision on the uniform mode of celebrating the holy *Qurbana* and determined that all should take care to implement the decision, engendering circumstances favourable to it. “It was also agreed by the bishops that in the mission centres in India and abroad they would all celebrate the Holy *Qurbana* according to the synodal decision”.<sup>182</sup>

Although on 16 December 1992 the Syro-Malabar Church was elevated to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church, only on 18 December 1999 did it obtain a real “father and head” with all the rights, privileges and honours as stipulated in the Eastern Code. At that time the synod enjoyed full legislative, judicial and liturgical powers, as well as other rights, obligations and prerogatives as determined in the Code. Nevertheless, all that concerned episcopal elections still remained reserved to the Roman Pontiff.

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<sup>180</sup> The circular letter of the major archbishop dated 30 June, 2000 can be found in *Ernakulam Missam* 70 (July 2000) 7. CCEO c. 1538 § 1 states: “The eparchial bishop can dispense in special cases from both the common law and the particular laws of his Church *sui iuris* the Christian faithful over whom he exercises power in accordance with law, whenever he deems it conducive to their spiritual good, unless reservation has been made by the authority which enacted the laws”.

<sup>181</sup> *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 9.

<sup>182</sup> *Synodal News*, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 2000) 21.

### 12.3. Restitution of the Faculty of Episcopal Elections and New Hierarchical Structures

Recognizing the sufficient collegial maturity of the synod and the growing unity and communion among the bishops, the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in its regular session held on 9 December 2003, decided to propose to the Supreme Pontiff that the reservation of the faculty to appoint bishops in the Syro-Malabar Church be revoked. On 23 December 2003 the Holy Father accepted the proposal and revoked the reservation. With the decree of 3 January 2004 the Congregation published the decision, which came into effect on the same date. The decree of the Congregation states:

The question of the faculty of election of bishops was examined in a regular session held on 23 December 2003. The fathers arrived at the conclusion to propose to the Supreme Pontiff to revoke the reservation. In the audience granted on 23 December 2003 to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches His Holiness Pope John Paul II revoked the reservation to the Holy Father of the faculty to appoint bishops in the Syro-Malabar Church restoring the said faculty to the synod of the same Church according to the norm of the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches.<sup>183</sup>

With the granting of the faculty to appoint bishops to the synod of the Syro-Malabar Church, it has become a fully-fledged and canonically perfect major archiepiscopal Church according to the norms of the Eastern Code, although much remains to be done in the fields of liturgy, theology and other aspects of ecclesial life.

After the Syro-Malabar Church was granted the faculties pertaining to the episcopal election, having obtained the consent of the synod of bishops in its session held from 1 to 13 November 2004 and the non-objection of the Holy See, on 9 May 2005 the Major Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil raised the Southist eparchy of Kottayam to the rank of a metropolitan see, "with the explicit understanding that the metropolitan see of Kottayam is to remain

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<sup>183</sup> The decree of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Prot. N. 19/2003, *Synodal News*, vol. 11, no. 2 (December 2003) 50.

without a suffragan eparchy".<sup>184</sup> On the same day Mar Kuriakose Kunnacherry, the incumbent bishop of Kottayam, was appointed as the first metropolitan of the newly erected metropolitan see of Kottayam<sup>185</sup> and he was enthroned on 3 June 2005. According to the norms of the Eastern Code, on 21 August 2007 Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil, the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church erected the eparchy of Bhadravathi, carving out the entire civil district of Shimoga in the State of Karnataka from the territory of the eparchy of Mananthavady. The new Eparchy and its bishop are subject as suffragans to the metropolitan archdiocese of Tellicherry and its metropolitan.<sup>186</sup>

On 15 January 2010 the Major Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil, having completed the procedures prescribed in the Eastern Code, bifurcating the eparchy of Mananthavady, erected the new eparchy of Mandya as suffragan of Tellicherry, comprising the four civil districts of Mandya, Hasan, Mysore and Chamaraj Nagar in Karnataka. On the same date bifurcating the eparchy of Palakkad the eparchy of Ramanathapuram was constituted in Tamilnadu comprising the civil districts of Coimbatore, Erode, Karur and Thirupur; the new eparchy is suffragan of Trichur. Moreover, the boundary of the eparchy of Bhadravathi was extended to include the Chikmaglore area of the eparchy of Mananthavady.<sup>187</sup>

On 1 April 2011 due to the demise of Cardinal Mar Varkey Vithayathil the major archiepiscopal see became vacant. On 24 May 2011 the Syro-Malabar Synod elected Mar George Alencherry, bishop of the eparchy of Thuckalay (1997-2011), as the third major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. Pope Benedict XVI confirmed the election of Mar Alencherry on 26 May 2011 and he was enthroned as major archbishop on 29 May 2011 during a solemn ceremony at St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica in

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<sup>184</sup> Decree of elevation in *Synodal News*, vol. 13, nos. 1 & 2 (2005) 60-61.

<sup>185</sup> Decree of appointment in *Synodal News*, vol. 13, nos. 1 & 2 (2005) 62-63.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, giovedì 30 agosto 2007, 1; *Synodal News*, vol. 15, nos. 1 & 2 (November 2007) 79-80.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 18-19 gennaio 2010, 1.



Ernakulam.<sup>188</sup> The Pope appointed him a member of the College of Cardinals on 18 February 2012 and installed him as Cardinal-Priest of San Bernardo alle Terme on 14 October 2012.

On 6 March 2012 Pope Benedict XVI erected the eparchy of Faridabad for the pastoral care of around 100,000 Syro-Malabar Catholics in the area of Delhi. The eparchy has a size of 950,000 km, spreads over several jurisdictions of Latin Catholic dioceses and covers the national capital territory of Delhi, the states of Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu-Kashmir as well as the districts of Gautambuddhanagar and Ghaziabad belonging to the state of Uttar Pradesh.<sup>189</sup> For the Syro-Malabar faithful residing in Australia on 23 December 2013 Pope Francis established the “Eparchy of St Thomas the Apostle of Melbourne” with the eparchial see in the said city.<sup>190</sup> With the decree of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches dated 4 August 2015 the territory of the diocese of Mandya was extended to cover the civil districts of Bengaluru (Bangalore) Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Chickballapur, Kolar, Ramnagara and Tumkur.<sup>191</sup> On 6 August 2015 Pope Francis erected a Syro-Malabar Apostolic Exarchate for the faithful of the same Church residing in Canada with its see in Mississauga (Ontario).<sup>192</sup>

On 28 July 2016 Pope Francis established the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain for the pastoral care of Syro-Malabar faithful in England, Scotland & Wales, with its see in Preston at St

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<sup>188</sup> For details concerning the election, papal confirmation and enthronement, see *Synodal News*, vol. 19, nos. 1-3 (2011) 61-67.

<sup>189</sup> For the papal bull erecting the eparchy of Faridabad, see *AAS* 104 (2012) 403; *Synodal News*, vol. 20, nos. 1-3 (2012) 133.

<sup>190</sup> *AAS* 106 (2014) 347; *Synodal News*, vol. 22, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2014) 186.

<sup>191</sup> *Synodal News*, vol. 23, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2015) 149.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, venerdì 7 agosto 2015, 1; *Synodal News*, vol. 23, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2015) 143-144.

Alphonsa Cathedral (formerly St Ignatius Church, Preston). This is the third eparchy for the Syro-Malabars outside of India.<sup>193</sup>

#### 12.4. Re-establishment of All India Jurisdiction (2017)

At least from the time of the Second Vatican Council the Syro-Malabar Church persistently requested the re-establishment of its jurisdiction in all India for the pastoral care of migrants and the evangelization of peoples. In fact an explicit juridical act of the Roman Pontiff was necessary for the extension of the rights and obligations of the synod of bishops and major archbishop in all India (CCEO, c. 146 § 2). Really this was done by Pope Francis with the apostolic letter dated 9 October 2017, addressed to the bishops of India.<sup>194</sup> After evaluating the various provisions taken by his predecessors for the pastoral care of Syro-Malabar faithful outside its restricted territory, the Pope stated:

I have therefore authorized the Congregation for the Oriental Churches to provide for the pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar faithful throughout India by the erection of two Eparchies and by the extension of the boundaries of the two already in existence.

I decree also that the new circumscriptions, as with those already in existence, be entrusted to the pastoral care of the Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly and to the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, according to the norms of the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*.<sup>195</sup>

In accordance with this letter on 9 October 2017 His Holiness Pope Francis erected the Syro-Malabar eparchies of Hosur and Shamshabad. The eparchy of Hosur comprises the northern part of the state of Tamilnadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry and Karaikal.<sup>196</sup> The eparchy of Shamshabad is very vast, comprising

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<sup>193</sup> AAS 108 (2016); *Synodal News*, vol. 24, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2016) 142.

<sup>194</sup> The apostolic letter in AAS 109 (2017) 1171-1176; *Synodal News*, vol. 23, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2017) 181-186; the Italian version of the apostolic letter in *L'Osservatore Romano*, mercoledì 11 ottobre 2017, 7.

<sup>195</sup> *Synodal News*, vol. 23, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2017) 184.

<sup>196</sup> *Synodal News*, vol. 23, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2017) 187-188.

all the territories of India, not yet covered by other Syro-Malabar eparchies.<sup>197</sup> On 10 October 2017 the Holy Father also extended the boundaries of the eparchies of Ramanathapuram and Thuckalay.<sup>198</sup>

With these provisions of the the Roman Pontiff practically the lost all India jurisdiction has been re-established. The synod of bishops and the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church have obtained all the powers, rights and obligations according to the norms of the Eastern Code in all India. Thus, for example, metropolitan provinces, eparchies and exarchies can be erected anywhere in India and bishops can be elected by the synod. Just like the liturgical laws, also the disciplinary laws enacted by the synod and promulgated by the major archbishop have the force of law in all the Syro-Malabar eparchies in India.

The recognition of all India jurisdiction of the Syro-Malabar Church is the final outcome of the efforts of many Syro-Malabar bishops (at times misunderstood and despised), native and foreign scholars, as well as Syro-Malabar religious congregations from the time of the Second Vatican Council. With due regard for the provisions of the previous authorities of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, the Prefect Leonardo Sandri, Archbishop Secretary Cyril Vasil and the concerned officials were unanimously favourable to recognize the right of the Syro-Malabar Church for the pastoral care of the faithful everywhere in India. The committed actions of the Syro-Malabar Synod under the able leadership of Major Archbishop Cardinal George Alencherry accelerated the procedures and finally led the Supreme Authority to grant the right of all India jurisdiction for the spiritual benefit of the Christian faithful and for the evangelization of peoples.

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<sup>197</sup> *Synodal News*, vol. 23, nos. 1 & 2 (December 2017) 191-192-. The see of new Eparchy of Shamshabad, situated 25 kilometers away from Hyderabad, is a city in Ranga Reddy District in the state of Telangana.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, mercoledì 11 ottobre 2017, 7.

### 12.5. Present Canonical and Ecclesial Status

Although all India jurisdiction has theoretically been re-established, practical implementation of the provisions and the reorganization of hierarchical structures will be a long and laborious process. As we see below, the eparchies outside the previous territorial boundaries of the Syro-Malabar Church still remain suffragans of the Latin archdioceses of the place. They are to be gradually reorganized into one or two Syro-Malabar ecclesiastical provinces.

On 22 December 2018 the Holy Father has raised the exarchy of Mississauga in Canada to the status of an Eparchy. Thus at present the Syro-Malabar Church has 35 eparchies: eighteen within the boundaries of the four ecclesiastical provinces, which have their sees in Kerala and which previously constituted the proper territory of this Church, 13 in various Indian states, and one each in the United States of America, Australia, Great Britain and Canada. Obviously the archdiocese of Kottayam, which has no suffragan see, is not an ecclesiastical province. We give the names of the archdioceses or ecclesiastical provinces and the suffragan eparchies in alphabetical order.

Archdioceses	Suffragan Eparchies
1. Changanacherry	Kanjirapally, Palai, Thuckalay
2. Ernakulam-Angamaly	Kothamangalam, Idukki
3. Kottayam	No suffragan eparchy
4. Tellicherry	Belthangady, Bhadravathi, Mananthavady, Mandya, Thamara-sserly
5. Trichur	Irinjalakuda, Palghat, Ramana-thapuram

Of the sixteen eparchies outside the four Syro-Malabar ecclesiastical provinces, the eparchies of Saint Thomas the Apostle of Chicago, Saint Thomas the Apostle of Melbourne, the eparchy

of Great Britain and the eparchy of Mississauga in Canada as well as the eparchies of Faridabad, Hosur and Shamshabad in India are immediately subject to the Holy See. The other ten eparchies, though situated in India, are not suffragans of any of the Syro-Malabar archdioceses, but of the nearby Latin archdioceses.<sup>199</sup> Below we indicate the Latin archdioceses, of which the Syro-Malabar eparchies are suffragans.

Latin Archdioceses	Syro-Malabar Eparchies	Suffragan
Agra	Bijnor, Gorakhpur	
Bhopal	Sagar, Satna, Ujjain	
Bombay	Kalyan	
Gandhinagar	Rajkot	
Hyderabad	Adilabad	
Nagpur	Chanda	
Raipur	Jagdapur	

The Syro-Malabar Church has 4,500,086 Christian faithful in 35 Syro-Malabar hierarchical structures, 4,574 diocesan priests, 3,527 religious priests, 5,603 male religious, 32,967 female religious and 2991 parishes. There are 64 bishops: 1 major archbishop, 5 archbishops, 30 eparchial bishops, 1 apostolic visitor, 9 auxiliary bishops and 17 retired bishops.<sup>200</sup> According to the official website, the Syro-Malabar Church has about 521 mission stations, 4860 educational institutions and 2614 charitable institutions.<sup>201</sup> Outside India about 3,33,500 faithful reside in Latin dioceses, especially in Europe and Gulf countries, where Syro-Malabar eparchies or exarchies have not yet been established.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. *Annuario Pontificio* 2019.

<sup>200</sup> Statistics according to *Annuario Pontificio* 2019.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. [www.syro-malabarchurch.in/church](http://www.syro-malabarchurch.in/church) at glance, consulted on 6 August 2018.

We provide below a statistical table, formulated on the basis of the details given in the *Annuario Pontificio* 2019. It considers only the situation of Syro-Malabar ecclesiastical circumscriptions, namely 5 archdioceses, 30 eparchies.

Eparchies	Chris- tian faithful	Diocesan priests	Religious priests	Male Religious	Female religious	Parishes
<b>Changanacherry</b>	404,500	390	417	685	2374	243
Kanjirapally	220,220	242	85	115	1,810	146
Palai	334,482	393	141	256	2,992	170
Thuckalay	25,325	40	21	23	290	59
<b>Ernakulam- Angamaly</b>	633,000	395	395	602	4,976	349
Kothamangalam	231,790	348	112	197	2,320	121
Idukki	273,500	252	450	457	913	156
<b>Kottayam</b>	189,060	370	111	153	1,060	148
<b>Tellicherry</b>	287,075	294	147	396	1,895	247
Belthangady	20,292	41	28	39	197	53
Bhadravathi	9,873	11	48	48	128	24
Mananthavady	175,673	208	22	181	1,370	151
Mandya	87,320	49	248	463	400	39
Thamarassery	152,920	163	115	251	1,592	123
<b>Trichur</b>	437,522	340	255	412	3,171	217
Irinjalakuda	263,185	220	116	189	1,903	135
Palghat	58,675	130	69	75	1,132	89
Ramanathapuram	11,579	14	44	79	302	19
<b>(Outside Provinces)</b>						
Adilabad	18,640	40	70	88	248	39
Bijnor	4,292	53	28	52	212	36
Chanda	13,475	41	72	177	405	10
Faridabad	161,700	51	63	63	957	83

Gorakhpur	3,357	46	23	29	249	30
Hosur	65,700	22	-	-	73	-
Jagdapur	9,800	35	66	84	323	23
Kalyan	66,350	83	103	123	365	112
Rajkot	13,340	40	86	93	470	14
Sagar	3,992	61	17	21	272	17
Satna	2,917	43	12	23	141	16
Shamshabad	120,000	44	44	44	100	16
Ujjain	4,682	44	49	115	291	42
<b>(Outside India)</b>						
Mississauga	20,000	13	9	9	12	12
St Thomas, Chicago	87,000	50	23	23	21	42
Great Britain	38,150	25	31	31	3	2
St Thomas, Melbourne	50,700	23	7	7	-	8
<b>Total (35)</b>	<b>4,500,086</b>	<b>4,574</b>	<b>3,527</b>	<b>5,603</b>	<b>32,967</b>	<b>2991</b>

## Conclusion

The growth of the Syro-Malabar Church from two vicariates (1887) to the rank of a major archiepiscopal Church (1992) with all the faculties, powers and rights (2004) has been gradual, but stupendous. With the apostolic letter of Pope Francis and the constitution of the eparchies of Hosur and Shamshabad the Syro-Malabar Church also obtained all India jurisdiction. At present the Syro-Malabar Church is the most vigorous and rapidly growing Eastern Church in the whole of Christendom, in spite of its internal problems. Possible future steps for the further progress of the Syro-Malabar Church would be: to complete the liturgical reform and renewal in accordance with the sound tradition, the liturgical principles of Vatican II and the norms of the Eastern Code, to develop a solid Indian Eastern theology, based on Sacred Scripture, patristic doctrine and the magisterium of the Church, to obtain recognition from the supreme authority of the Church as a patriarchal Church, to overcome every barrier of excessive provincialism and ethnocentrism, instilling in the hearts of all an

inextinguishable thirst for the common good of the Church, to strengthen the bonds of unity and communion among the bishops, clergy, religious and other Christian faithful, as well as to form a new generation of sober ecclesiastics who seek and respect the truth, act on gospel values and objective principles and faithfully implement synodal decisions.



