

THE THOMAS CHRISTIANS  
AND  
THEIR SYRIAC TREASURES



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## INTRODUCTION

This is a very short account of the Thomas Christians and of the treasures they possess in the Syriac language and literature.

We have selected only a few of the numerous items that come under this vast subject. The following are these items:

- I. The Thomas Christians: a short history of these Christians who are now divided into different denominations who use the East or the West Syriac liturgy with the East or the West Syriac language.
- II. Malayalam and Syriac, respectively the mother tongue and the hieratic languages of the Thomas Christians.
- III. The high esteem the Thomas Christians had for Syriac.
- IV. A general view of the Syriac language and literature.
- V. East and West Syriac polemics.
- VI. East and West Syriac Churches (Catholic and non-Catholic) with which the Thomas Christians had or have relations.
- VII. Syriac liturgies—only those that are related to the Thomas Christians.
- VIII. Syriac liturgical writings—a very short



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description of those that are useful to the Thomas Christians.

IX. Syriac canonical compositions—an outline.

X. Syriac ascetical works—a mere mention only with reference to the Thomas Christians.

XI. Conclusion.

Ideas never die, and, if ventilated, will not fail to produce fruits. We herein give vent to some of our ideas on certain points; others may have their own ideas on the same points; within legitimate limits and in his or her own sphere one can, and sometimes must, act according to his or her convictions and resources.

Although we speak of all the Thomas Christians, who use the Syriac liturgies and the Syriac language, still we will pay some special attention to the Catholic Syro-Malabarians. There is a tendency among some of them to give up altogether whatever is Syriac.

## THE THOMAS CHRISTIANS

### **They and their home**

The term **Thomas Christians** now denote the most ancient Christians of India who have their home in Malabar, the South-West coast of India.<sup>1</sup> They hail Apostle Thomas as the one who converted their forefathers to Christianity. Formerly there were Thomas Christians in different parts of India and outside. Their place is now taken by immigrant Thomas Christians from Malabar. These immigrants also look to Malabar as their home.

### **Their two languages and liturgies**

The mother tongue of the Thomas Christians is Malayalam, one of the Dravidian languages of India. Their hieratic language is Syriac which at one time they were all using in its eastern form known as East Syriac or Chaldaic for performing their most ancient liturgy which was in East Syriac or the Chaldaic. Later on the western form of Syriac and the West Syriac liturgy were introduced among some Thomas Christian communities. The majority still follow the East Syriac liturgy and have the East Syriac or the Chaldaic language.



## **Their ancient hierarchical structure**

From very early times they were having hierarchical relations successively with the Church of Persia proper (Iran) and with the East Syriac Church or the Chaldaic Church of Mesopotamia (Iraq) from where their bishops came. Their chief bishop was called the **Metropolitan and Gate of All India**. The effective administration, however, was in the hands of local priests known as **Archdeacons of All India**. The Archdeacons were also the political and the social leaders of the Thomas Christians. As head of all the Thomas Christians there was only one Archdeacon at one time. As the titles of the chief bishop and of his Archdeacon show, the whole of India belonged to them ecclesiastically.

## **Latin rule and revolt**

At the end of the 16th century the Portuguese 'padroado or Latin ecclesiastical rule was imposed upon the Thomas Christians. The first Latin Prelates were Jesuits and these in several ways latinised liturgy and customs of the Thomas Christians and curtailed the powers of the Archdeacon; the All India aspect of their Church also came to an end. Although the Archdiocesan dignity which had been taken away from their Church was restored to it, still, the Portuguese treated it as a Latin diocese some way inferior to their archdiocese of Goa. The Thomas Christians were yearning for a bishop of their own rite. In 1653 at a false rumour that the Jesuits had killed the Patriarch whom the Pope had sent to them, they revolted against the then Jesuit Prelate.

The great majority constituted themselves under the then Archdeacon. They proclaimed him as their archbishop by a mock consecration which was performed by twelve priests on the strength of a false letter said to have been sent by the above mentioned Patriarch. All the same they protested their loyalty to the Catholic Church and continued to believe that the Patriarch in question was sent by the Pope. The few who led the agitation were in bad faith; still they invoked the authority of the Pope in support of all their actions. The revolt of 1653 is known as the **oath at the Coonan Cross** since it was inaugurated publicly by an oath taken at a cross called the **Coonan Cross**.