## Chapter Five

# THE ORIGIN OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES OF ANTIOCHENE TRADITION AND THE SYRO- MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

### Introduction

From the time of the Apostle Thomas until 1653 the St Thomas Christians remained united under one head, without any division or schism among them. As we have seen in the third chapter, after the *Coonan* Cross Oath on 3 January 1653, twelve priests of the St Thomas Christian community “consecrated” the Archdeacon Thomas Parampil as bishop with the title of Mar Thomas on 22 May 1653. Most of the parishes abandoned the Jesuit Padroado Archbishop Francis Garcia SJ and in *bona fide* rallied behind the new “bishop”. Realizing that the consecration of Archdeacon Thomas was not valid, several Christians sooner or later abandoned him. After receiving reports about such tragic events in Malabar, in accordance with the proposal of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, Pope Alexander VII sent two groups of disalced Carmelites, headed respectively by Joseph of St Mary Sebastiani and Hyacinth of St Vincent, both apostolic commissaries endowed with special faculties to investigate and settle the problems of the Malabar Church. Although many Christian faithful returned to the true fold, the attempts of the apostolic commissaries did not succeed in recomposing the broken unity because the archdeacon and his party required that he be consecrated bishop. Since such a demand was unacceptable, as the last nail in the coffin, on 1 February 1663 Sebastiani excommunicated the archdeacon and his companion Ittithomman Anjilimoottil from the Catholic Church. Thus the schism initiated in 1653 was officially ratified, perpetuating the division of the St Thomas Christians into Catholic and non-Catholic groups. In this chapter we consider the vicissitudes of the non-Catholic group which led to the origin of the Orthodox Churches of the

Antiochene tradition in India and the successive emergence of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Hierarchical Relationship with the Patriarch of Antioch and the Origin of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Churches

After the excommunication from the Catholic Church and the failure of all attempts at reconciliation Mar Thomas I, aware of not being an ordained bishop, wrote to the Chaldean patriarch and the Syrian Jacobite patriarch of Antioch for a bishop by whom he could be validly consecrated. The Chaldean patriarch did not respond, but in 1665 the Syrian Jacobite patriarch of Antioch sent a Jacobite Bishop Abdul Jaleel Mar Gregorios to Malabar.<sup>2</sup> Since the followers of Mar Thomas (the archdeacon) were aware of the fact that he was not a real bishop, they solemnly received Mar Gregorios and accepted him as their prelate. Indubitably an Oriental bishop of Syriac tradition was more acceptable to the community than any Latin bishop. From the time of his arrival, Mar Gregorios began to perform the episcopal functions, while Mar Thomas carried out the administration of the Church.

### 1.1. The Start of the Introduction of Syrian Orthodox Faith

The *Coonan* Cross Oath was against the Portuguese Padroado jurisdiction, represented at that time by the Jesuit bishops and missionaries who tried their best to suppress the Eastern rite and ecclesial traditions, the law of Thomas and the autonomy of the Church of St Thomas Christians. The Antiochene Bishop Mar Gregorios (1665-1670), on the other hand, knowing the pulse of the community, promised to restore and promote the heritage and traditions of the St Thomas Christians. In fact, he reinstated some

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<sup>1</sup> In this book the designation "Malankara Church", without any qualification refers to the community of non-Catholic St Thomas Christians, prior to its various divisions.

<sup>2</sup> *Fonti*, II-VIII, 213; C. Malancharuvi, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Alwaye 1973, 22-24; C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India, A History of the Malankara Orthodox Church*, Kottayam 2003, 56.

of the authentic traditions which had been abandoned after the Synod of Diamper. However, he did not consecrate Mar Thomas I bishop because his intention was to bring the separated group to the Jacobite faith and Antiochene tradition. He tried very tactfully to gradually introduce Jacobite Orthodox doctrines and the Antiochene rite in Malabar. He also succeeded in creating a general antipathy against Rome and the Catholic Church before his death in 1670.<sup>3</sup> The arrival and activities of Mar Gregorios strengthened the party of Mar Thomas I and widened the rift between the Catholic and non-Catholic groups. The *Coonan* Cross Oath itself began to be misinterpreted as a rebellion and schismatic act against the Roman Pontiff and the hegemony of the Roman Church.

After the death of Mar Thomas I on 22 April 1670, Mar Thomas II (1670-1686),<sup>4</sup> Mar Thomas III (1686-1688), Mar Thomas IV (1688-1728) and Mar Thomas V (1728-1765) governed the community. According to general opinion none of these "bishops" had received valid episcopal consecration. During the governance of Mar Thomas II, in 1685 two more Jacobite bishops arrived, Eldo Mar Basilios and Hidatulla Mar Ivanios, for the continuation of the gradual Antiochenization of the Malankara community. The Antiochene Bishop Mar Basilios died twelve days after his arrival on 29 September 1685 and was buried at the Kothamangalam church, but Mar Ivanios continued the work until his departure from this world on 13 August 1693. After the death of Mar Ivanios in 1693 no Antiochene Orthodox bishop reached Malabar for a long period of time and the local head governed the Church in an autonomous manner. Although some Antiochene Christological elements were introduced, the community continued to live the faith according to the Syro-Oriental or Chaldean tradition, celebrating the liturgy in the Chaldean rite.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Fonti*, II-VIII, 56; Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, 99-100; J. Thekkedath, *Christianity in India*, 100-102; L. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 111-112; D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 2, 62-63.

<sup>4</sup> Since the first successor of Mar Thomas I died eight days after his election, he is not often counted in listing the heads of the Malankara community.

## 1.2. Progress of Antiochene Tradition and the First Validly Consecrated Bishop

Like his predecessors, Mar Thomas V also made some efforts to be reunited with Rome, but without any success. Thoughts about his lack of valid episcopal consecration always tormented Mar Thomas V, who asked the Dutch authorities in Cochin (the Dutch had already conquered Cochin in 1663) to fetch a bishop from the Persian Gulf, promising to pay a great sum of money for his travel expenses. Owing to the continuous efforts and constant requests of Mar Thomas V, supported by the Dutch authorities, the Antiochene patriarch sent two prelates, Sacralla Mar Basilios and Mar Gregorios, who reached Cochin on 23 April 1751, together with Ramban John (Youhanan) and two Syrian clerics.<sup>5</sup> These bishops claimed jurisdiction over the Malankara Church and tried to introduce many more Antiochene customs and Jacobite tenets among the Malankara Christian faithful. It is they who brought to the Malankara Church various Anaphoras of the Antiochene tradition, including the liturgy of St James, and propagated them in the Church, though without replacing the Chaldean liturgy.<sup>6</sup>

Mar Thomas V invited the Antiochene prelates and gave them sanctuary in Malankara in order that he be consecrated bishop by them. But the said prelates tried to establish their authority over the Malankara Church and postponed the consecration of Mar Thomas V because they knew well that it was the want of a valid episcopacy that made the heads of this Church turn towards Antioch, and the hope of establishing Antiochene supremacy would be in vain if they consecrated Mar Thomas V as bishop.<sup>7</sup> This conflict between Mar Thomas V and the Antiochene bishops reached its climax when Mar Basilios consecrated Ramban John, who had come with him, as Mar Ivanios and appointed him the metropolitan of the Malankara Church in 1752. However, he was

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<sup>5</sup> *Fonti*, II-VIII, 59; Paulino a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, 111-112; L. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 120.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 328.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 35-36.

never acknowledged in his position and Mar Thomas V continued to function as the head of the Malankara Church.<sup>8</sup> Since the Antiochene prelates did not consecrate Mar Thomas V, he refused to pay the money promised to the Dutch governor for their travel expenses. The consequence was a grave and long conflict between the Dutch authorities in Cochin, Mar Thomas V and the Antiochene bishops.

Since the conflict continued, the king of Travancore intervened to bring about reconciliation between the parties and, as a compromise, the Antiochene bishops agreed to consecrate Mar Thomas V. But the Antiochene Bishop Mar Basilios breathed his last in 1764. Mar Thomas V died in 1765, without having received episcopal consecration, and he was succeeded by a nephew, who assumed the title of Mar Thomas VI. After a long delay, in accordance with the aforementioned agreement, under pressure from the king of Travancore, the Antiochene prelate Mar Gregorios, assisted by Mar Ivanios, consecrated Mar Thomas VI at St Mary's Church at Niranam in the first week of January 1772. The new bishop, the first validly consecrated bishop of the Malankara Church, took the name Mar Dionysius I.<sup>9</sup>

In the profession of faith and petition dated 12 March 1778, sent to Pope Pius VI through Joseph Cariattil, Mar Thomas VI himself explicitly admitted that none of his predecessors had been validly consecrated and because of this he "received again the imposition of hands from the first tonsure up to the episcopacy inclusively from the Jacobite Gregory".<sup>10</sup> As the Orthodox historian C. V. Cheriyan rightly observes: "The consecration of Mar Thomas VI as Mar Dionysius I in the presence of Mar Ivanios [...] was the first episcopal consecration in Malankara Church by

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<sup>8</sup> C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 276.

<sup>9</sup> *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 208-209; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 145; C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 37-38; Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 625-626.

<sup>10</sup> APF, SC, *Indie Orientali e Cina*, vol. 39, f. 14; English trans. *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 140.

an Antiochene prelate".<sup>11</sup> Hence it is evident that all the predecessors of Mar Thomas VI were pseudo-bishops and their episcopal acts were invalid. However, after the valid episcopal consecration of Mar Thomas VI in 1772 the Malankara Church not only obtained a kind of stability and autonomy, but also could maintain the apostolic succession, true priesthood and valid sacraments.

### 1.3. Origin of the Thozhiyoor Church

Though the two Antiochene bishops remained in Malankara even after the consecration of Mar Thomas VI,<sup>12</sup> they did not exercise any jurisdiction. Mar Thomas VI alone governed the Church as its only head and leader. It seems that due to disagreements with Mar Thomas VI, on 28 November 1772 Mar Gregorios consecrated also Ramban Kurian Abraham Kattumangattu as Bishop Abraham Mar Koorillos, but he could not exercise any power in the Church. After 21 years of ministry in Malankara, Mar Gregorios died in 1773. The third Antiochene Bishop Mar Ivanios supported Mar Thomas VI until his death in 1794.

Even after the consecration of Abraham Koorillos Kattumangattu, Mar Thomas VI alone was considered the official metropolitan and head of the Malankara Church, both by the faithful and the local governments. In fact, due to the prohibition of the kingdoms of Travancore and Cochin Abraham Mar Koorillos was forced to take refuge in "British Malabar", where he established *The Independent Syrian Church of Malabar* at Thozhiyoor (Anjoor) in the present district of Trichur. This Church, consisting even today of only a single diocese, follows the Antiochene Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite tradition.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 277.

<sup>12</sup> Although at the time of his consecration Mar Thomas VI assumed the name Mar Dionysius I we, like many other authors, shall continue to refer to him with his original name.

<sup>13</sup> At present the Thozhiyoor Church is centred in Kunnankulam and has about 10,000 members. For more about this Church, see E. Tisserant, *Eastern*

#### 1.4. Anglicanization of the Malankara Community (1816-1836)

After the death of Mar Thomas VI on 8 April 1808, he was succeeded by Mar Thomas VII (1808-1809), Mar Thomas VIII (1810-1815), Mar Thomas IX (1815), Mar Dionysius II (1816), Mar Dionysius III (1817-1825) and Mar Dionysius IV (1825-1846). At the dawn of the nineteenth century, British supremacy was established in the kingdoms of Kerala. In fact, as early as 1795 the English had confiscated Cochin from the Dutch and, since 1800, a British Resident had been stationed in the royal courts of Travancore and Cochin, who began to closely control the affairs of the said kingdoms. This in the course of time brought the Malankara Church in touch with the Church of England, subsequently engendering the Anglicanization of the former. Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), who had begun to work among the Christian faithful of the Malankara Church in 1816, tried to reform the Church in attune with their faith and doctrines.<sup>14</sup>

At the start of the governance of Mar Dionysius III (1817-1825) decisions were even officially taken to promote a close collaboration between the Church of England and the Malankara community. The Anglican missionaries were permitted to teach and preach in the churches and in the Malankara seminary, which was erected with their financial support at Kottayam in 1815. The missionaries, who regarded the Malankara community as a primitive Church corrupted by contact with Roman Catholic tenets, wished to remove all ritual and doctrine which could not be "brought to the test of the rule of Scripture".<sup>15</sup> Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Mother of God, prayers for the dead and the presence of images in some of the churches were

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*Christianity in India*, 144; X. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 160; E. R. Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, 53-54; C. V., Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 224-225.

<sup>14</sup> For details concerning the beginning and progress of Anglicanization, see C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 231-246.

<sup>15</sup> *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 214-215; cf. also L. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 125-126.

considered abominable errors by these missionaries. They endeavoured to expunge such "erroneous doctrines" from the liturgical, canonical and theological books and to impart Protestant formation to seminarians and priests.

### 1.5. Assembly of Mavelikara in 1836 and Consolidation of Relationship with the Patriarch of Antioch

Mar Dionysius III, who initially supported the work of the Protestant missionaries among the Malankara faithful, died in 1825 and was succeeded by Mar Dionysius IV (1825-1846). On 16 January 1836 he held an assembly or synod of the priests and lay leaders at Mavelikara, which decided to end the Anglicanization of the Church and declared that the Malankara Church was subjected to the supreme power of the patriarch of Antioch. The synod categorically stated:

We, the Jacobite Syrians being subject to the supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch, and observing, as we do, the liturgies and ordinances instituted by the prelates sent under his command, cannot deviate, from the liturgies and ordinances and maintain a discipline contrary to them.<sup>16</sup>

In this synod the Antiochene liturgy and canonical discipline were formerly and officially accepted by the Malankara Church.<sup>17</sup> The decision was also taken to strengthen ties with the Antiochene patriarch because this was considered the only way of preventing the English Protestants from modifying the faith and rite of the Malankara Church.

After the decision of the synod of Mavelikara in 1836, owing to the efforts of the missionaries over time several hundred members of the Malankara Church became Anglicans.<sup>18</sup> However,

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<sup>16</sup> *Fonti*, II-IX, 26; P. Cherian, *The Malabar Syrians and the Church Missionary Society*, Kottayam 1935, 390.

<sup>17</sup> C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 91; C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 330-332.

<sup>18</sup> These "Syrian Anglicans" really became members of the Church of England and did not form a distinct Church. At present they are members of the Church of South India (CSI). See P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, 227.



a minor section of the Malankara clergy and Christian faithful under the leadership of Fr Abraham Palakunnathu of Maramon favoured Anglicanization, but did not want to leave the Malankara Church and join the Anglican missionaries. Fr Abraham Palakunnathu started to correct the Antiochene liturgy, rewriting and reforming it along Protestant lines. In 1841 Abraham Palakunnathu sent one of his nephews, Deacon Mathew Palakunnathu, to the Syrian Orthodox Jacobite Patriarch, Ignatios Mar Elias II with the request to be consecrated bishop. They did not reveal to the patriarch their real intention of Protestant reformation, but pretended to safeguard the Orthodox faith. Without making any inquiry, the patriarch consecrated Mathew Palakunnathu metropolitan of Malankara under the name Mathew Mar Athanasius, who returned to Kerala in 1843.

Immediately after his arrival Mathew Mar Athanasius claimed the office of the Malankara metropolitan. The presence of two metropolitans in the Malankara community naturally engendered jurisdictional conflicts. Reports were sent to the patriarch accusing Mar Athanasius of communion with the Anglicans. In 1846 the patriarch sent his delegate Mar Koorillos or Cyril (1846-1866) to make an assessment of the situation and to take whatever action he deemed necessary. On reaching Malabar, Mar Koorillos declared himself metropolitan of the Malankara Church and Mar Dionysius IV abdicated in favour of Mar Koorillos with the intention of impeding Mar Athanasius from taking possession of his office as the head of the Malankara Church. Mar Koorillos completed the replacement of the Chaldean rite with the Antiochene rite and introduced West Syrian script among the Christian faithful of the Malankara Church.<sup>19</sup>

Since both Mar Koorillos and Mar Athanasius styled themselves heads of the Malankara Church, the intervention of the civil authority became necessary. In 1852 the Travancore Royal Court passed judgement and officially declared Mar Athanasius to be the metropolitan of the Malankara Church, in virtue of his

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<sup>19</sup> *Fonti*, II-VIII, 63; Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 150; C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 331.

credentials brought from Antioch. The Syrians of Malankara were ordered to accept him as metropolitan and to obey him according to the previous custom.<sup>20</sup> Since the Travancore government and the British officials supported Mar Athanasius, Mar Koorillos could not exercise any effective jurisdiction, although he remained in Malankara. Practically Mathew Mar Athanasius continued as the official head of the whole Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite community in Malabar. Although he had Protestant leanings, he did not attempt to carry out the reforms planned by his uncle Abraham Palakunnathu.

### **1.6. Synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876 and the Absolute Supremacy of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch**

In 1865 those who opposed Mar Athanasius sent Joseph Pulikkottil, a native priest of Malankara to the Orthodox Syrian patriarch of Antioch. The patriarch consecrated him bishop under the name Mar Dionysius V and appointed him as the Malankara metropolitan to succeed the Antiochene Bishop Mar Koorillos. He returned in 1866, but did not succeed in ousting Mar Athanasius. In this context in 1868 Mathew Mar Athanasius, the official metropolitan of the Malankara Church, recognized by the Royal Court, decided to nominate a successor in advance. With the help of the bishop of the Jacobite sect of Thozhiyoor, on 31 May 1868 he consecrated one of his cousins called Thomas and declared the new prelate his successor, under the name of Thomas Mar Athanasius.

Solicited by Mar Dionysius V, in 1874 Patriarch Ignatius Mar Peter III went to London, in order to voice his claims and to diminish the activities of Protestants in Malabar, and in 1875 he arrived in Malankara. After obtaining the support of the Travancore government and that of the British officials, from 27 to 30 June 1876 Patriarch Peter III convoked an assembly or synod of the parishes of the Malankara Church at Mulanthuruthy in which the supremacy and jurisdiction of the Antiochene patriarch were accepted and acknowledged. An association of the whole

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<sup>20</sup> The Travancore Royal Court Judgment, no. 173; in *Fonti*, II-IX, 27.

Malankara community was formed, of which the patron would be the patriarch of Antioch, while the ruling metropolitan was to be the president. Arrangements were made also for the collection of money (Ressisa) to be remitted to the patriarch.<sup>21</sup> Concerning the authority of the patriarch, in the final document issued by the assembly it was publically affirmed:

From ancient times the people of Malabar and their churches are under the spiritual supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch. In this no one else has power. Since our bishops and priests receive (holy) Orders from you, you have power to appoint and depose them. Your Holiness (Jacobite patriarch) has the spiritual care of the Syrian people and churches of Malabar and also the powers of nominating and deposing bishops.

We and our posterity will not, until death, deviate either to the right or to the left from the faith of the three Councils of our holy Church handed over or from the precepts of our religion of true faith and of Your Holiness who is the head. We, therefore, unanimously swear before God and Your Holiness touching the cross and the Bible that until the last breath there will not be any change for this.

Requesting Your Holiness to put into effect all canons and laws pertaining to religion, we pray to confirm the decisions as read now for the administration of our Church, to confirm on the commission of 24 members and the metropolitan elected to it as responsible without partiality in all things pertaining to religion and community, and to appoint a metropolitan from outside who shall watch that nothing may happen against faith or obedience.<sup>22</sup>

The synod acknowledged the authority of the patriarch to appoint and depose bishops, the Orthodox Jacobite "faith of the three councils" without any change, as well as "all canons and laws" of Antiochene tradition. With this synod the Malankara Church was definitively and completely brought under the absolute supremacy of the Antiochene patriarch. In practical terms, the Malankara Church was annexed to the Antiochene patriarchate and the

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<sup>21</sup> For details, see C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 58-63; C. V. Cherian, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 288-296.

<sup>22</sup> *Fonti*, II-IX, 29-30; C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 63.

patriarch became the true and supreme head of the Malankara Church.

### 1.7. Origin of Mar Thoma Syrian Church

Due to the intervention of the patriarch the government of Travancore withdrew its support of Mathew Mar Athanasius, the pro-Anglican bishop and until then the official metropolitan of the Malankara Church. He and his would-be successor Thomas Mar Athanasius did not take part in the synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876. Hence the patriarch excommunicated Mathew Mar Athanasius and the pro-Anglican group from the Malankara Jacobite Church. Despite the excommunication by the patriarch and the withdrawal of governmental support, Mathew Mar Athanasius refused to leave his office or to recognize Metropolitan Mar Dionysius V and surrender the temporalities of the Church to him. As already planned, in 1877 Thomas Mar Athanasius succeeded Mathew Mar Athanasius as the Malankara metropolitan and took possession of the properties belonging to the said office.

In the long litigation that followed between Mar Dionysius V (appointed by the patriarch) and the pro-Anglican Bishop Thomas Mar Athanasius over the seminary and other temporal properties of the Malankara Church, the Travancore Royal Court of Final Appeal pronounced its definitive judgement on 12 July 1889, which was in favour of Mar Dionysius V and thus the pro-Anglican party was finally defeated. In fact, the Court recognized Mar Dionysius V as the metropolitan of the Syrian Jacobite Church in Malankara and ordered Thomas Mar Athanasius to surrender the insignia and office of metropolitan of the Malankara Church and give up possession of all the properties and moneys belonging to the Church.<sup>23</sup>

The Royal Court judgement marked the final and definitive defeat of Thomas Mar Athanasius and the pro-Anglican group. In

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<sup>23</sup> See, *Fonti*, II-IX, 30-34; see also *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 218-219; A. P. Urumpackal, *The Juridical Status of the Catholicos of Malabar*, Rome 1977, 58-59; for details concerning the case and the final judgment, C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 297-302.

accordance with the judgement they had to give up all the churches and temporal properties. However, three parishes accepted the authority of Thomas Mar Athanasius. They decided to form an independent Church known as the "Reformed Party". Later they adopted the name "The Mar Thoma Syrian Church".<sup>24</sup> This Church follows the Syro-Antiochene liturgical tradition, partially Anglicanized in harmony with Protestant doctrines.

### 1.8. Progression as Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

As we have seen above, with the synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876 the Antiochene patriarch became the head of the Malankara Church with full patriarchal powers in both spiritual and temporal matters.<sup>25</sup> He divided the Malankara Church, which had remained one unit until then, into seven dioceses and consecrated six more bishops in order to govern them.<sup>26</sup> Even after this division of the Malankara Church and the appointment of new bishops, Mar Dionysius V (1866-1909), the then metropolitan, continued to be the local head of the whole Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, as *primus inter pares*.

The implantation of the Antiochene rite and the Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite faith in Malankara was a long and continuous process which began in 1665 with the arrival of the first Antiochene prelate Mar Gregorios and was almost completed during the period (1846-1866) of Mar Cyril or Koorillos. Cyril Malancharuvil rightly observes:

The introduction of the Antiochene rite into the Malankara Church was a gradual process. Examining this process closely we see that the Antiochene liturgy with its rituals was fully adopted, though gradually, and declared officially in 1836 to be the liturgy of the

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<sup>24</sup> Over the course of time the Mar Thoma Syrian Church has spread to different parts of India and even abroad. At present it has seven dioceses, one metropolitan, one suffragan metropolitan, five bishops and about 700,000 members. For more about this Church, see X. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 156-159.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Fonti*, II-IX, 29-30.

<sup>26</sup> *Fonti*, II-VIII, 64-65.

Malankara Church. Later the Antiochene prelate Mar Cyril completed the evolution, leaving no room for other liturgical elements to exist in it. As for the disciplinary system, very few innovations were made, though a few elements that were properly Antiochene and intimately connected with liturgy and rituals were introduced at various stages. However, the discipline of the Malankara Church was declared formally and “de jure” Antiochene and the transition was complete as it had adopted the “Nomo-Canon” of Bar Hebraeus as the code of law for it, although the church-government was left to be regulated, for the most part, by the traditions and customs of the Malankara Church, drawn from different sources and developed through various stages of its history.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly the imposition of the jurisdiction and supremacy of the Antiochene patriarch over the Malankara Church was also a gradual process. The Malankara metropolitans sought the help of the Antiochene patriarch and asked him for Antiochene bishops either to receive valid episcopal consecration or to protect themselves from the undue intervention of the English Protestant missionaries and civil authorities who wanted to anglicanize the Malankara Church, changing its faith and rite. But the Antiochene patriarch and bishops strove to bring the Malankara Church under their direct jurisdiction, the patriarch obtaining complete authority over this Church in the synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876. It is no wonder that the Syrian Orthodox patriarch and his bishops, taking advantage of the propitious occasion, tried to form an Orthodox Church of Antiochene tradition in India in an epoch in which the logic of the fierce competition of proselytism between Catholics and non-Catholics prevailed.

Paradoxically those St Thomas Christians who happened to break communion with the Catholic Church in order to safeguard the Chaldean rite, genuine ecclesial traditions and the autonomy of their Church, were subjected to such a thorough Antiochenization process that in the end, constrained by the vicissitudes of history, they completely relinquished “their own rite” and received the Antiochene rite and Syro-Orthodox or Jacobite faith, placing themselves under the absolute and full supremacy of the Jacobite

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<sup>27</sup> C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 95.

Syrian patriarch of Antioch, thus totally jeopardizing the autonomy and original identity of their Church. However, as we shall see below, such acts by the patriarch only provided fuel for another regrettable outburst and attempt to assert autonomy which was destined to perturb the Malankara Church for several decades, provoking even violent conflicts and public litigation.

### **1.9. Development of Two Contrasting Malankara Orthodox Syrian Churches**

Patriarch Peter III, who brought the Malankara Church under the complete supremacy of the Antiochene Orthodox patriarch in the synod of Mulanthuruthy, died in 1894. Afterwards Abdul Messiah II was installed as patriarch on 16 June 1895. But in 1905 the Turkish Sultan Habdul Hameed deposed Mar Abdul Messiah II, the canonical Syrian Orthodox patriarch of Antioch and subsequently Mar Ignatios Abdallah Saltuf was enthroned as Patriarch Mar Abdalla II on 28 August 1906. In Kerala Mar Dionysius V was succeeded by Mar Dionysius VI (1909-1934).

The new Antiochene Patriarch Abdallah II, who came to Malankara in 1909, claimed complete supremacy over the Malankara Church, both in spiritual and temporal matters. The Malankara Metropolitan Dionysius VI, however, argued that the patriarch had supremacy only over spiritual affairs and not over the temporalities of the Church. By spiritual supremacy he meant the consecration of bishops and holy Chrism, as well as general supervision over the Orthodox faith, but no intervention in the internal government of the Church nor over its temporalities.

The dispute over the authority of the patriarch reached its climax on 31 May 1911 when the patriarch excommunicated Mar Dionysius VI and his followers and enthroned Mar Koorillos (1911-1917) as the metropolitan of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church. As a consequence of such drastic intervention by the patriarch, two competing parties were formed in the Malankara Church, though in faith and worship they were Jacobites of the Antiochene tradition. The excommunicated group began to be called the bishop's party; those who accepted the claims of the

patriarch formed the patriarch's party.<sup>28</sup> The bishop's party denied the authority of the Antiochene patriarch over the temporal affairs of the Malankara Church and thereby implicitly questioned his authority also over spiritual affairs, while the patriarch's party acknowledged his authority over both the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Church.<sup>29</sup>

Mar Dionysius VI and his followers, in an assembly held at Kottayam on 7 September 1911 declared the nullity of the proceedings of the patriarch and decided to constitute an autonomous Church. They sought the help of the deposed Antiochene Patriarch Abdul Massiah II, who reached Kerala on 13 June 1912 and released Mar Dionysius VI from his excommunication. On 15 September 1912 Mar Abdul Massiah II instituted the Catholicate of the East and installed Murimattathil Paulos Mar Ivanios with the title of Moran Mar Paulos Baselios as the first catholicos of Syrian Orthodox Church in Malankara. Three bishops were also consecrated.<sup>30</sup>

In the bull issued immediately after the investiture ceremony on 15 September 1912, with regard to canonical competence of the catholicos the patriarch affirmed: "the authority to serve all the spiritual elements in public, which are necessary for protecting the tradition of the Holy Church has been given to him by the Holy Ghost as was given to the holy Apostles by Our Lord Jesus Messiah. Authority means the authority to ordain metropolitans, bishops and to consecrate holy Myron and to serve all the other spiritual items [...]".<sup>31</sup> With regard to the autonomous nature of the

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 153-154; N. J. Thomas, "The Eastern Orthodox Church in India", in H. C. Perumalil & E. R. Hambye (eds.), Alleppey 1972, 204; C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 64-67; for full details, C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 302-312.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. A. P. Urumpackal, *The Juridical Status of the Catholicos of Malabar*, 74.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Fonti*, II-VIII, 75-76; N. J. Thomas, "The Eastern Orthodox Church in India", 205-206; C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 68-70.

<sup>31</sup> The bull in C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, appendix 9, 460-462.



catholicate, in the bull issued on 19 February 1913 the patriarch decreed:

The Catholicos, aided by the metropolitans, shall ordain chief priests and consecrate Holy Myron in accordance with the canons of the Holy Fathers. In your metropolitans is vested the permission and authority to install a Catholicos, when a Catholicos dies. No one can resist you in the exercise of this right and, do all things properly and in conformity with precedents [...].<sup>32</sup>

From these two bulls issued by the patriarch it is evident that he granted this Orthodox faction the canonical status of an autocephalous Church with the power to elect bishops, metropolitans and the catholicos, without any dependence on the patriarch of Antioch.

In the course of time the patriarch's party took the name Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church and the catholicos' party assumed the title Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church (the patriarch's party) remained a part of the Antiochene patriarchal structure, the patriarch of Antioch thus having full supremacy and jurisdiction in spiritual and temporal affairs. The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (catholicos' party) really became an autocephalous Church, completely independent of the patriarch of Antioch.

The constitution of the catholicate, "which lays down the institutional structure of the Church for preserving its integrity and autocephaly and for administering its spiritual, ecclesiastical and temporal functions", was brought into force by the Malankara Association held on 26 December 1934.<sup>33</sup> The holy synod of the catholicate, composed of the catholicos and other bishops of the same Church, consecrates bishops and metropolitans and performs all patriarchal functions. The synod has legislative, administrative

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<sup>32</sup> The bull of the patriarch in C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, appendix 10, 462-465; also in A. P. Urumpackal, *The Juridical Status of the Catholicos of Malabar*, Appendix I, 137-140.

<sup>33</sup> A Latin version of the Constitution can be found in *Fonti*, II-IX, 26, Appendix, pp. 321-339. This Constitution, with the amendments of 1951 and 1997, still remains the essential law of the Catholicate.

and disciplinary powers in all matters spiritual and ecclesiastical.<sup>34</sup> As we shall see below, it is from the autocephalous Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church that a group came into full communion with the Catholic Church, thus giving rise to the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

From the moment of their division, the history of the two factions of the Malankara Orthodox Church was marked by a century-long period of litigation, scandalous public conflicts, reconciliation efforts, excommunications, several court cases, many verdicts of the High Court of Kerala upholding one or the other position and two important judgements of the Supreme Court of India on 12 September 1958 and 20 June 1995 respectively. According to the final verdict of the Supreme Court, there is only one Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in India, namely the autocephalous catholicate, which is governed according to the Constitution adopted by the Malankara Association in 1934 with the subsequent amendments.<sup>35</sup>

Even after the final verdict of the Supreme Court the patriarchal faction decided to continue as a separate Church with the name Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church, under the authority of the Orthodox Syrian patriarch of Antioch. Since 1975 the indigenous head of this Church has also had the title of catholicos, which was originally granted by the patriarch in contrast to the autocephalous Malankara Orthodox Church. Thus there are two Malankara Orthodox catholicates, one autocephalous and completely independent, the other under the authority of the Antiochene patriarch. Both of these Churches follow the same Orthodox faith, Antiochene liturgy and canonical discipline; they differ only with regard to the authority of the Antiochene patriarch.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. The Constitution, nos. 4, 7 and 8; C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 123.

<sup>35</sup> For details, see C. V. Cheriyan, *Orthodox Christianity in India*, 339-435; X. Koodapuzha, *Christianity in India*, 141-156.

## 2. The Efforts of the St Thomas Christians for One Church under One Head

After the division of the Malabar Church following the *Coonan Cross Oath* in 1653 and the definitive excommunication of Mar Thomas I in 1663, for more than a century both Catholics and non-Catholics cherished an inalienable craving for the reunion of all the St Thomas Christians under one head. Strenuous efforts for a rapprochement began from the very moment of schism itself. After the *Coonan Cross Oath* only a small group of St Thomas Christians remained in the archdiocese of Cranganore under the Padroado Archbishop Francis Garcia, while the majority were placed in the vicariate apostolic of Malabar under the jurisdiction of the Carmelite vicars apostolic of the Propaganda Fide. Hence practically all the reconciliation efforts took place mainly under the governance of Carmelite vicars apostolic and the Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide, although at times the Padroado authorities intervened in the affair.

### 2.1. The Failed Attempts of the First Five Pseudo-Bishops for a Reunion

Initially the leaders of the "revolution" had no intention of abandoning the Catholic faith, or the Chaldean rite. An examination of the history of the pseudo bishops (from Mar Thomas I to Mar Thomas VI) who governed the schismatic group from 1653 to 1808 demonstrates that only when their efforts to be united with the Catholic Church had failed, did they turn to the Antiochene patriarch as a last resort in order to obtain valid episcopal consecration for ensuring the spiritual good of their faithful.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 102-110; T. Pallipurathkunnel, *A Double Regime in the Malabar Church*, 157-163; F. Thonippara, *Saint Thomas Christians of India: A Period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, Bangalore 1999, 132-136; T. Kalayil (ed.), *Collected Works of Rev. Dr. Placid J. Podipara CMI*, vol. 1, Mannanam 2007, 222-225; J. C. Kollara, *Archbishop Joseph Cariattil. The Pioneer Ecumenist of the St Thomas Christians*, PIO, Rome 2010, 29-44.