### **The Syro-Malabarians**

Realising the truth, the majority gave in and joined the few who had not taken part in the oath. Commissaries sent by the S.Propaganda Congregation, Rome, worked hard to reveal the truth to the multitude. Even before the arrival of the Commissaries many had deserted the Archdeacon and among those were three of his councillors. Subject to varying fortunes and constituted under two Latin regimes, namely, the Portuguese Padroado and the Propaganda, all these continued to follow their latinised liturgy and customs. They are the Predecessors of the Present Catholic Syro-Malabarians of the East Syriac or the Chaldaic liturgy, and both are known also as, **Pazhayakuttukar** i.e. the old party. The long Latin rule and the Latin training their clergy gets even today have coloured their vision

through a thick Latin lence which many of them are unable, or are reluctant and even unwilling to put away.

### The 'Nestorians'

For three centuries the Syro-Malabarians had to struggle for liberating themselves from under the Latin rule and for constituting themselves definitively under their own indigenous prelates. Their struggles were not without internal splits. These splits were of short duration except the one of 1874 led by the foreign Chaldean Catholic bishop, Elias Mellus. It is still perpetuated by a few who accepted 'Nestorianism' and the East Syriac liturgy as practised by the foreign 'Nestorians' (c. 1908). They are now divided into two groups, one with and the other against the foreign 'Nestorian' Patriarch (who has now resigned from his office).

### The Jacobites and the other denominations

The minority of the Thomas Christians who after the revolt of 1653 mentioned above stood with the Archdeacon (pseudo-archbishop) accepted Jacobitism ('Monophysism') and later on the West Syriac liturgy, both from the Jacobites of the middle East. They are known also as **Puthenkuttukar**, i.e. the new party. They have been divided and subdivided into different denominations. The main body, however, has remained Jacobite; after a prolonged quarrel among themselves regarding the nature of the foreign Jacobite Patriarch's authority, they are now constituted under their Catho-

licos who is in communion with the Patriarch, though the quarrel has not completely subsided.

The other denominations are: the independent Jacobites of Anjoor (c. 1772), the Anglicans (who abandoned the West Syriac liturgy and merged into the Anglican Church first, c. 1838, and then into the South Indian United Church), the Mar-Thomites, or the Reformed Jacobites (c. 1875), the St. Thomas Evangelicals who broke away from the Marthomites (c. 1960).

### **The Syro-Malankarians**

Those who became catholic from among the Jacobites in 1930 and their followers are known as the Syro-Malankarians. Malankara is another name by which Malabar is called. They use the West Syriac liturgy.

### **Those who use Syriac now**

Hence the present-day Thomas Christians who use Syriac are of the East Syriac or the Chaldaic and of the West Syriac liturgies. They are:

- 1) Of the East Syriac or Chaldaic liturgy are the
  - a) Catholic Syro-Malabarians,
  - b) Non-Catholic 'Nestorians', called also Chaldeans.
- 2) Of the West Syriac liturgy are the
  - a) Non-Catholic Jacobites (now known also as Orthodox),
  - b) Non-Catholic independent Jacobites of Anjoor,

- c) Non-Catholic Marthomites or Reformed Jacobites,
- d) Catholic Syro-Malankarians,
- e) Non-Catholic St. Thomas Evangelicals.

In the liturgy all, both Catholics and non-Catholics, now use Malayalam or the language that is understood in the place where they are.

### Names common to all

Both the Catholic and the non-Catholic Thomas Christians are known as Syrian Christians, **Syrians**, **Nazranis** (i.e. followers of the Nazarene), **Nazrani Mapilas** (i.e. noble Nazranis). These last two names are not generally used to designate the recent converts who have swelled the number of the Thomas Christians.