The attempts at reunion during this period failed mainly because the heads of the Malankara community demanded that they be consecrated bishops and be received into the Catholic Church with jurisdiction over their faithful. But the Carmelite vicars apostolic of Malabar (later Verapoly), the Portuguese Padroado authorities and the Congregation of Propaganda Fide were not prepared to receive the separated group with their head as a bishop with jurisdiction, since it was detrimental to their authority over the St Thomas Christians.<sup>37</sup> The reception of the separated group with their leader as bishop of "their own rite and nation" might have signified the reunion of all the St Thomas Christians under one head, as had been the case before the sixteenth century, and the probable end of the authority of the Latin bishops over the St Thomas Christians. In fact, the policy of Propaganda Fide with regard to the St Thomas Christians was manifested in the very mandate given to the commissary apostolic Sebastiani which required him to divert the St Thomas Christians from the Chaldean rite and convert them gradually to the Latin rite, and clearly this would have been impossible if a native bishop was admitted into the Catholic Church with episcopal jurisdiction.<sup>38</sup>

One must also note that, even though the first five heads of the separated community were not consecrated bishops, they exercised all the episcopal functions, including the ordination of priests. Consequently there was the doubt that at least some successors of Mar Thomas I, selected from among the "priests" not validly ordained, were simple laymen. Having overcome the initial worries, Propaganda Fide studied with benevolence and interest the case of Mar Thomas V (1728-1764), who was for the dicastery only an "intruder" or "laicus mitratus", who exercised all the episcopal functions without any sign of repentance. Although the praxis of the Holy See at that epoch was to receive into the Catholic Church with episcopal dignity only validly consecrated "schismatic bishops", Propaganda was ready to confer the sacred

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<sup>37</sup> See *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 59, 61-62, 108, 133, 138, 143, 149-150 & 164; cf. also C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 102-110; Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 612-628.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Chapter III, no. 10.2.

Orders on Thomas V, on condition that he had shown true conversion. In the letter of 5 September 1750 addressed to the vicar apostolic of Malabar Propaganda pointed out:

His Holiness in his usual apostolic clemency and fatherly benignity does not refuse to grant at a more opportune time the mentioned Archdeacon the graces that he asks both for his own person and for his so-called priests, but he wants first to verify their sincere reformation and to have suitable and clear proofs for the same.<sup>39</sup>

The Congregation, therefore, expressed its positive opinion on the possibility of conferring the episcopal character on the head of the Malankara community and the sacred Orders on his priests under rigorous conditions, but was contrary to granting ordinary jurisdiction since this would be harmful to the authority of the vicar apostolic.<sup>40</sup>

It seems that subsequently the attitude of Propaganda Fide changed in a negative sense, since Mar Thomas V did not manifest any sign of repentance. On 3 September 1757, in its "Instructions for Msgr Vicar Apostolic of the Serra of Malabar with regard to the Chaldean Archdeacon, named Thomas, who pretending to be a bishop since some times not only celebrates the Mass, but still exercises the Pontifical, and confers, although invalidly, the sacred Orders", the Congregation specified:

But since the aforesaid Archdeacon is persisting, as you have notified, in using the episcopal insignias, and in unduly usurping the power that he does not enjoy, it is the mind of the said Sacred Congregation that you continue to exercise all the obligations of Christian charity in his regard, as becomes your pastoral character, procuring as far as is possible his effective and sincere conversion. In doing this, however, you should be very careful not to give them any hope whatever of being ever raised to the ecclesiastical dignities, and of being rehabilitated by this Holy See all those

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<sup>39</sup> APF, *Lettere* (1750), f. 158v-159.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. APF, *Lettere* (1750), f. 159.

persons, whom he promoted to the sacred Orders, without having any legitimate authority to do so.<sup>41</sup>

In any case, the attempts at reconciliation with Rome failed and, therefore, as already indicated, Mar Thomas V turned to the Syro-Orthodox patriarch of Antioch in the hope of obtaining episcopal consecration.

## 2.2. The Initial Attempts of Mar Thomas VI

The efforts at reunion made by Mar Thomas VI, the sixth head of the Malankara community, deserve our special attention. He was born in 1728 into the Catholic family Parampil at Kuravilangad and was given the name Joseph. His uncle Mar Thomas V induced him to become a priest in the non-Catholic community. On 29 June 1761 Mar Thomas V raised to "episcopal dignity" Fr Joseph Parampil who succeeded him in 1765 with the title Mar Thomas VI. From that same year on, Mar Thomas VI began his attempts for a reconciliation with Bishop Florence of Jesus OCD (1750-1773), the vicar apostolic of Malabar, but based on the suggestions of missionaries, Propaganda Fide was ready to grant only a brief conferring the dignity of Protonotary Apostolic to the "mitred layman" if he desired to become an ecclesiastic or the dignity of Knighthood (Speron d'Oro), if he preferred to remain in the lay state.<sup>42</sup> The intention of the Congregation was to convert the "mitred layman" by offering him some honorific titles and to reunite his people to the vicariate apostolic of Malabar.

But such proposals became irrelevant since even before they were made known to Mar Thomas VI, he was consecrated bishop by the Antiochene Bishop Gregorios in the first week of January 1772 under the name Mar Dionysius I. After his valid episcopal consecration Mar Thomas VI continued his attempts at reconciliation through the Propaganda vicar apostolic of Malabar, Florence of Jesus (1750-1773), the Padroado archbishop of Cranganore, Salvador dos Reis SJ (1756-1777) and through the

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<sup>41</sup> APF, *Lettere*, vol. 190, f. 213r; Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia Carmelitana*, 251.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. APF, *Lettere*, vol. 218, ff. 381-382.

visitor apostolic Fr Lawrence Justiniani (1773-1788).<sup>43</sup> Regarding his attempts through the vicar apostolic of Malabar and the archbishop of Cranganore, in his petition addressed to Pope Pius VI, Mar Thomas VI stated:

Several times I earnestly requested and prayed with sighs through the presbyters of the orthodox faith (Catholics), Msgr Salvador dos Reis, the metropolitan of Cranganore and Florence of Jesus, the Bishop of Aeropolis and the vicar apostolic of Malabar and Cochin, to aggregate me with all my people to the unity of the body of the Catholic Church by giving absolution from the excommunication that has fallen on us since the time of our forefathers, and if they were unable to do this, to send my petition to the Apostolic See of Rome. But they refused and kept away.<sup>44</sup>

In the meantime the vicar apostolic of Malabar Bishop Florence of Jesus died and Bishop Francis Sales OCD (1775-1779) succeeded him. Based on the reports and suggestions of Francis Sales who had submitted a report in Rome before his elevation to the dignity of the vicar apostolic, on 22 July 1774 the Congregation of Propaganda Fide confirmed its decision to grant the dignity of Protonotary Apostolic or an annual subsidy of 100 or less Roman Scudi to Mar Thomas VI for his surrender to the Holy See.<sup>45</sup> On 6 August 1774 the Congregation also gave the following instruction to the new vicar apostolic Bishop Francis Sales concerning the reunion of Mar Thomas VI, who was then a validly consecrated bishop with jurisdiction over his people:

Regarding the conversion of the mitred layman Mar Thomas, and of the schismatic bishop who intruded himself into that mission, the vicar apostolic with his zeal and prudence should employ all those means, which he believes opportune and practical. And as regards the first individual (Mar Thomas), whose conversion would be more

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<sup>43</sup> For details, J. Kollaparambil, "Mar Dionysius the Great of Malabar: for the One True Fold", *OCP* 30 (1964) 153-155; J. C. Kollara, *Archbishop Joseph Cariattil*, 46-54.

<sup>44</sup> APF, SC, *India Orientale e Cina*, vol. 39, f. 14; English trans. *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 140; see also *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 2, 209.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. APF, *SOCG* 839, f. 222; J. Kollaparambil, "Mar Dionysius the Great of Malabar", 155.

important, besides the primary and most appropriate means of exhortation and persuasion, you can make use of some offer in disposing him more readily to acknowledge the truth, for example, you may permit him to exercise some supervision over his subjects in the administration of temporal goods, but never in anything of spiritual matters. In order to assist him in his indigence, it will not be far from the mind of the Sacred Congregation to grant him an annual allowance of 100 scudi or less according to the decision of the vicar apostolic, who should be very careful not to encourage talk about the nation's desire to have its own bishop or head of its rite because if this were conceded to the people, there would be evident danger of the same nation separating itself abruptly, or at least gradually, from its dependence on the vicar apostolic which is considered necessary to maintain such a large and excellent flock in the faith and in union with the Catholic Church.<sup>46</sup>

Since a general impression had been created in Rome and elsewhere that the St Thomas Christians were heretics and schismatics, brought back to the Catholic faith and communion of the Roman Pontiff by the Western missionaries in the Synod of Diamper in 1599, the Congregation feared that the presence of a native bishop with jurisdiction would be detrimental to the faith and communion of the St Thomas Christians. Hence, the idea of receiving Mar Thomas VI with jurisdiction over his community was unacceptable to the Holy See.

The exceptional and heroic attempts of Thomas VI for a rapprochement continued through the new vicar apostolic Bishop Francis Sales who, however, was not favourable to the idea either. His attempts at reunion must be viewed within the historical context of the division of the St Thomas Christians between the archdiocese of Cranganore, governed by Jesuit bishops of Portuguese Padroado, and the vicariate apostolic of Malabar, administered by the Carmelite vicars apostolic of Propaganda Fide, who were in constant conflict for supremacy over the St Thomas Christians but astonishingly concordant in avoiding the presence of any native Catholic bishop with jurisdiction since this was seen as a threat to their authority by both of them. The problem of

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<sup>46</sup> APF, SOCG 839, f. 222; Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia Carmelitana*, 277.



retaining episcopal jurisdiction remained the only obstacle for the reunion of Mar Thomas VI and his community with the mother Church.

### 2.3. The Delegation to Rome under the Leadership of Joseph Cariattil

Due to the constant requests of Mar Thomas VI, Bishop Francis Sales sent to him, with ample instructions, Fr Joseph Cariattil,<sup>47</sup> the first St Thomas Christian to have a doctorate in philosophy and sacred theology from the Propaganda Fide College and a professor at the Alangad seminary in the vicariate apostolic of Malabar. After a meeting with Mar Thomas VI, and being convinced of the sincerity of his conversion, Cariattil encouraged and emboldened him promising to do all he could to effect the reunion, even if he had to “go to Rome once again for you, sacrificing my life to God”.<sup>48</sup> Then Cariattil approached Bishop Francis Sales, who stated: “if Mar Thomas wanted to join the Pazhayath (old, the Catholic party) he would not allow him to exercise jurisdiction in Malabar, but he would try to procure for him some dignity other than that of a bishop, or, if Mar Thomas wanted to retain his dignity as a bishop, he would try to send him to Europe”.<sup>49</sup>

Having considered the grave problems that perturbed the Malabar Church during the governance of Bishop Francis Sales, with two decrees dated 25 February 1777 Propaganda Fide deposed him from the office of the vicar apostolic and appointed

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<sup>47</sup> Joseph Cariattil was born on 5 May 1742 at Alangad in the vicariate apostolic of Malabar under the jurisdiction of Propaganda. After his preliminary formation at the Alangad seminary under the Carmelite missionaries, from 1755 to 1766 he studied philosophy and theology at the Propaganda College in Rome. He was ordained priest on 25 March 1766 at St John Lateran cathedral in Rome. After his return to Malabar on 10 November 1767 he was appointed professor of Syriac at the aforementioned Alangad seminary in January 1768. For details concerning the early life and activities of Cariattil, J. C. Kollara, *Archbishop Joseph Cariattil*, 57-84.

<sup>48</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 60 & 62.

<sup>49</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 60.

Bishop Charles of St Conrad, vicar apostolic of Great Mogul (Bombay) as the administrator of Malabar as well. After the death of Archbishop Salvador dos Reis on 7 April 1777, the archdiocese of Cranganore also remained vacant and a Goan priest Pedro Figueiredo was appointed administrator by the archbishop of Goa.<sup>50</sup> Thus both sees of the St Thomas Christians, the vicariate apostolic of Malabar and the archdiocese of Cranganore were practically vacant at that time.

Since all attempts at reunion through the Padroado and Propaganda authorities in Malabar failed, in April 1778 the general church assembly of 72 parishes of the Catholic St Thomas Christians of both jurisdictions decided to send a delegation under the leadership of Fr Joseph Cariattil, accompanied by Fr Thomas Paremakkal, to Portugal and Rome to procure whatever benefits possible for the Malabar Church and especially to treat directly the reunion of Mar Thomas VI with the superior authorities, setting aside the mediation of the missionaries in Kerala.<sup>51</sup> Cariattil belonged to the Propaganda vicariate apostolic of Malabar, while Thomas Paremakkal was a leading priest of the Padroado archdiocese of Cranganore.

Both the Propaganda and Padroado missionaries in India tried their best to impede the delegation's mission. Among other things the Carmelite missionaries gave the Congregation of Propaganda Fide to understand that the purpose of the journey of the two priests was to free the Malabar Church from the governance of the missionaries sent by the same Congregation.<sup>52</sup> The delegation reached Lisbon on 18 July 1779 and submitted a petition to Francesca Maria, the reigning Queen of Portugal in August 1779.

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Ambrosius a S. Theresia, *Hierarchia Carmelitana*, 267-271; D. Ferrolì, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. 2, 91-92; F. Thonippara, *Saint Thomas Christians of India: A Period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, 82-84 & 101.

<sup>51</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 65 & 77.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. C. Payngot, "Mar Joseph Cariattil Archbishop of Cranganore", in C. Payngot (ed.), *Homage to Mar Cariattil, Pioneer Malabar Ecumenist*, Rome 1987, 33-34; cf. also, F. Thonippara, *Saint Thomas Christians of India: A Period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, 71-72 & 109-110.

The petition contained six points, among which the request for a “learned and God-fearing Portuguese” as archbishop of the vacant see of Cranganore and all possible help for the reunion of Mar Thomas VI with his community of eighty thousand people.<sup>53</sup>

On 6 November 1779 Cariattil and Paremmakkal embarked for Rome, reaching there on 3 January 1780. As a result of the false reports of the Carmelite missionaries and because the two messengers of Christian unity first went to Lisbon and submitted a petition to the Queen, they received only rebukes and threats from the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Giuseppe Maria Castelli and from its Secretary Stefano Borgia, who accused the delegation of trying to do away with the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide in Malabar through the Portuguese royal authority.<sup>54</sup> Charles Payngott, former archivist of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and a scholar of the Syro-Malabar Church, highlights the reason for such a negative attitude on the part of Propaganda Fide:

During their stay in Rome Cariattil and his companion had several meetings with Castelli and Borgia. Both these men, however, showed Pharaonic obstinacy in their unfriendly attitude towards the Malabarians. This hostility sprung from the fear that admitting Mar Thomas into Catholic Communion would bring an end to the apostolic vicariate of Malabar and in that way the Propaganda Fide might lose a part of its ecclesiastical empire. For this reason Castelli was trying to subdue the deputation by threats and insults.<sup>55</sup>

Propaganda Fide was not ready to give credit to the envoys of the Malabar people, who had come to Rome without any authorization or recommendation from their local ecclesiastical authorities. Hence, on 11 March 1780 Cardinal Castelli wrote to the vicar apostolic of Great Mogul and at that time administrator apostolic of Malabar, Bishop Charles of St Conrad, asking him to inquire into the matter sincerely and to obtain exact and correct

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<sup>53</sup> For the petition and its explanation, see *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 106-108; cf. also J. C. Kollara, *Archbishop Joseph Cariattil*, 107-112.

<sup>54</sup> See *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 131-138; cf. E. R. Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, 31; J. C. Kollara, *Archbishop Joseph Cariattil*, 115-118.

<sup>55</sup> C. Payngot, “Mar Joseph Cariattil Archbishop of Cranganore”, 34-35.

information for the Congregation with regard to Mar Thomas VI and his followers.<sup>56</sup>

Cardinal Castelli, the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, died on 9 April 1780 and was succeeded by Cardinal Leonardo Antonelli. The new Prefect was not so unfriendly to the Malabar priests as his predecessor. In spite of innumerable hurdles and difficulties, the delegation succeeded in meeting Pope Pius VI (1775-1799) and submitted to him the profession of faith and petition of Mar Thomas VI, the letter of the Malabar general church assembly and two other petitions prepared by the delegation concerning the reunion and the needs of the St Thomas Christians.<sup>57</sup> In the meantime, Portugal also recommended the petition of Mar Thomas VI and desired that the Padroado archbishop of Goa be commissioned to receive him into the Catholic Church.<sup>58</sup> Cariattil and Paremmakkal could not achieve much in Rome and, without obtaining a definite or precise answer concerning the affairs, they left for Lisbon on 20 June 1780.

Evidently the documents submitted to the Pope were handed over to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide for evaluation and action. The Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Antonelli found the profession of faith of Mar Thomas VI incomplete; his episcopal character and the sincerity of his conversion also appeared doubtful to him. In spite of this, respecting also the desire of Portugal, on 28 September 1780 Cardinal Antonelli, the Prefect of Propaganda Fide granted Emmanuel of St Catherine OCD, the Padroado bishop of Cochin and administrator of Goa (at that time the bishop of Goa was in Europe) special faculties to ascertain, personally or through a delegate, the truthfulness of the affirmations made in the petitions, the validity of the episcopal consecration of Mar Thomas

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<sup>56</sup> APF, *Lettere*, vol. 236, ff. 189v-191; J. Kollaparambil, "Mar Dionysius the Great of Malabar", 162.

<sup>57</sup> For details, see *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 139-153; J. Kollaparambil, "Mar Dionysius the Great of Malabar", 160-161; F. Thonippara, *Saint Thomas Christians of India: A Period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, 141-145; J. C. Kollara, *Archbishop Joseph Cariattil*, 133-142.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 154.

VI, the sincerity of his conversion and then to receive him into the Catholic Church after his profession of faith according to the prescribed formula, but under some rigorous conditions and prohibiting him from all functions of episcopal order and jurisdiction for the time being.<sup>59</sup>

#### 2.4. Cariattil, Archbishop of Cranganore

After returning to Lisbon in October 1780, Cariattil and Paremakkal continued their mission and endeavoured to obtain whatever was possible from the Portuguese government for the common good of the Malabar Church. Surprisingly on 16 July 1782 the Portuguese Queen Maria Francesca nominated Joseph Cariattil archbishop of the vacant Padroado archdiocese of Cranganore and Pope Pius VI confirmed the nomination on 16 December 1782 in accordance with the provisions of *ius patronatus* of the Portuguese Crown.<sup>60</sup> The nomination of Cariattil as archbishop of Cranganore appears to be a strategic action motivated by the desire on the part of the Portuguese to get rid of the Propaganda missionaries in Kerala, although the delegation never fostered such intentions.<sup>61</sup> When the mission of the delegation in Rome failed, Padroado affirmed its superiority in Malabar by nominating Cariattil as archbishop.

On 17 February 1783 Mar Cariattil was consecrated bishop in the church of St. Benedict in Lisbon and on 17 March of the same year he received the sacred pallium. The enemies of the new

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<sup>59</sup> See APF, *Lettere*, vol. 236, ff. 729-740; for details, J. Kollaparambil, "Mar Dionysius the Great of Malabar", 162-164; cf. also *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 162-170; E. R. Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, 55; F. Thonippara, *Saint Thomas Christians of India: A Period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, 146-148.

<sup>60</sup> See chapter III, no. 13.1.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. E. R. Hambye, "Mar Joseph Cariattil between Propaganda and Padroado", in C. Payngot (ed.), *Homage to Mar Cariattil, Pioneer Malabar Ecumenist*, Rome 1987, 54; B. Vadakkekara, "Cariattil-Paremakkal Representation to Rome and Lisbon towards Restoring Ecclesial Unity among India's St Thomas Christians (1778-1786)", in C. Payngot (ed.), *Homage to Mar Cariattil, Pioneer Malabar Ecumenist*, Rome 1987, 20.

archbishop were numerous, strong and ever active. The return journey of Cariattil and Paremmakkal was delayed for about two years because the impression was created in Portugal that the appointment of Cariattil as the archbishop of Cranganore would be detrimental not only to the Propaganda missionaries but even to the Portuguese. Regarding this delay Paremmakkal stated:

It is publicly known to all that all the Portuguese, especially Martin de Mel, the minister for India, venomously hate these (Propaganda) missionaries who try to uproot their power in India. Again, it was precisely to uproot the (Propaganda) missionaries from Malabar that our archbishop was consecrated. But after this, the minister mentioned above and many among the important persons in Lisbon understood that by this one act that they had undertaken to uproot the (Propaganda) missionaries from Malabar, all the Europeans would be uprooted from there. They were led to this conclusion by the words of many Europeans in Lisbon who ruled over India, and by the letters written against us with one mind by the missionaries from India and by the other Portuguese Padres. So, the minister mentioned above and many of the important persons in Lisbon repented of what they had done. But they also realized that it would be a disgrace and dishonour for them if they detained the archbishop in Lisbon without sending him to Malabar. They, therefore, by general consent, decided that he was to be sent to Malabar by all means.<sup>62</sup>

As Paremmakkal indicated, it was only after the consecration of Cariattil that the Portuguese authorities understood the mistake they had committed by such action and the danger of having a native bishop in Malabar, namely the possible unification of all the St Thomas Christians under an indigenous head. Based on the ominous reports of the missionaries, the Propaganda Fide was not very enthusiastic either about the return of Cariattil. However, the Portuguese authorities decided to send him back to India since it was judged inopportune to keep him in Portugal for a long time, considering also the antagonism of the St Thomas Christians against the missionaries in Malabar, who were also held responsible for the delay of bishop's return home.

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<sup>62</sup> *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 281; see also pages 237-238.

## 2.5. Authorization for Reunion, Partial Fulfilment of the Mission

As we have already seen, on 28 September 1780 Emmanuel of St Catherine, bishop of Cochin and administrator of Goa, was authorized to ascertain the truth of the petitions and to receive Mar Thomas VI into the Catholic Church, but he did nothing because of various circumstances. As he did not obtain the royal permission to leave Goa for Malabar, after the elapse of a year, he commissioned Fr José da Soledade OCD, the new ecclesiastical governor of Cochin (later its bishop) to deal with the matter. The latter prepared a long report, evaluating all the relevant facts and on 16 January 1782 sent it to Bishop Emmanuel, who was commissioned to receive Mar Thomas VI into the Catholic Church. Since he felt that he did not have all the faculties to act according to the recommendations of Soledade, he forwarded the report to the Propaganda Fide on 15 February 1783 with his own comments and observations, which were not very favourable to Mar Thomas VI.<sup>63</sup> On 18 July 1783 Emmanuel was appointed the archbishop of Goa and Soledade became the bishop of Cochin.

After receiving the aforementioned report, considering the new ecclesiastical situation engendered by the promotion of Emmanuel to the metropolitan see of Goa, the appointment of Fr Soledade as the bishop of Cochin and especially the elevation of Cariattil to the dignity of the archbishop of Cranganore, Propaganda Fide made a thorough study of the whole matter. The general congregation of 17 May 1784, after mature consideration of the problems, did not make a definitive decision but resolved to commit the matter to Mar Cariattil. In fact, the decision was taken to request the Holy Father to grant Mar Cariattil the same faculties which had been granted four years earlier to Bishop Emmanuel for handling the case of Mar Thomas.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The original report written in Portuguese in APF, *SOCG* 867, ff. 133r-143v; Italian translation in APF, *SOCG* 867, 154r-161r; the forwarding letter of archbishop Emmanuel in APF, *SOCG* 867, f. 153.

<sup>64</sup> APF, *SOCG* 867, f. 125v.

On the basis of the inconclusive reports from India, the cardinals decided to write to Mar Cariattil, asking him to conduct a fresh enquiry on Mar Thomas VI, especially with regard to the genuineness of his conversion, true faith, episcopal consecration, conduct and lifestyle, and to refer back to the Congregation with all frankness and sincerity.<sup>65</sup> The cardinals judged that, after fulfilling the said obligation, Cariattil could receive Mar Thomas into the Catholic Church, but the granting of episcopal jurisdiction was reserved to the Holy Father.<sup>66</sup>

With the letter of 10 July 1784 the Congregation of Propaganda Fide communicated to Mar Cariattil the said decision, empowering him to receive Mar Thomas into the Catholic Church after verifying the validity of his priesthood and after obtaining a new complete profession of faith according to the formula of Pope Urban VIII.<sup>67</sup> With regard to this specific point the Congregation stated:

If Your Lordship verifies that his conversion is true and sincere, You can, by virtue of the extensive faculties His Holiness accords to you to this effect, admit him to the Catholic Communion after having absolved him of the irregularity and rehabilitate him in the priestly ministry. You should, however, prohibit him absolutely to perform any episcopal function whatsoever, until the Holy See would, by a formal sentence, declare his consecration true and valid.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> APF, *SOCG* 867, ff. 125-126; for details concerning the reports from India and the reasons behind the decision of Propaganda one may see the *Ponenze* of Cardinal Ghilini, APF, *SOCG* 867, ff. 105r-126r; J. C. Kollara, *Archbishop Joseph Cariattil*, 285-302.

<sup>66</sup> "Quo peracto, vigore facultatem a SS.mo D. N. benignitur concessarum, dictum Mar Thoma, previa absoluteione a censuris, ad Catholicam Communionem admittat quatenus vero sit sacerdos, ab irregularitate absolvat, et ad sacerdotalia obeunda munera reabilitet; functiones tamen omnes episcopales omnimodo ipsi prohibeat usqueque de vera validaque illius consecratione ex judicio Ssmi D. N. non consisterit". APFF, *SOCG* 867, 126r.

<sup>67</sup> APF, *Lettere* 244, ff. 570r-573v.

<sup>68</sup> APF, *Lettere* 244, f. 572r-v.



By granting the faculty to the Padroado Archbishop Cariattil, Propaganda in a way confirmed its authority in Malabar. Padroado reacted immediately, requesting that the archbishop of Goa also should be delegated to receive Mar Thomas VI into the Catholic Church.<sup>69</sup> The request was rejected by Propaganda, but as a compromise the archbishop of Goa was permitted to send a representative to be present at the reception of Mar Thomas VI into the Catholic Communion.<sup>70</sup>

It is generally believed that Cariattil was granted all the faculties to receive Mar Thomas into the Catholic Church. In actual fact, Cariattil was empowered to receive him into the Catholic Church only as a simple priest. Carittail was explicitly asked to prohibit him from performing any episcopal functions whatsoever until the Holy See had declared his consecration true and valid by a formal sentence. However, with this provision of the Holy See, about five years of intense travail of the two Indian heralds of ecumenism in Rome and Lisbon turned out to be at least a partial success, thus unleashing a ray of hope for the re-composition of the unity of all the St Thomas Christians. Anyhow the question of the reunion of Mar Thomas VI officially came under the authority of Mar Cariattil, who was sure to achieve this goal, even though he had to work with the archbishop of Goa, within the bounds imposed by Propaganda Fide.

## 2.6. The Unexpected Death of Cariattil and the Last Blow to Reunion

After further delay in Lisbon, on 20 April 1785 the two pioneers of ecumenism took passage on a Portuguese ship and on 23 April they started their return voyage. After a long stay at Bahia in Brazil, after sailing round the island of Sri Lanka the ship reached the Malabar Coast in the beginning of April 1786, but Archbishop Cariattil and Paremakkal had to proceed to Goa,

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<sup>69</sup> APF, SC, *Indie Orientali e Cina*, vol. 37, ff. 698r-690r.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *The Varthamanappusthakam*, 279; F. Thonippara, *Saint Thomas Christians of India: A Period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, 165-166; J. C. Kollara, *Archbishop Joseph Cariattil*, 170-171.

where they arrived on 1 May 1786 and stayed for more than four months. Unfortunately, on 9 September 1786 Mar Cariattil died in Goa, causing an irremediable and perpetual loss to the Church of St Thomas Christians. He passed away in the archbishop's house and was buried on 11 September 1786 in the cathedral church. The real cause of his death still remains an inscrutable mystery.<sup>71</sup> If Mar Cariattil had reached Kerala, Mar Thomas VI and the Malankara community would have been received into the mother Church before officially accepting the Orthodox doctrines and the Antiochene rite and thus St Thomas Christians would have remained one and undivided, without any of the numerous divisions found among them today. Instead, the premature death of Mar Cariattil extinguished the last flames of hope that the old wounds would eventually heal.

After the death of Mar Cariattil, also in order to calm the people the archbishop of Goa, Emmanuel of St Catherine appointed Thomas Paremmakkal as the administrator of the archdiocese of Cranganore (1787-1799), but he could not do anything substantial for the reunion of Mar Thomas VI because of the opposition of the missionaries in Malabar and because he had no faculties to bring the matter to a happy conclusion. From 1780 on, that is from the time that faculties were granted to Bishop Emmanuel, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide maintained a rather positive approach to the reception of Mar Thomas VI into the Catholic Communion, in spite of ambiguous reports and numerous negative letters, as well as the doubts and grumbings of the ecclesiastical authorities and missionaries in Malabar against the reunion.

After the death of Mar Cariattil, Mar Thomas VI sincerely continued his efforts until 1799, but did not achieve final success

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<sup>71</sup> For more information and various interpretations concerning the death of Mar Cariattil, see C. Payngot, "Mar Joseph Cariattil Archbishop of Cranganore", 42-45; F. Thonippara, *Saint Thomas Christians of India: A Period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, 211-217; J. C. Kollara, *Archbishop Joseph Cariattil, 187-223*; cf. also Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 668; E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 96; P. J. Podipara, *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church*, 150.

due to the indifference of the Padroado and Propaganda authorities in Malabar, and especially due to the opposition and objections of the Carmelite vicar apostolic and his missionaries who were largely responsible for the ultimate failure of the ecumenical endeavours of Mar Thomas VI.<sup>72</sup> He died on 13 May 1808 without realizing his dream of re-establishing the unity and communion of all the St Thomas Christians within the bosom of the Catholic Church.

### 3. The Ecumenical Efforts of the Twentieth Century and the Origin of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

After the death of Mar Thomas VI in 1808, we find only one serious attempt at reunion during the governance of Mar Dionysius V (1876-1909), who also insisted on the retention of the hierarchy and the rite.<sup>73</sup> From among the Catholic St Thomas Christians, Fr Emmanuel Nidiry emerged as the protagonist of the ecumenical movement. In collaboration with Mar Dionysius, Nidiry developed the project of the Syrian National Union Association to foster unity and communion between the Catholics and the native Jacobites, and to promote common affairs such as education and social development. The project was aborted because, at that time, such collaboration between Catholics and non-Catholics was unacceptable to both the local and the Roman ecclesiastical authorities. In spite of this, Mar Dionysius and Nidiry continued their ecumenical efforts, but did not achieve their goal for various ecclesiastical and socio-political reasons.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> For the reunion efforts of Mar Thomas VI after the death of Cariattil and the causes of their failure, see J. Kollaparambil, "Mar Dionysius the Great of Malabar", 173-190; E. R. Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, 56-60; Bernard Thoma, *Mar Thoma Kristianikal*, 690-694; T. Kalayil (ed.), *Collected Works of Rev. Dr. Placid J. Podipara CMI*, vol. 1, 226-227; J. C. Kollara, *Archbishop Joseph Cariattil*, 226-236.

<sup>73</sup> C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 119-121.

<sup>74</sup> For details, see C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India*, 260-274 & 286-287; G. Kanjirakkatt, *Emmanuel Nidiry*, 119-167; cf. also J. Kallarangatt, "Nidhirickal Manikathanar (1842-1904) the Mahatma of the Syrian Christian

As we have seen above, following the schism the Malankara Church became the victim of Anglicanization, Antiochenization and several divisions. In the end the Malankara Church became part of the Antiochene patriarchal structure and the patriarch emerged as the supreme head of the Church, without leaving any room for reunion attempts in Kerala. But the division of the Malankara Church and the independence of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church from the patriarch together with the establishment of an autonomous catholicate in 1912 placed this Church in a position to determine its own destiny and hence, once again the quest for entering into full communion with the Catholic Church came to the fore.

Paulose Mar Baselios, the first catholicos of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church died on 2 May 1913. Due to various adverse circumstances the second Catholicos Baselios Geevarghese I was installed by the synod only on 30 April 1925. On the following day, 1 May, Fr P. T. Geevarghese was ordained bishop of Bethany under the name Geevarghese Mar Ivanios. He would become the protagonist of the ecumenical efforts of the twentieth century.

### **3.1. Preliminary Communications between Mar Ivanios and Rome**

All attempts for a reconciliation with the Orthodox patriarch of Antioch and for the reunification of the two factions of the Malankara Orthodox Church failed. Afterwards, under the influence of the Syrian Catholic patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Ephrem II Rahmani, the bishops of the autonomous catholicate began to consider the possibility of an eventual communion with the Catholic Church. The synod of bishops held at Parumala in Tiruvalla on 1 November 1926, presided over by the Catholicos Mar Baselios, authorized Geevarghese Mar Ivanios, the

metropolitan of Bethany to enter into negotiations with the authorities of the Roman Church with a view to full communion.<sup>75</sup>

In accordance with the decision of the synod, on 1 November 1926 Mar Ivanios sent an unofficial memorandum to the Holy See, in which he prospected the entry of the Malankara Church into the Catholic Communion, preserving its autonomy and ritual identity. After explaining briefly the origin and juridical status of the catholicate, Mar Ivanios stated:

It is the Bishops of the Catholicate that seek re-union with the Holy See. The Holy Synod of the Catholicate consecrates Bishops and Metropolitans and perform all the patriarchal functions and exercises patriarchal powers within the archdiocese of the Catholicate. The Holy Synod claims to itself legislative, administrative and disciplinary powers in all matters spiritual and ecclesiastical within the archdiocese. The Holy Synod of the Catholicate prays that they be admitted into the unity of the Catholic Church, themselves,

1. preserving the ancient rites and rituals,
2. retaining for the Holy Synod and for the individual bishops their jurisdiction over all the Jacobite Syrians that come into reunion,
3. and accepting the supremacy of the Holy See, the Pope being the successor of St Peter, the chief of the Apostles of Our Lord.<sup>76</sup>

Mar Ivanios made it clear that the holy synod did not want to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Syrian Catholic patriarch of Antioch, since the synod itself exercised patriarchal jurisdiction within the catholicate.<sup>77</sup> Hence the original project was the reunion of the whole catholicate, preserving the Antiochene rite and rituals and retaining the jurisdiction of the individual bishops and the prerogatives of the holy synod which consecrated bishops and

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<sup>75</sup> G. Chediath, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, Kottayam 2003, 89-94; S. Kanjiramukalil, *Punaraiikya Rekhakal* (Malayalam), enlarged edition, Kottayam 1989, 67-72.

<sup>76</sup> AAT, A 10/1926; C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 122-123; S. Kanjiramukalil, *Punaraiikya Rekhakal*. 80-84.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. AAT, A 10/1926; C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 122-123; S. Kanjiramukalil, *Punaraiikya Rekhakal*, 82.

metropolitans and performed all patriarchal functions within the catholicate, as well as accepting the primacy of the Roman Pontiff.

In the meantime Catholicos Mar Baselios Geevarghese I passed away on 17 December 1928. Metropolitan Mar Dionysius together with Mar Ivanios installed the third Catholicos Baselios Geevarghese II on 15 February 1929. Having obtained full details concerning the Malankara Church from Mar Ivanios, on 5 August 1929 the Holy See answered the memorandum ensuring the preservation of the pure Antiochene rite, the jurisdiction of the returning bishops over their flock and the complete independence of the Malankara Church from the Catholic Syrian patriarch of Antioch. However, the Holy See denied the position of the catholicos and the synod in strong words:

In further eventual organization of a hierarchy along Catholic lines, there can, of course, be no question of a synodal form of episcopal government, nor any hopes be entertained for the retention of a position or title like that of "Catholicos" which is not supported by a longstanding ecclesiastical tradition in Malabar.<sup>78</sup>

Moreover, obligatory celibacy was prescribed for future priests, but "without any prejudice to the ecclesiastical stand of those convert priests who are now married".<sup>79</sup> The response of the Oriental Congregation seems to contradict the authentic tradition of the Christian East, where each Church has its own hierarchical head and a synod for collegial governance. Furthermore priestly celibacy is not obligatory according to the discipline of the Eastern Churches.