### Southists and Northists

Among the ancient Christians we deal with here there is an ethnical minority group known **the Southists**. Their origin is traced back to a 4th century colonisation. They are an endogamous community now. As opposed to **the Southists** the other ancient Christians are called **the Northists**. They are not so endogamous as **the Southists** and they make converts from among the non-Christians which **the Southists** do not. The Syro-Malabar and the Jacobite **Southists** have their own bishops distinct from those of the others.

## II

### MALAYALAM AND SYRIAC

We said above that the Thomas Christians use Malayalam and Syriac, the former being their mother tongue and the latter their hieratic language. We will now speak about these two.

#### 1) MALAYALAM THEIR MOTHER TONGUE

##### **From Tamil or from proto Dravidian?**

Malayalam, as said above, is one of the Dravidian languages of India. According to some it is a daughter, while according to others a sister, of Tamil, another Dravidian language which had attained a high degree of development in the early centuries of the Christian era, if not even before. According to the second opinion both Malayalam and Tamil developed from the same proto-Dravidian stock which more or less was common to all the Dravidian languages. Nevertheless, all admit that Tamil had hegemony over Malayalam for a long time in the very places where Malayalam was spoken. Malayalam developed gradually and attained its perfection at a later period. The Brahmins of Malabar called **Nampoothiris** use the language and have the culture of the place.

## Indus valley culture and proto-Dravidian

We have just made mention of proto-Dravidian. Scholars are inclined to accept the hypothesis that the Mohanjo Daro and the Harappa pictographs that represent the early Indus valley culture of the pre-Christian era (2500-1500 B.C.?) are proto-Dravidian. The Spanish Jesuit, Fr. Heras, Director of the Historical Institute, Bombay, with the help of a Dravidian scholar came to the conclusion that they are proto-Dravidian. He was so sure of his conclusion that he even composed a Dictionary (with grammar) of the proto-Dravidian words (roots) as he read them in the pictographs. The present writer has had the fortune to go through this Dictionary twice. Any way we are in the realm of hypothesis only just as in the possible Sumerian-Dravidian identification of which we shall speak below.

## Indus valley-Sumerian-Dravidian cultures and Aramaic

The pictographs of the Indus valley bear a great similarity to the Sumerian pictographs that represent the early culture of Mesopotamia. The Sumerian culture flourished in places where flourished the Aramaic (Semetic) language that takes its name from Aram, the grandson of Nahor, brother of Patriarch Abraham who was from the Ur of the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia. We have to note here that the name 'Mesopotamia' found in the Septuagint (LXX), and 'Mesopotamia of Syria' found in the Latin Vulgate and some other versions of the Bible is 'Paddan of Aram' in the Hebrew text

and in the Syriac Pscitta version. 'Paddan of Aram' means 'the field or the garden of Aram' which shows the importance Aram had in this place. The author of the article on 'Sumerian language and literature' in 'The New Catholic Encyclopedia' says that in the period between c. 2350-2140 B.C. (Sargonic-Gutian period) the Sumerian language was dominated by Semetic (i.e. Aramaic).<sup>2</sup> Now the Sumerians and the Dravidians, it is held by some are of the same stock.<sup>3</sup> This might be the reason why certain relationship is noticed between Tamil a Dravidian language, and a form of Aramaic. In fact, Tamil and this form of Aramaic have the same words for **father** (**apa**, Tamil—**aba**, Aramaic), **mother** (**ama**, Tamil—**aema**, Aramaic), **I** (**en**, Tamil—**aena**, Aramaic) and **Raba** (**rampam**).<sup>4</sup> This form of Aramaic is similar to East Syriac or Chaldaic which we shall have to speak of.

What about the Ur of the Chaldeans in Paddan of Aram (Mesopotamia wherefrom was Patriarch Abraham? The same writer cited above says (ibid.) that between c. 2140-2030 B.C. was the neo-Sumerian period under the third dynasty of Ur, and also that Ur was a city. In the Dravidian languages Tamil and Malayalam Ur has the meaning of village or town. When it is used as a suffix to a name it means 'the village or town N'. Thus in Malabar we have Trichur, Ollur, Perumpavur, Sampalur, Ettumanur, Kodamalur. . . . When was Abraham's Ur of the Chaldeans called Ur? In the Dravidian languages mentioned above Ur is employed to designate the village or town of a people as v.g. Ur of Brahmins, Ur of Christians just like the Ur of the Chaldeans.