### 3.2. Final Decision of the Holy See and Important Dispositions

For certain socio-political reasons, and especially because the Holy See denied the title of catholicos and the synodal structure, the Catholicos Mar Baselios Geevarghese II lost all interest in

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<sup>78</sup> The letter from Apostolic Delegation on 5 August 1929, Prot. N. 1309/29, AAT, A 8/1929; C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 124-125; S. Kanjiramukalil, *Punaraikya Rekhakal*, 106.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. AAT, A 8/1929; C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 124-125; S. Kanjiramukalil, *Punaraikya Rekhakal*, 106-107.

reunion. However, Mar Ivanios was convinced of the necessity of communion with the Catholic Church and he proceeded with the project. From among the bishops of the catholicate only Mar Theophilos, bishop of Tiruvalla, was ready to follow him. Clarifications and communications continued between Mar Ivanios and the Holy See regarding the disputed questions. Finally, on 4 July 1930 the plenary session of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church took the definitive decision to receive Mar Ivanios, archbishop of Bethany and Mar Theophilos, bishop of Tiruvalla into the Catholic Church. The important dispositions of the final decision of the Holy See follow:

1. The pure Syrian rite of Antioch will be maintained and therefore they (the reunited) will not be confounded with the Syro-Malabars whose rite is of Syro-Chaldean origin.

2. Having verified the validity of the Baptism, the sacred Ordination and the consecration of the above said two bishops, they will be kept in their respective office and jurisdiction, i.e., Mar Ivanios will remain bishop of Bethany with the personal title (*ad personam*) of archbishop metropolitan and Mar Theophilos bishop of Tiruvalla.

3. As regards the title of the catholicate or catholicos: it is not advisable to touch this question, in view also of the fact that the present catholicos is not going to be converted, it is premature to decide now what should be done in case of his conversion. The archbishop of Bethany and the bishop of Tiruvalla (*in presentibus rerum adjunctis*) will at present depend directly on the Holy See, without any dependence on the Syrian patriarch of Antioch.

4. The liturgical books (Missal, Ritual, Pontifical) are those coming from Propaganda; the same will be kept, correcting, however, the expressions not proper or erroneous which eventually have been introduced.

5. Regarding the name: these new Catholics may be called "Syro-Malabar Catholics of Antiochene rite" or "Malabar Catholics of the Syro-Antiochene rite" or else "Malabar or Syro-Malabar Antiochene Church". In this way they will be distinguished from the Malabar Catholics of the Chaldean rite.

6. As regards "Filioque": the Catholic doctrine is to be accepted, not only by the bishops, who have already declared it, but also by the people; then the question of its insertion or not in the "Credo" becomes secondary and of a disciplinary character.

7. As regards celibacy: in future no candidate will be admitted to the sacred Orders unless he promises to remain unmarried. For the present, however, married priests who convert will be accepted and tolerated and the married deacons may receive priesthood.<sup>80</sup>

The identity and juridical status of the new Catholic Eastern Church emerge clearly from these dispositions of the Holy See. The new Church would be of Antiochene rite: it would live the faith in consonance with the basic Antiochene tradition in liturgy, theology, spirituality and canon law. Hence this new Catholic Church would have nothing to do with the East Syrian tradition or Chaldean rite of the Syro-Malabar Church, which it had definitively abandoned only at the beginning of the nineteenth century, forced by the vicissitudes of history. The new Church was to be an individual particular Church directly under the Holy See, without forming part of the Syrian Catholic patriarchate of Antioch and without any kind of dependence on the same. Similarly the new Catholic community would have no juridical dependence on the Syro-Malabar Church, the main heir of the ancient Church of St Thomas Christians, of which the forefathers of this new Church were members, before their tragic separation after the *Coonan* Cross Oath in 1653.

Obligatory celibacy was prescribed for future priests of the Malankara Catholic Church, regardless of the general discipline of optional celibacy prevalent in the Christian East and the immemorial tradition of the Church of St Thomas Christians until the celebration of the pseudo Synod of Diamper in 1599.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Apostolic Delegation of the East Indies, Prot. N. 2035/30, AAT, A 18/1930; *Fonti*, II-VIII, 83-85; see also C. Malancharuvil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, 127-131; S. Kanjiramukalil, *Punaraikya Rekhakal*, 131-136.

<sup>81</sup> The Synod of Diamper "desiring to restore this church to its purity, and the usage of the Roman Church" abolished the Eastern discipline of married clergy (optional celibacy) and imposed the Latin discipline of obligatory celibacy. See session VII, *The Doctrine of the Sacrament of Orders*, decrees XVI-XVII.



Although in the preliminary response of 5 August 1929 the Oriental Congregation was categorically against granting the title *catholicos* and synodal structure, in the final disposition it made the two bishops understand that these questions could not have been considered since the *catholicos* and the entire synod of bishops were not going to be converted, but only two bishops and a few faithful.

### 3.3. Full Communion: Partial Realization of a Long Cherished Dream

In accordance with the aforementioned dispositions of the Oriental Congregation, on 20 September 1930 Metropolitan Mar Ivanios and his suffragan Bishop Mar Theophilos, together with Fr John OIC, deacon Alexander (later Fr Seraphion OIC) and Mr Chacko Kilileth, belonging to the autocephalous Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, were received into the Catholic Church by the special delegate Msgr Aloysius Maria Benzinger, bishop of Quilon. Afterwards the parents and other close relatives of Mar Ivanios, the entire community of the Bethany sisters, many from the men's religious Order of the Imitation of Christ (OIC) and a few other priests joined the new Catholic Church.<sup>82</sup>

The two Malankara bishops Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos were received into the Catholic Church in their episcopal dignity and with ecclesiastical power over their faithful, but without erecting a hierarchy and without establishing a clear and precise division and delimitation of jurisdiction with territorial boundaries. Mar Ivanios, as though he were the head of the new Church, maintained the personal title (*ad personam*) of archbishop metropolitan and could exercise personal jurisdiction over all the faithful from the Orthodox dioceses who embraced the Catholic Church. The juridical status of Mar Theophilos, instead, was not sufficiently clear, since no territorial division was effected and no specific task was entrusted to him. In practical terms, Mar

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. G. Chediath, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, 99; for the life and activities of Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos, see pages 112-123 & 196-197 respectively.

Theophilos collaborated with Mar Ivanios for the pastoral governance of the emerging Eastern Catholic Church. With regard to territorial division the directive was to let the two bishops “go on together for a while and when the opportune time comes to make a division after we see what the movement amounts to”.<sup>83</sup>

#### 4. Erection of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Hierarchy

On 13 February 1932 through the apostolic constitution *Magnum Nobis*, two ordinariates were established for the Syro-Malankara Church, separated from each other by the course of the Pampa river. To Mar Ivanios was assigned the titular see of “Phasiensis”, with residence in Trivandrum and to Bishop Theophilos the titular see of “Aradensis” with residence in Tiruvalla.<sup>84</sup> This provision was, however, only an interim arrangement in preparation for a stable and definitive hierarchy.

After evaluating the rapid growth of the reunited community, on 11 June 1932 Pope Pius XI constituted the Syro-Malankara hierarchy with an ecclesiastical province through the apostolic constitution *Christo Pastorum Principi*.<sup>85</sup> We cite the central and important part of this apostolic constitution:

1. After having suppressed the two afore-mentioned ordinariates in the Malabar region at the north and the south of the Pampa river, from their territory we erect a new and distinct ecclesiastical province for the Syro-Malankara faithful of Antiochene rite, which will consist of two sees, namely the archiepiscopal see of Trivandrum and the episcopal see of Tiruvalla.
2. The archdiocese of Trivandrum, whose boundaries shall be the same as those of the dioceses of Quilon, Kottar and the southern part of the diocese of Cochin, embraces the districts of Trivandrum, Kottarakara, Adoor, Pathanamthitta, Mavelikara, Kayamkulam and Chengannoor.

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<sup>83</sup> *Fonti*, II-VIII, 85.

<sup>84</sup> *Fonti*, II - VIII, 85-86; cf. also *AAS* 24 (1932) 289.

<sup>85</sup> Pope Pius XI, Ap. Const. *Christo Pastorum Principi*, *AAS* 24 (1932) 289-292, *IRD*, 264-273.

3. We constitute the see of the archbishop of Trivandrum in the city of Trivandrum, from which the archdiocese itself derives its name.

4. We constitute the archiepiscopal church of Trivandrum as the metropolitan see of this new ecclesiastical province, and also we grant to it and as the occasion demands to its archbishops for the time being, all rights and privileges, honours and prerogatives which, by common law and legitimate customs of the Syro-Antiochene Church are due to them; especially the faculty for the archbishops to use the pallium within the boundaries of the ecclesiastical province according to the liturgical laws, but only after it has been requested and obtained from the Apostolic See in a sacred consistory.

5. The diocese of Tiruvalla, whose boundaries shall be the same as those of the dioceses of Verapoly and Vijayapuram, as well as the borders of the northern part of the diocese of Cochin, shall consist of the districts of Tiruvalla, Niranam, Kottayam, Moovattupuzha and Kunnankulam.

6. We establish the see of the bishop of Tiruvalla in the city of Tiruvalla, by which name itself the diocese shall be called.

7. We concede to the cathedral church of Tiruvalla and to its bishops for the time being all rights, privileges, honours and prerogatives which according to common law and the legitimate customs of the Syro-Antiochene Church belong to them.

8. We constitute this new cathedral of Tiruvalla, a suffragan of the metropolitan Church of Trivandrum and we subject its bishops to the metropolitan right of the archbishop of Trivandrum.

9. We oblige both the metropolitan Church of Trivandrum and its archbishops, and the cathedral Church of Tiruvalla and its bishops by the same duties and obligations, by which other metropolitan and cathedral churches and their bishops are bound.

10. We fix the cathedrals of the bishops of Trivandrum and Tiruvalla, one in the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of God in the city of Trivandrum, the other in the church of St John the Baptist in the city of Tiruvalla. We grant to these churches until otherwise provided, all rights and privileges which other metropolitan and cathedral churches enjoy.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Christo Pastorum Principi*, AAS 24 (1932) 290-291; IRD, 266-269.

The Pope constituted the reunited community as an ecclesiastical province with two sees: Trivandrum as the metropolitan see and Tiruvalla as its suffragan. The external territorial boundaries of the Malankara Church were determined to be coterminous with the borders of the then Latin dioceses of Quilon, Kottar, Cochin, Verapoly and Vijayapuram. Hence, the territory was practically limited between the Pampa river in the north and Kanyakumai in the south of the present federal state of Kerala.

Mar Ivanios became the first metropolitan of Trivandrum and Mar Theophilos the first bishop of Tiruvalla. The rights, privileges, honours, prerogatives and obligations of the metropolitan and the bishops of the new Church were determined to be in accordance with the common law and legitimate customs of the Syro-Antiochene Church, which the Malankara Church officially adopted in 1836. In the final decision of the 'Congregation for the Oriental Church' concerning reunion, dated 4 July 1930, several names were proposed, but in the present constitution the expression "Syro-Malankara" is consistently used, which has become the official name of the new Catholic Church.

### **5. A Glance at the Growth of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church**

After the erection of the Syro-Malankara hierarchy, three more bishops, Joseph Mar Severios of the catholicos' party in 1937, Thomas Mar Dioscoros of the patriarch's party in 1939 and Paulos Mar Philexenos of the *The Independent Syrian Church of Malabar* or the Thozhiyoor Church in 1977 embraced the Malankara Catholic Church. Since his reunion, Mar Severios had been administrator of Tiruvalla (1938) owing to the continuous illness of Mar Theophilos and in 1950 he became bishop of the same diocese. This zealous bishop, who worked hard for the ecumenical movement, left this world in 1955. Mar Dioscoros, who led a retired life after his reunion, died in 1943. Paulos Mar Philexinos, after fruitfully accomplishing many auxiliary tasks,

obtained his celestial premium in 1998.<sup>87</sup> Since then, no other bishop from the Orthodox Churches has embraced the Malankara Catholic Church up to the present day. However, thousands of Christian faithful from the Malankara Orthodox, Marthoma and Protestant Churches have joined the Malankara Catholic Church. Moreover non-Christians have also been converted in large numbers.

On 14 February 1958 the diocese of Tiruvalla was extended to the northern part of Kerala (the present Malabar region) and to a few districts in Tamilnadu and Karnataka.<sup>88</sup> On 28 October 1978 Pope John Paul II bifurcated the diocese of Tiruvalla and erected the diocese of Bathery with the apostolic constitution *Constat Paulum*.<sup>89</sup> The territory of this vast diocese included the civil districts of Kannur, Kasargod, Wayanad, Malappuram and Kozhikode in Kerala; Coimbatore, the Nilgiris and Karur Taluk in Tamilnadu; Mysore, Mandya, Hassan, Coorg, Chickmangalore and Shimoga in Karnataka. On 16 December 1996 the region of Kanyakumari was separated from the archdiocese of Trivandrum and the eparchy of Marthandom was constituted as its suffragan.<sup>90</sup> On 15 January 2003 the Pope dismembered the civil districts of Ernakulam, Trichur and Palakkad in Kerala, as well as Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli in Tamilnadu from the eparchy of Tiruvalla and created the eparchy of Muvattupuzha.<sup>91</sup> Hence at that epoch the Syro-Malankara Church had one archdiocese and four suffragan dioceses.

After the promulgation of the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, the Syro-Malankara Church was considered as a *sui iuris* metropolitan Church of Antiochene tradition. The Church, headed by the metropolitan of Trivandrum, had a council of

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<sup>87</sup> For details concerning the life and activities of these three bishops, see G. Chediath, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, 198-201 & 204-205.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Decree of the 'Congregation for the Oriental Church', Prot. no. 534/43; G. Chediath, *The Malankara Catholic Church*, 158.

<sup>89</sup> Ap. Const. *Constat Paulum*, AAS 71 (1979) 5-6.

<sup>90</sup> Ap. Const. *Singulares omnino*, AAS 89 (1997) 436-437.

<sup>91</sup> Ap. Const. *Communitates terrarium*, AAS 95 (2003) 380-381.

hierarchs, which consisted of all and only ordained bishops of the same Church. The council of hierarchs had restricted legislative power but no special electoral or judicial powers. The metropolitan himself and the bishops of the metropolitan Church had to be directly appointed by the Roman Pontiff. The metropolitan tribunal was equivalent to such tribunals of the Latin Church, and hence the third instance of appeal was always in Rome.<sup>92</sup> Hence the synodal governance according to the Eastern tradition was realized only in a very limited manner in the Syro-Malankara Church.

## **6. Elevation of the Malankara Church to the Status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church**

Considering the growth, maturity and “brilliant position” of the Malankara Church, Pope John Paul II, with the apostolic constitution *Ab ipso sancto Thoma* of 10 February 2005, elevated this Church to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church in accordance with the norms of the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. The apostolic constitution follows:

John Paul Bishop, Servant of the Servants of God, for perpetual memory. By St Thomas the Apostle himself was founded the Christian Religion in India and was fruitfully guided by his successors and it prospered in the course of the past centuries under various traditions. The Syro-Malankara community, which entered into communion with the Holy See in 1930, has secured the greatest increase in number of its faithful and pastors and at the same time safeguarded its own ancient ecclesiastical patrimony and faith. Hence, considering the brilliant position of the Church, which we fully reckon and esteem, we have decided to raise the same community of the Syro-Malankarites as the Major Archiepiscopal Church of Trivandrum with all the rights and obligations prescribed in the Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches. This Church shall be recognized under the afore-mentioned title and its boundaries shall be the same as the boundaries of the former Metropolitan Church of Trivandrum and the permanent seat of the Major Archbishop shall be the city of Trivandrum. We determine those things through this official document and command that they shall

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<sup>92</sup> CCEO cc. 155-173 deal with metropolitan *sui iuris* Churches; for details see, P. Pallath, *Local Episcopal Bodies in East and West*, 245-278.

ever be safeguarded and declare that nothing contrary to them shall prevail. We hope that this, our declaration and the new arrangement shall be helpful to the apostolic work of the Church and shall produce visible fruits to the entire congregation of the faithful, in the years to come.

Given at Rome, from the Holy See of St. Peter, on the tenth day of the month of February 2005, in the year of Our Lord, the twenty-seventh year of Our Pontificate.<sup>93</sup>

We shall briefly analyze and comment on this apostolic constitution, highlighting the important aspects of the nature and status of the Syro-Malankara Major Archiepiscopal Church.

### **6.1. Rapid growth**

First of all the apostolic constitution points out that, since the entrance of the Syro-Malankara community into full communion with the Roman Pontiff in 1930 it has secured “the greatest increase in number of its faithful and pastors”. As we have seen above, on 20 September 1930 only two bishops, a religious priest, a deacon and a layman were received into full communion with the Catholic Church. As a result of its phenomenal growth, at the time of the elevation of the Malankara Church to the major archiepiscopal status it could count five dioceses, 476 parishes, eight bishops, 476 diocesan priests, 115 religious priests, 206 men religious, 1662 women religious and 402,702 Christian faithful.<sup>94</sup>

### **6.2. Ecclesiastical Patrimony and Faith**

The apostolic constitution underlines the fact that during these years of growth the Malankara Church “safeguarded its own ancient ecclesiastical patrimony and faith”. The ancient ecclesiastical patrimony and faith indicate the liturgical, theological, spiritual and canonical heritage according to the Antiochene tradition, which the Malankara Church officially

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<sup>93</sup> Apostolic Bull *Ab ipso sancto Thoma* has not yet been published in *AAS*; the original Latin text and the English translation can be found in *Malankara*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2005) 14.

<sup>94</sup> The statistics according to *Annuario Pontificio* 2005.

accepted in the assembly or synod of the priests and lay leaders held at Mavelikara on 16 January 1836. Since the Malankara Church entered into full communion with the Catholic Church in 1930, when the missionary Latinization and the tendency of “uniatism” had almost ended and when the Roman Curia began to catholicise and not to Latinize, it has remained the least westernised Eastern Catholic Church in the whole of Christendom. Even the phenomenon of spontaneous self-westernization present in some Eastern Catholic Churches has not yet exerted much influence on the Malankara Catholic Church.

### 6.3. All the Rights and Obligations

The Roman Pontiff elevated the Malankara Catholic Church to the major archiepiscopal status “with all the rights and obligations prescribed in the Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches”. This phrase can be well understood if we consider the case of the Syro-Malabar Church. Due to internal problems, when the Syro-Malabar Church was constituted as a major archiepiscopal Church on 16 December 1992 the Roman Pontiff entrusted the pastoral governance to a papal delegate and reserved to his own person all that concerned episcopal elections and the liturgical order. The Pope ceased to reserve the liturgical powers on 19 January 1998 and the faculty to appoint bishops only on 3 January 2004.<sup>95</sup> In contrast to the case of its sister Church, at the very moment of its elevation to the major archiepiscopal status the Malankara Church obtained a real hierarchical head and a synod of bishops with all the rights and obligations stipulated in the Eastern Code. The rights, powers and obligations of a major archiepiscopal Church are equal to those of a patriarchal Church.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> For details see, chapter IV, nos. 10-12.

<sup>96</sup> There are only two differences: 1) the election of a major archbishop requires confirmation by the Roman Pontiff (c.153), while that of a patriarch is only notified (c.76). 2). A patriarch precedes all bishops of any degree everywhere in the world (c. 58).



#### 6.4. Title and See

According to the Eastern Code a major archiepiscopal Church must have a permanent see for the residence of the major archbishop in a principal city inside its own territory from which the major archbishop takes his title (CCEO c. 57 § 3). The city of Trivandrum has been the principal see and the residence of the chief bishop of the Malankara Church since the establishment of full communion with the Catholic Church in 1930. When two ordinariates were created on 13 February 1932, the residence of Mar Ivanios was officially fixed in the city of Trivandrum. At the time of the constitution of the Syro-Malankara hierarchy on 11 June 1932 Trivandrum became an archdiocese and the see of the metropolitan archbishop. In the course of time the ecclesiastical status of Trivandrum mutated owing to the erection of the Latin diocese of Trivandrum on 1 July 1937 and its elevation to metropolitan status on 3 January 2004. However, Trivandrum continued to be considered as the “ecclesiastical capital” of the Malankara Church. Now in the apostolic constitution the Pope definitively granted to the Malankara Church the official title, the “Major Archiepiscopal Church of Trivandrum” and fixed the permanent seat of the major archbishop in the same city.

#### 6.5. Territorial Extension

As we have seen above, when the hierarchy was erected in 1932 the territory of the Malankara Church was determined to be coterminous with the boundaries of the then Latin dioceses of Quilon, Kottar, Cochin, Verapoly and Vijayapuram. Later, in 1958, the territory was extended to the northern part of Kerala and to some parts of Tamilnadu and Karnataka. The present apostolic constitution states that the territory of the Malankara Church “shall be the same as the boundaries of the former Metropolitan Church of Trivandrum”. With the elevation of the Malankara Church to major archiepiscopal status no change was effected with regard to its territory. Hence the territory of the Malankara Church is limited to the external boundaries of the five eparchies of this Church. The powers of the major archbishop and synod of bishops of the

Malankara Church are limited to the frontiers of this Church in accordance with canons 146-150 of the Eastern Code.

### **6. 6. The Major Archbishop**

On 10 February 2005, with the apostolic bull *Cunctis ecclesialibus communitatibus* Pope John Paul II appointed the “venerable Brother Cyril Baselios Malancharuvil, Metropolitan Archbishop of Trivandrum of the Syro-Malankarites” as the first major archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Church. In the apostolic bull the Pope stated: “[...] we nominate you using our Apostolic Authority as the Major Archbishop of Trivandrum of the Syro-Malankara Church. You will have the rights and duties inherent to your office and status. You are obliged to safeguard all the requirements prescribed in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches”.<sup>97</sup> On 14 May 2005, in a solemn ceremony Metropolitan Cyril Mar Baselios was enthroned as the first major archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Church and began to use the title *catholicos* in accordance with the decision of the Malankara bishops.

### **7. Syro-Malankara Catholic Church since Its Elevation to the Major Archiepiscopal Status**

The first canonical synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, held from 16 to 18 August 2005, constituted the permanent synod, a committee for the preparation of the statutes of the various organs of the major archiepiscopal curia, 18 synodal commissions to assist the synod and the Church in coordinating the various apostolic activities and an expert group for drafting the particular law.<sup>98</sup> The synod endorsed the previous decision that “the hierarchical head of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, being its father and head shall be called ‘*Catholicos*’, according to our Syro-Antiochene and Malankara traditions”.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Malankara*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2005) 13 & 15.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *Malankara*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2005) 18-22 & 36-38.

<sup>99</sup> *Malankara*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2005) 24 & 38.

With the consent of the synod of bishops and having consulted the Apostolic See, on 14 May 2006 the Major Archbishop Cyril Mar Baselios established the ecclesiastical province of Tiruvalla in accordance with canon 85 § 1 of the Eastern Code, raising the eparchy of Tiruvalla to the status of a metropolitan see, with the eparchies of Bathery and Muvattupuzha as its suffragans.<sup>100</sup> Isaac Mar Cleemis Thottunkal, the incumbent bishop of Tiruvalla, was appointed its first metropolitan archbishop.<sup>101</sup> He was installed as the metropolitan archbishop of Tiruvalla on 10 June 2006 at St John's Cathedral Church in Tiruvalla. Thus the second metropolitan province of the Malankara Catholic Church came into being.

In accordance with the provisions of the Eastern Code, the fourth synod held from 31 October to 3 November 2006 deliberated on organizing the tribunals of the Church to ensure efficient administration of justice. In accordance with the norms of canon 1062 of CCEO, the synodal tribunal of the Church was constituted with the election of Thomas Mar Koorilos as the general moderator for the administration of justice and three other bishops as judges. The synod resolved to constitute the ordinary tribunal of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and determined the personnel necessary for the same.<sup>102</sup> The synod also decided to erect the eparchy of Mavelikara, bifurcating the northern part of the archdiocese of Trivandrum.<sup>103</sup> After consulting the Apostolic See as per canon 85 of the Eastern Code, the Major Archbishop

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<sup>100</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, 15-16 maggio 2006, 1. In the decree of the major archbishop the date is indicated as 14 May 2006. *Malankara*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2006) 59. The announcement of the constitution of the ecclesiastical province of Tiruvalla was made on 15 May 2006. According to *Annuario Pontificio*, the date of constitution is 15 May 2006.

<sup>101</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, 15-16 maggio 2006, 1; *Malankara*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2006) 62-63.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. *Malankara*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2007), 28-29.

<sup>103</sup> *Malankara*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2007), 27-28 & 46.

Cyril Mar Baselios constituted the eparchy of Mavelikara on 1 January 2007 as a suffragan of the archdiocese of Trivandrum.<sup>104</sup>

On 18 January 2007 Major Archbishop Cyril Mar Baselios Malancharuvil died and on 20 January he was buried in St Mary's Cathedral Church at Pattom in Trivandrum. On 8 February 2007 the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church elected Isaac Mar Cleemis Thottunkal, until then archbishop of Tiruvalla, as the second major archbishop.<sup>105</sup> In accordance with canon 153 of the Eastern Code, on 8 February 2007 the synod notified the Roman Pontiff of the canonical conduct of the election and the major archbishop elect petitioned the confirmation of his election.<sup>106</sup>

On 10 February Pope Benedict XVI confirmed the election of Mar Cleemis as the major archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.<sup>107</sup> On the same day, before the synod, the major archbishop elect emitted the profession of faith and the promise to fulfil his office faithfully, and then the official proclamation was made.<sup>108</sup> The new major archbishop, who assumed the name Baselios Mar Cleemis, was enthroned on 5 March 2007 during a solemn ceremony conducted in St Mary's Cathedral at Pattam in Trivandrum.<sup>109</sup> On 28 May 2007 the new major archbishop visited Pope Benedict XVI to manifest hierarchical communion with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of St Peter, through the fidelity,

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<sup>104</sup> Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 2-3 gennaio 2007, 1; *Malankara*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2007) 80-81; *Annuario Pontificio* indicates 2 January as the date of erection.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Report of the synod of election held from 7 to 10 February 2007 in *Malankara*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2007) 72-75.

<sup>106</sup> *Malankara*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2007) 83-88.

<sup>107</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, 11 febbraio 2007, 1; *Malankara*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2007) 198 & 140.

<sup>108</sup> *Malankara*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2007) 74.

<sup>109</sup> See report in *Malankara*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2007) 118-120.

reverence and obedience that are due to the supreme pastor of the entire Church.<sup>110</sup>

Because of the sudden demise of Major Archbishop Cyril Mar Baselios the ordinary tribunal of the Malankara Catholic Church, already decided by the synod in November 2006, was constituted only on 15 November 2007 by the new major archbishop.<sup>111</sup> With this act the Malankara Church completely introduced the Oriental judicial system as defined in the Eastern Code. On 25 January 2010 the Major Archbishop Baselios Mar Cleemis, with the consent of the synod and having consulted the Apostolic See of Rome, created two new eparchies. The eparchy of Pathanamthitta in Kerala was erected bifurcating the major archdiocese of Trivandrum as its suffragan see. The eparchy of Puthur was created in the state of Karnataka consisting of the northern part of the eparchy of Bathery as a suffragan of the archdiocese of Tiruvalla.<sup>112</sup>

On 14 July 2010 Pope Benedict XVI erected a new exarchate for the Syro-Malankara Catholics in the United States of America and appointed Fr Thomas Naickaparambil as exarch apostolic, assigning to him the titular see of Lares. The new exarch was also nominated the apostolic visitor of the Malankara Catholics in Canada and Europe.<sup>113</sup> Naickamparampil was consecrated bishop on 21 September 2010 with the name Thomas Mar Eusebius and he canonically took possession of the office on 13 October 2010.

Major Archbishop Catholicos Mor Baselios Cleemis was elevated to the college of cardinals by Pope Benedict XVI at the Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican on 24 November 2012. As Cardinal-Priest he was assigned the titular church of San Gregorio VII.

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. CCEO, c. 92 § 1; report about the manifestation of hierarchical communion in *Malankara*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2007) 5-8; documentation, pages 76-84.

<sup>111</sup> *Malankara*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2006) 5-11 & 22; decree of the major archbishop erecting the ordinary tribunal in pages 67-68.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 25-26 gennaio 2010, 1.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 15 luglio 2010, 1.

On 26 March 2015 Pope Francis erected the “Eparchy of Saint John Chrysostom of Gurgaon”.<sup>114</sup> The eparchy stretches across the northern part of India, embracing 22 of the 29 states of the country. On the same day the Pope also established the exarchate of St Ephrem of Khadki for the Syro-Malankara Catholics of Maharashtra, Goa, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and parts of Tamilnadu and Karnataka.<sup>115</sup> The exarchate extends throughout the southern part of India that had formerly not been under any eparchy of the Syro-Malankara Church. With these acts of the Pope practically the Syro-Malankara Church has obtained the right for the pastoral care of its faithful anywhere in India.

On 4 January 2016 Pope Francis elevated the Syro-Malankara apostolic exarchate in USA as the eparchy of St Mary, Queen of Peace, whose bishop has jurisdiction also over the Christian faithful of the same Church in Canada.<sup>116</sup> On 5 August 2017 Major Archbishop Cleemis erected the eparchy of Parassala according to the provisions of the Eastern Code. The eparchy in the ecclesiastical province of Trivandrum covers some parts of Kerala and Tamilnadu.

At present the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church has 11 eparchies and an apostolic exarchate. The eparchy of St Mary, Queen of Peace in USA, as well as the eparchy of Saint John Chrysostom of Gurgaon and the apostolic exarchate of St Ephrem of Khadki in India are directly under the Apostolic See. In the proper territory the Syro-Malankara Church has nine eparchies organized into two ecclesiastical provinces: 1) Trivandrum with its suffragan eparchies of Marthandom, Mavelikara, Parassala and Pathanamthitta; 2) Tiruvalla with its three suffragan sees, Bathery, Muvattupuzha and Puthur. The Malankara Catholic Church has 15 bishops (including one exarch, one emeritus, and two coadjutor bishops), 622 diocesan priests, 198 religious priests, 373 male religious, 1983 female religious, 989 parishes (including some

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<sup>114</sup> Pope Francis, Ap. Const. *Quo aptius*, AAS 107 (2015) 508.

<sup>115</sup> Pope Francis, Ap. Const. *Nos qui*, AAS 107 (2015) 502-503.

<sup>116</sup> Pope Francis, Ap. Const. *Ad aptius*, AAS 108 (2016) 1-2.

non-parochial churches) and 511,588 Christian faithful.<sup>117</sup> Here follows a statistical table based on the details provided in *Annuario Pontificio* 2019.

Eparchies	Christian Faithful	Diocesan priests	Religious priests	Male Religious	Female religious	Parishes
<b>Trivandrum, Arch.</b>	222,760	117	116	203	619	216
Marthandom	70,800	47	7	9	233	86
Mavelikara	26,628	62	12	14	164	96
Parassala	42,000	36	6	9	81	103
Pathanamthitta	40,020	70	6	6	114	100
<b>Tiruvalla, Arch.</b>	43,355	111	12	47	285	134
Bathery	26,165	69	8	8	300	105
Muvattupuzha	13,800	47	8	8	78	70
Puthur	3,300	19	8	8	-	25
<b>(Outside Territory)</b>						
St Mary in USA	11,600	20	-	-	34	16
Gurgaon	-	10	5	5	30	9
Khadki (ap. ex.)	11,160	14	10	56	45	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>511,588</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>1983</b>	<b>989</b>

## Conclusion

The original project of Mar Ivanios, the prophet and protagonist of the Indian ecumenical movement in the twentieth century, was the entrance of the whole Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church with its head the catholicos and the synod of bishops into

<sup>117</sup> The statistics is based on *Annuario Pontificio* 2019.

the Catholic Church, preserving its individuality, autonomy and Antiochene ritual identity. Although the original project failed because of various adverse circumstances, the authentic thirst for unity and communion led Mar Ivanios, together with Mar Theophilos and the representatives of the clergy and laity to Catholic Communion in 1930. In the course of time that "little flock" attained steady growth and sufficient maturity. With its promotion to the rank of a major archiepiscopal Church, the Malankara Catholic Church obtained a real "father and head" in the person of the major archbishop and a synod of bishops for authentic collegial governance with all the rights, privileges and obligations in accordance with the norms of the Eastern Code. With the erection of the eparchy of Gurgaon and the apostolic exarchate of Khadki the Syro-Malankara Church has also obtained the right of pastoral care of its Christian faithful and evangelization of peoples all over India. Now the great challenge and responsibility of the Malankara Catholic Church will be to achieve what Mar Ivanios earnestly desired, namely the unity and communion of the Indian Orthodox Churches of Antiochene tradition in the bosom of the Catholic Church.



## EXPLANATION OF SOME WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

### 1. Antiochene Rite

This is the basic tradition, designated also West Syrian rite, enshrining the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary patrimony (cf. CCEO, c. 28), formed first in Jerusalem, and then developed in Antioch, the third greatest city in the Roman Empire and the capital of the Oriental region. The Church in Antioch, where “the disciples were for the first time called Christians” (*Acts* 11, 26), was founded by the Apostle Peter. The Antiochene tradition, diffused in Palestine, Syria and northern Mesopotamia, from the second half of the XVII century gradually extended to the Malankara community in South India. Currently the Antiochene tradition is common to three Catholic Churches: the Syrian Church, the Maronite Church and the Syro-Malankara Church, as well as to the Syrian Orthodox Church and to the four Indian Syro-orthodox fractions (cf. nos. 9, 10, 12 & 23).

### 2. Archdeacon

The archdeacon of the St Thomas Christians, as one can imagine from his title, was not a deacon but was always a celibate priest, comparable to a high prelate, selected from among the priests of those families which had directly received the faith and Baptism from the Apostle Thomas and from amongst whom the Apostle himself had selected the first sacred ministers to continue his mission in India. The archdeacon of all India, the religious and civil head of the St Thomas Christians, esteemed by the kings of Malabar and revered even by the non-Christians, exercised ample administrative and jurisdictional powers over the Oriental Christians, wherever they were found in India. After the beginning of the Latin governance in 1599, following various contrasts and conflicts between the archdeacon of all India and the Latin bishops, the office definitively disappeared from the Catholic community with the death of Archdeacon Mathew Parampil (Pallil) on 20

March 1706, since it was incompatible with the Latin episcopal power of governance as practised at that epoch.