## Laban's language

A word about the language of Laban of Paddan of Aram (i.e. Mesopotamia), second cousin of Aram. In Gen. 25/5 Laban is **Syrian** in the Latin vulgate, but **Aramean** in the Syriac Pscitta version. He was Patriarch Jacob's maternal uncle, and Jacob was Patriarch Abraham's grandson. When Laban and Jacob parted from each other the heap of stones that was erected as testimony was called **Jagar sahaduta** by Laban, and **Galed** by Jacob (Gen. 31/45-47). Both mean the same i.e. 'heap of testimony'. Laban's words are Aramaic and he was an Aramean. They are also Syriac with East Syriac or Chaldaic pronunciation (of which below).

## 2) SYRIAC THEIR HIERATIC LANGUAGE

### Syriac is Aramaic

Pyne Smith says that **Syria** and **Syriac** came into use in place of **Aramia** and **Aramaic** because of Syrus who killed his brother and ruled over Mesopotamia. The Greeks use the words **Syria** and **Syriac** as equivalent to **Aramia** and **Aramaic**.<sup>5</sup> We have seen above that the **Syrian** of the Latin Vulgate is **Aramean** in the Syriac Pscitta. To cite another instance, 'Naaman the Syrian' of the Latin Vulgate is 'Naaman Aramaya' in the Syriac Pscitta (Lk. 4/27).

### Two forms of Syriac and the Thomas Christians

Aramaic admitted of local differences from region

to region, and this was but natural. Syriac is a form of Aramaic that developed and became literary in a very early period. Syriac, with no difference in grammar and syntax, is written and pronounced in two ways, the Eastern and the Western—vg. the Eastern ‘o’ and long ‘a’ is ‘u’ and long ‘o’ in the Western. Thus we have East Syriac and West Syriac, the ancient Estrangela script being common to both. The former is also called Chaldaic, or Syro-Chaldaic, or ‘Nestorian’. The pronunciation of East Syriac or Chaldaic is similar to that of the words of Laban cited above. And Laban’s words were also Aramaic. It is the Aramaic (Syriac) of Paddan of Aram i.e. Mesopotamia which had a different script.

As said above, all the Thomas Christians used East Syriac once, and all the Syro-Malabarian Thomas Christians as well as a few non-Catholic Thomas Christians (‘Nestorians’) of Malabar use it even today as their hieratic language. The other Thomas Christians who have Syriac as their hieratic language use it in its Western form in script and pronunciation. They are the Jacobites, Independent Jacobites of Anjoor, Mar-Thomites, Syro-Malankarites and the St. Thomas Evangelicals.

### **Teresa Neumann and Aramaic (Syriac) of our Lord**

On the first Friday of August 1958, from Regensburg in the company of Br. Wolfgang, OCD., the present writer went to the Bavarian village where lived Teresa Neumann who was widely known as an ecstatic. We

reached the village in question by noon and obtained the permission of the local parish priest to visit Teresa. Teresa then came to the church to receive Holy Communion and we met her in the sacristy. She asked us to go to her house nearby after lunch. Accordingly we were in her house at about 2.30 p.m. With the simplicity of a child she answered our questions regarding her experiences during the ecstasies. Without attributing anything supernatural to them I asked her through Br. Wolfgang, OCD., who knew English if she could reproduce from memory a few words which she had heard during her ecstasies. She said that they were Aramaic, and with apology for the possible defects of her memory she reproduced a good many, some of which were:

s-lam lak malka d-judaye : Hail to you king of the Jews (said to our Lord by those who crowned Him)

har b-reki : Here (is) your son (Our Lord to His Mother from the cross)

har aemak : Here (is) your mother. (Our Lord to St. John from the cross)

tshe : (I) am thirsty (Our Lord from the cross)

slem kol-hen : All is consummated (Our Lord from the cross)

aba bidak apqeth ruhi : Father in Thy hand I make my spirit go out (Our Lord from the cross)

aena la thede (h) lun : I (am) be not afraid (Our Lord to the Apostles after resurrection)

She said she had forgotten the words of Our Lord spoken to the good thief as well as those Our

Lord addressed to the Father to forgive His executioners. I asked how she had heard the name 'Mary'. She said when the Scripture was being read in the temple she had heard it as Miriam, while she had heard St. Joseph calling Our Lady Mariam.