### **3. Assyrian Church of the East of Trichur**

With the Synod of Diamper in 1599 the jurisdiction of the Chaldean patriarch over the Indian Eastern Church was suppressed and Latin jurisdiction was imposed upon it. However, the St Thomas Christians always desired bishops of their own rite and liturgical language. When the Latin jurisdiction became unbearable, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, several requests were sent from Malabar to the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Joseph VI Audo (1848-1878) who sent Mar Thomas Rokos in 1861 and Elias Mellus in 1874, provoking the so-called Rokos schism (1861-1862) and Mellus schism (1874-1882). Upon the order of the Pope, both of these Chaldean Catholic bishops were excommunicated and subsequently returned to Mesopotamia, but many of their followers in Trichur persisted in the schism. In 1907 the adherents of Mellus established communion with the (Nestorian) patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, Simon XIX Benjamin who sent bishop Timotheos Mar Abimelek to Kerala. He reorganized the community in Trichur and established it as a section of the Assyrian Church of the East. The present Indian head of this Church, which has 30 parishes and about 15,000 faithful, is Metropolitan Mar Aprem, who resides in Trichur. This Church follows the original East Syrian tradition in liturgy, theology and spiritual life, without significant modifications.

### **4. Church of St Thomas Christians**

This expression indicates the Church founded by the Apostle Thomas in South India which remained one and undivided until the *Coonan* Cross Oath 1653 and the subsequent division of the community. The descendants of those who had been converted to the Catholic faith by the Apostle Thomas were generally known as the St Thomas Christians, until the Western missionaries who arrived in India from the beginning of the sixteenth century coined other names. As a consequence of the schisms and divisions provoked by westernization from the second half of the

seventeenth century on, at present the St Thomas Christians are divided among two Catholic and five non-Catholic Churches (cf. nos. 3, 9, 10, 12, 21-23). However the bishops of the Catholic St Thomas Christians had always occupied the ancient "apostolic see of St Thomas" until the definitive suppression of the archdiocese of Cranganore in 1886.

### 5. *Coonan* Cross Oath

The Malayalam word "*coonan*" means slant or bent. Hence *Coonan* Cross Oath literally means the oath at the slant or slanting cross. Historically it refers to the oath made by St Thomas Christians on 3 January 1653 at the Church of Our Lady of Life at Mattancherry in Kerala. The essential content of the oath was that they would no longer obey the Portuguese Jesuit archbishop Francis Garcia or any other prelate from the Society of Jesus, nor would they ever again admit the Jesuits into Malabar or to their churches. The head of the community, Archdeacon Thomas Parampil, prominent priests and other leaders made the oath inside the church in front of a crucifix with lighted candles and touching the Bible. The large crowd of faithful that could not enter the church, somehow participated in the oath by touching the ropes tied to an open air cross in front of the church, which was in a slanting position. According to some traditions, the cross slanted because of the great force of the people pulling the ropes, whose acute agony and intense anger exploded against the Portuguese Padroado jurisdiction that jeopardised the autonomy, identity and heritage of their Church. Anyhow, the revolt of the St Thomas Christians came to be known in history as the *Coonan* Cross Oath, because of the presence of the aforementioned slant cross.

### 6. Cranganore

In ancient times known also as Mahodayapuram, Shinkli, Muchiri (Muziris) and Muyirikkodu, even before the birth of Christ Cranganore or Kodungallur was a leading seaport and commercial centre on the Malabar Coast, where St Thomas the Apostle is believed to have landed. Cranganore was the see of the St Thomas Christians and the residence of their metropolitans for a long period of time. After many tragic vicissitudes, the St Thomas

Christian archdiocese of Cranganore was definitively suppressed on 1 September 1886 and its title was given first to the Latin diocese of Daman and then to the archdiocese of Goa at the time of their unification in 1928. Now it is a town and a municipality in the Trichur district in the Indian state of Kerala.

## 7. Malabar Church

The word Malabar derives from two words: *mala* = hill or mountain and *bar* probably from the Arabic *barr* or Syriac *bar* = country. So Malabar literally means a country of hills, mountains and highlands. In ancient times Malabar indicated the southwest coast of the Indian subcontinent. Even when the Western missionaries coined the expression "Malabar Church" to refer to the Church of St Thomas Christians in the sixteenth century, Malabar signified vast regions, which, in addition to Kerala, touched the present Indian states of Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Later, from the time of the British Rule, "Malabar" was employed to designate only the northern part of Kerala, which formed part of the Madras Presidency. At present Malabar is used in the latter sense indicating only a small region in the northern part of Kerala. Currently only four (Tellicherry, Mananthavady, Thamarassery and some parts of Palghat) dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church are found in Malabar.

## 8. Malankara Church

The Malayalam expression Malankara is composed of two words: *mala* which literally means hill or mountain and *kara* which indicates land or country. Hence Malankara, which signifies simply a country of hills or mountains, is a synonym for Malabar. Historically the expression Malankara Church began to be used for the Christian community that abandoned the Catholic Church and established the hierarchical relationship with the Syrian Orthodox patriarch of Antioch after the *Coonan* Cross Oath in 1653. After the fragmentation of this Orthodox community into different groups, each one added to the expression "Malankara Church" its own diversifying attributes and distinguishing qualifications. Hence Malankara Church without any specification indicates the non-Catholic Christian community before its various divisions.

## 9. Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church

As already mentioned, after the *Coonan* Cross Oath in 1653 and the definitive excommunication of Archdeacon Thomas Parampil in 1663, the non-Catholic group entered into communion with the Orthodox Syrian Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, gradually accepting Antiochene or West Syrian liturgy, Christology and canonical discipline. The relationship with the Antiochene patriarch, which began with the arrival of the first bishop Mar Gregorios in 1665, reached its culmination in the synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1876, in which the Malankara Church was forced to accept the complete supremacy of the patriarch both in spiritual and temporal affairs. A group of bishops accepted the claims of the patriarch, while the Malankara Metropolitan Dionysius VI and the majority of the bishops maintained that the patriarch had only spiritual authority in the Malankara Church. The dispute over the authority of the patriarch reached its climax on 31 May 1911 when the Antiochene Patriarch Abdallah II excommunicated Mar Dionysius VI and his followers from the Malankara Church. In 1912 the metropolitan's party established an autocephalous catholicate and became completely independent from the patriarch with its own constitution approved in 1934. In the course of time the autocephalous catholicate came to be known as the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church. The Supreme Court of India in its judgements of 1958 and 1995 recognized this Church and its constitution. The present head of this Church is Catholicos Baselios Mar Thoma Didymos I who resides in Kottayam. This Church has 27 dioceses and claims to have 2,500,000 faithful.

## 10. Malankara (Jacobite) Orthodox Syrian Church

This Church, initially known as the patriarch's party after the split in the Malankara Church in 1912, evidently accepted the complete authority and jurisdiction of the patriarch in spiritual matters and in the temporal administration of the Church. The two Orthodox factions, similar also in their names, have the same Antiochene liturgical, theological, spiritual and canonical patrimony, the same history up until 1912 and the same Indian cultural heritage. They differ only with regard to the authority of

the Orthodox Syrian patriarch, who now resides at Damascus in Syria. After the failure of the reconciliation efforts between the two groups in 1975, Patriarch Mar Yakoub III granted the title of catholicos also to the head of the Orthodox faction depending on him. The present head is Catholicos Mar Baselios Thomas I, who resides in Moovattupuzha. The patriarchal faction, now known as the Malankara (Jacobite) Orthodox Syrian Church has 18 dioceses and about 1,200,000 faithful.

### 11. Malayalam

The word Malayalam seems to be derived from two words: *mala* = hill, mountain and *ala* = wave (or *alam* = land or locality). So Malayalam literally means a country or land of mountains and waves, indicating the geographical nature of South India. Although Malayalam was formerly used as a synonym for Malabar, at present it refers only to the language, spoken mainly in the south west of India, particularly in Kerala. Malayalam, one of the four major Dravidian languages of southern India, was derived from ancient Tamil in the sixth century. Malayalam is one of the 22 official Indian languages recognized by the constitution of India and spoken by the people of Kerala origin. At present Malayalam is the liturgical language of all the Churches in Kerala.

### 12. Mar Thoma Syrian Church

At the dawn of the nineteenth century British supremacy was established in the kingdoms of Kerala and consequently the Malankara Orthodox Church came under the influence of the Anglican Church. Although Anglicanization was officially terminated in 1836, a group continued with the process, correcting the Antiochene liturgy and reforming it along Protestant lines. In 1876 the Antiochene Patriarch Peter III excommunicated the two pro Anglican Malankara bishops and their followers from the Malankara Orthodox Church. In the course of time the pro Anglican group formed a new Church known as the "Reformed Party", which later adopted the name "Mar Thoma Syrian Church". This Church is St Thomas Christian in origin, Antiochene in liturgy, Anglican-Protestant in doctrine and Indian in culture. The present head is Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan, who resides at

Tiruvalla in Kerala. This Church, having 12 dioceses and 1137 parishes, claims to number about 900,000 faithful dispersed in India, Malaysia, Singapore, Europe, North America, South Africa, Australia, etc.

### **13. Nestorianism**

This is the heresy attributed to Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople (428-431), who was excommunicated by the ecumenical council of Ephesus (431) and died around the year 451. Although Nestorius was not a member of the Church of the East in the Persian Empire, it considered him a holy and orthodox man, since he was unjustly condemned in an irregular session of the aforementioned council by his accusers themselves and without a “fair trial”, even though no trace of the heresy attributed to him was found. The Nestorian doctrine, as it is generally understood in theological circles, advocates that there are two persons in Christ, corresponding to his divine and human natures, and consequently the Blessed Virgin Mary is only the mother of Christ the man. Over time it has been clarified that neither Nestorius nor any Christian community in the world has ever professed the heresy called Nestorianism. In practical terms, Nestorianism ended with the common Christological declaration of 11 November 1994 signed by Pope John Paul II and Mar Dinkha IV, the patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East [AAS 87 (1995) 685-687].

### **14. Ordinariate**

Ordinariates are territorial ecclesiastical structures established for Eastern Catholic communities in places where a proper hierarchy has not been constituted. The head of the ordinariate is a prelate with the title “ordinary”, who is appointed by the Holy See with jurisdiction over Eastern Catholics who do not have their own bishop.

### **15. Padroado**

The Portuguese word “padroado” means patronage. In Church history this word indicates the sum total of the rights, privileges and obligations which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the

Roman Pontiffs conferred upon the kings of Portugal and Spain for the Christianization of the newly discovered lands in Asia and Africa. The Latin expression "ius patronatus" means the "right of patronage". On account of Padroado the kings of Portugal and Spain obtained a kind of ecclesiastical jurisdiction in territories under their dominion, which included the right of deciding the erection of new dioceses, presenting bishops to the Roman Pontiff for appointment in all the dioceses under their authority and of nominating suitable persons to all ecclesiastical offices in those dioceses.

### 16. Persian or Chaldean Church

In order to refer more or less to the same Church which originated in the ancient Persian Empire authors use different expressions like "Persian Church", "the Church of the East", "the Babylonian Church", "the Assyrian Church", "the Church of Seleucia Ctesiphon" (the capital of the Persian Empire, which became the see of the catholicos-patriarch), the "Nestorian Church", the "East Syrian Church", the "East Syriac Church" and the "Chaldean Church". However, from the time of the Catholic Patriarch John Sulaqa (1551-1555), the "Chaldean Church" refers to the Catholic section, while the Assyrian Church of the East points to its counterpart not in full communion with the Roman Pontiff. In this book many of these expressions are synonymously used according to the context.

### 17. Propaganda Fide

Expressions like "Propaganda", "Propaganda Fide", "Congregation of Propaganda Fide", "Congregatio de Propaganda Fide" and "Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith" are found in various books and refer to the department of the Roman Curia, which Pope Gregory XV erected on 22 June 1622 for the enhancement and coordination of missionary activity throughout world. In the apostolic constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae universae* of 15 August 1667 Pope Paul VI named this dicastery *Sacra Congregatio pro Gentium Evangelizatione seu de Propaganda Fide*. In the apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus* of 28 June 1988,



this department is simply called *Congregatio pro Gentium Evangelizatione* (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples).

### 18. Serra

This is the Portuguese word for *mala*, meaning hill or mountain; the plural “serras” indicates hills or mountains. The Portuguese who coined the word “Malabar Church” to designate the Church of St Thomas Christians, translated Malabar as “serra” (*mala*). Hence in many Portuguese writings expressions such as Church of the serra(s), Christians of serra(s), people of serra(s) can be found.

### 19. Suriani

Suriani is the Malayalam expression for Syriac or Syrian, which was the liturgical language of the Eastern Christians of India until the introduction of local languages in 1962. Like the expressions “Latin Church” and “Latin Christians” or simply “Latins”, formerly “Suriani Church”, “Suriani Catholics”, “Suriani Christians” and “Suriani” were used to indicate the St Thomas Christians and their Church. From the second half of the nineteenth century “Suriani” or “Suriani Catholics” were consistently used even in the documents and communications of the Holy See until the name Syro-Malabar became prevalent. In this book at times we have used the said expressions, especially in citing documents and other authors.

### 20. Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite Church of Antioch

In the course of history several qualifications such as “Monophysite”, “Pre-Chalcedonian or Non-Chalcedonian”, “Jacobite”, “Ancient Oriental” and “Oriental Orthodox” have been applied to the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antiochene tradition. The Church was denominated Monophysite and Pre-Chalcedonian or Non-Chalcedonian because of its refusal to accept the Christological doctrine of the ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451) which asserted that Christ is one single person in two natures. The Council of Chalcedon provoked a split in the Antiochene Church: one group accepted the Christological

definition of the Council, while the other group rejected it. The Byzantine emperors Justin (518-527) and Justinian (527-565) adopted a policy of persecution against those who did not accept the Chalcedonian doctrine, and hence the Monophysite Church went into a state of decline. The bishop of Edessa, Jacob Baradaeus (545-578) reorganized the persecuted Monophysite Churches reviving and strengthening them with the secret ordination of a great number of bishops. The Church, therefore, was called Jacobite after his name. Really, the Syrian Jacobite Church, designated as Monophysite, sustained only the Christology in line with the doctrine of St Cyril of Alexandria. In the common declaration of 27 October 1971 Pope Paul VI and the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Mar Ignatius Jacob III agreed that "there is no difference in the faith they profess concerning the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and become really man, even if over the centuries difficulties have arisen out of the different theological expressions by which this faith was expressed" [AAS 63 (1971) 814]. The Syrian Orthodox Church accepts only the first three ecumenical councils: Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431). The present head of the Church is Ignatius Zakka I Iwas who resides at Damascus in Syria.

## 21. Syro-Malabar Church

When two vicariates were erected in 1887 for the Catholic St Thomas Christians the appellation "Malabar Church" coined by the Western missionaries together with the addition 'Syro' was officially adopted to designate their Church. "Syro" indicates the East Syriac language and East Syrian tradition or Chaldean rite. Malabar, as we have seen above has a geographical connotation. So literally "Syro-Malabar Church" denotes the Church in the Malabar region, which follows the East Syrian or Chaldean liturgical tradition. In fact, the Syro-Malabar Church, the main heir of the heritage and legacy of the Apostle Thomas, is constituted mainly of the descendents of those St Thomas Christians who, from the time of the Apostle until the present day have remained in the Catholic Church, always maintaining the Catholic faith and fostering communion with the Roman Pontiff.

## 22. Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

In this instance "Syro" indicates West Syriac language and West Syrian or Antiochene rite. As already indicated, "Malankara" literally means the land or country of mountains. Therefore Syro-Malankara Catholic Church means the Catholic Church in Malankara which follows the West Syrian or Antiochene tradition. On 20 September 1930, a group of Christian faithful from the autocephalous catholicate, called Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, came into full communion with the Roman Pontiff under the leadership of Geevarghese Mar Ivanios, retaining their own Antiochene liturgical, theological, spiritual and canonical heritage, and thus originated the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. The appellation "Syro-Malankara" gained official recognition in the apostolic constitution *Christo Pastorum Principi* of 13 February 1932, through which Pope Pius XI established a special hierarchy for the reunited community. After establishing communion with the Catholic Church, the Syro-Malankara Church witnessed a rapid growth from two ordinariates in 1932 to the major archiepiscopal status in 2005.

## 23. Thozhiyoor Church

The Syrian Orthodox Bishop Mar Gregorios, who consecrated the head of the Malankara Church Mar Thomas VI in 1772, in contrast with the latter consecrated also Ramban Kurian Abraham Kattumangatt as bishop Abraham Mar Koorillos, but this latter could not exercise any jurisdiction in Malankara. Expelled from the kingdoms of Cochin and Travancore, he went to Thozhiyoor in the present district of Trichur and there he established his own diocese, which later came to be known as Malabar Independent Syrian Church of Thozhiyoor. The fourteenth successor of Mar Koorillos and the present head of the Thozhiyoor Church is Metropolitan Cyril Mar Baselios. Although this Church has developed an interchurch relationship with the Anglicanized Mar Thoma Syrian Church, it has maintained the Antiochene liturgical tradition and Eastern heritage. This Church, which remains as a single unit has 14 parishes and about 10,000 faithful.

#### **24. Vicariate Apostolic**

Vicariates apostolic are ecclesiastical circumscriptions in mission territories where a hierarchy has not yet been established. A vicariate apostolic is entrusted to the pastoral care of a vicar apostolic who is normally a titular bishop appointed by the Roman Pontiff. A vicar apostolic, who depends exclusively on the Holy See, exercises jurisdiction in the name of the Roman Pontiff. Within the limits of his territory a vicar apostolic has almost the same power, rights and faculties as the diocesan bishops. All the missionaries and ecclesiastical institutions of a vicariate depend on its vicar apostolic. An exarchy or exarchate is the oriental equivalent of a vicariate apostolic and an exarch that of a vicar apostolic.

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