If the words cited above all Aramaic, and they are Aramaic, they are also Syriac with the East Syrian pronunciation. They are like certain words reproduced in their original form in the New Testament, such as, aba, kepa (cephas), talita qumi, haqel d-ma (hacel dama), maran atha, eli eli lama sabaqthani. These words represent the language spoken by the Jews of Our Lord's time in Palestine and also by Our Lord. This had become the spoken language of the Jews during the Babylonian captivity in the East, in Paddan of Aram or Mesopotamia where Aramaic was the language of the place. What is specially noteworthy is that their pronunciation is the same as that of East Syriac. Let us recall here what we said above about the Aramaic of Laban who was from the home of Aramaic. All this would argue that the Aramaic of Our Lord and Syriac, especially Syriac in its East Syriac pronunciation, are substantially the same. Our Lord's was a popular form of Aramaic brought from the East while Syriac, especially in its Eastern pronunciation is the same (or almost the same) that attained literary development in Edessa and in the neighbouring places.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Aramaic of Malula and Syriac**

The Aramaic of our Lord's time is said to be still

spoken in the village of Malula in modern Syria. But it has changed by use through centuries owing chiefly to the influence of other languages such as Turkish and Arabic. Syriac, on the other hand is substantially the same as Aramaic, we would say, that did not change drastically, but did develop and became literary with no further substantial change. Hence no other hieratic language can compare with Syriac if we take into consideration that it was through (one of) its popular form(s) that the Son of God made His revelation, and that the books of the New Testament were written by those who spoke the same.<sup>7</sup>

### III

## THE HIGH ESTEEM THE THOMAS CHRISTIANS HAD FOR SYRIAC

From what we said above it follows that the Thomas Christians possess an inestimable treasure in Syriac, their hieratic language which in Malabar was called also Chaldaic in the 16th century—Those of them who have the East Syriac may be said to be more fortunate than the others who have the West Syriac. For East Syriac is more ancient in Malabar and has substantially retained the pronunciation of our Lord's Aramaic. Whether or not they were conscious of this, the Thomas Christians of old highly esteemed the Syriac language to which they were also passionately attached. We reproduce below two testimonies with some clarifications thereof:

1) Nunes Baretto, SJ., Rector of the Jesuit College of Cochin Malabar, wrote on Dec. 1, 1561, that the Thomas Christians held as divine the Chaldaic language and that they would not give credence or authority to anything if it was not presented in that language (...porque come todas estos tenham as cousas divinas na lingua caldea a não em outra, quasi nonlum credite nem devaquam nem autoridade dão a toda doutrina que se lhes daa, se não vay envolta ne caldea).<sup>8</sup>

Since it was a popular form of Aramaic, almost the

same as East Syriac or Chaldaic, that Our Lord spoke, they were right in attaching something divine to East Syriac or Chaldaic which was the hieratic language of all the Thomas Christians at that time.

2) In 1578 three representatives of the Thomas Christians wrote to the Pope saying "Our prayers are in the Syriac or Chaldaic language which was handed over to us by our lord St. Thomas, and we and our predecessors have been taught this language".<sup>9</sup>

Let us see if there could be any foundation in the claim of the representatives of the Thomas Christians that the Apostle St. Thomas had handed over to them the Syriac or Chaldaic (East Syriac) language.

Long before the dawn of Christianity and also during the first centuries of the Christian era, India (South India including Malabar where flourished the Dravidian culture) had commercial relations with Mesopotamia and the other countries of the Middle East where Aramaic was spoken. This is admitted by all. Hence the commercial importance of Aramaic in the East before the rise of Islam. Aramaic was also the vehicle of the Gospel in places east of Antioch. Cranganore in Malabar known to the Greeks and Romans as Muziris, was a very important centre in those days.

That the Jews who spoke Aramaic were very influential in India is testified by one of Asoka's edicts promulgated also in Aramaic.<sup>10</sup>

According to the tradition of the Thomas Christians, among the converts of St. Thomas in Malabar there were also Jews. The language of these Jews was

Aramaic. Six of the seven churches or communities which, tradition says, St. Thomas founded in Malabar, were in places in which, or in the vicinity of which, it is said, there were Jews. These places are: Cranganore, Palayur, Parur, Kokkamangalam, Niranam and Quilon. The seventh Chayal too is spoken of as a Jewish colony by some.<sup>11</sup>

Thus it could be argued that the Apostle St. Thomas, himself a Jew who spoke Aramaic, might have performed some items of worship and also said some prayers in Aramaic (Syriac or Chaldaic as said above). The affirmation of the three representatives of the Thomas Christians adduced above, may not, therefore, be simply brushed aside as having no foundation. Any way it cannot at all be denied that the roots of the ancient Christianity of Malabar is directly Aramaic (Syriac or Chaldaic i.e. East Syriac as said above).



## IV

### SYRIAC LITERATURE

#### A very vast and rich literature

Syriac has a very vast and rich literature as can be seen from the works of Duval Baumstark, Wright, de Urbina and of others who have written about it. It is predominantly Christian-patristic and ecclesiastical.<sup>12</sup> To give a very general idea about it we quote here the words of Fr. I. Zuzek, SJ., Rector of the Pontifical Institute for Oriental Studies, Rome. In his introductory speech in the Symposium Syriacum held in the same Institute from October 26-30, 1972, among other things he said:

“Indeed the study of Syriac literature, which flourished from the 2nd to the 14th century of our era, and which embraces far more works than appears in the *Patrologia Orientalis*, or even than are treated by Baumstark or by the secretary of this Symposium, Fr. Ignacio Ortiz de Urbina, SJ., has importance primarily for its own sake. For one thing, it was produced in a milieu which received the Christian Gospel during the very lifetime of the Apostles who preserved and lived that message for centuries in a cultural context extremely close to that in which the Gospel itself originated. For

another, the writers of Syriac undertook at a very early date to translate many of the documents of Greek patristic literature into their own idiom, with the result that the Syriac translations not infrequently preserve for us works that have otherwise completely perished or have survived only in a much later redaction than that represented by the Syriac. Indeed it has justly been said that it is impossible to have a profound knowledge of Greek patrology without consulting the Syriac translations. One cannot but think, in this connection, of the work of the successor of Bishop Rabbula of Edessa the famous Hiba, called by Ebedjesus, 'the translator' *par excellence*, who translated, together with the other members of his *entourage*, the Greek works of Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, thus preserving some of the most important literary expressions of the theological school of Antioch".

We may add here that the Greek apology of Nestorius, the book of Heraclides, has been preserved in its Syriac translation.

### Domain of Syriac literature

Syriac was spoken and written in such Christian centres as Edessa and Nisibis the scene of the wonderful career of St. Ephrem. The domain of Syriac literature embraced most of the Middle East from Lebanon to Merv in Eastern Persia (Iran) and from Turkey and Cyprus to the island of Qatar in the Persian gulf.

The domain of Syriac liturgical literature extended over virtually the entire continent of Asia and even beyond from the Nitrian desert in Egypt to China and from Siberia to Malabar and Ceylon and even to Indonesia (Cf. Ibid.).

### **A great advantage: Different categories**

The better one understands the Syriac ecclesiastical literature, especially in the Syriac language itself, the better he can understand the Bible, especially the New Testament. How priceless are the treasures the Thomas Christians possess in this. Great will be their folly if they will give up its study.

Ascetical, Biblical, Canonical, Hagiographical, Historical, Liturgical, Medicinal, Patristic, Philosophical, Polemical and other kinds of works are found in the Syriac literature. We shall deal with some of these categories that had or have special relations with the Thomas Christians as we said in the Introduction.

## EAST AND WEST SYRIAC POLEMICS

After the councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), the important polemical writings in Syriac literature took two different lines, each hostile to the other—the anti-Ephesian or East Syriac movement called Nestorian and the anti-Chalcedonian or West Syriac movement called Jacobite ('Monophysite'). In this there was considerable political hostility, misunderstanding of terms and party spirit. Also what made a council ecumenical was not often clear to the interested parties. These polemics represent also the Churches known as the Nestorian and Jacobite respectively.

### 1) THE ANTI-EPHESIAN OR NESTORIAN MOVEMENT

#### **Theology of homo assumptus**

The East Syriac or Nestorian writings and writers insist on the theology of "homo assumptus" in Theodorian categories and terms rendered into East Syriac. Theodore of Mopsuestia is their great patron and they call him "the interpreter". They say that Christ is homo (Jesus, the primitiae from us) assumptus or put on by the Word. Thus they hold that Christ as God and man, is one.

## Terms and their application

In Christ they put two **kiane**, two **qnome** and one **parsopa**.

**Kiana** is nature (phusis) or that which is expressed in the definition of a thing in the abstract. It is clear that they deal with creatures though they apply their definitions to God also.

**Qnoma** is more or less the pre-Chalcedonian hypostasis; some take it as quiddity; some as individual concrete **kiana** (nature) that exists by itself capable of taking accidents (in creatures); some as mere substance.

**Parsopa** (prosopon) for some is appearance or external form; for others the sum total of accidents (or even an accident) that distinguishes one **qnoma** from another **qnoma** of the same **kiana**.

In God there is only one **kiana**, but there are three **qnome** and each **qnoma** is distinguished from the others by its **parsopa** or property which are Fatherhood, Filiation and Procession (which are not accidents as in creatures). Thus we have three **qnome** of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When they speak of three **qnome** in God they do not exclude the corresponding **parsopa**.

### One Son

Although some East Syrians have gone to the extreme, in general they do not seem to attribute **complete autonomy** to Jesus (the human **qnoma** or homo in Christ) assumed by the Word (the divine **qnoma**). They say that Christ (or Jesus the assumed and Word

the assumer) is One, One Son, the Son of God. Jesus or homo never existed without having been assumed by, or united inseparably to the Word; and this assumption or union is not in distance, but physical. Christ is thus the Son of God; He has only one **parsopa** of filiation which is the Divine filiation of the second **qnoma** of the Trinity; this Divine **parsopa** of Filiation is common to the divine and human **qnome** of Christ. Christ, they affirm, is One, One Son, the Son of God. They even say (because of this oneness) that Jesus is born without beginning, is Creator and the Splendour of the Father. They emphatically reject the idea of two sons in Christ; Christ for them is One (Son) through the One Divine Filiation.

### Two subjects

The pro-Ephesians and pro-Chalcedonians (and also the anti-Chalcedonian Jacobites who are pro-Ephesians) who scrutinise the above given explanation suspect and even affirm that there is only a moral union here between two subjects, Jesus and the Word. They say that the union advocated by the East Syrians, though highly sublimated so as to eclipse the duality of subjects or **supposita**, still, hides the same duality in the Nestorian sense, i.e., in the sense of the Nestorian prosopic union in which two autonomous subjects (persons) by a process of give and take, exchange their **parsopa** such as power, dignity etc., and appear as one, or are spoken of as one. Some of the examples the East Syrians adduce confirm this affirmation of their adversaries. The East Syrians compare the union in question with the union

of husband and wife in love, or with the union of a king with his minister in power and dignity. In fact the East Syrians say that Jesus (*homo assumptus*) was raised up with the Word in the same power and dignity. Occasionally they also use the abstract and the concrete forms of nouns indiscriminately which also creates confusion and indecision.

### In the light of the system of Scotus

It would seem that their Christology in general has a great similarity to the system of Duns Scotus (of *homo assumptus*), especially in its refined form as presented by Pesch, Franzelin and Tiphanius. In the words of Karl Adam it comes to this:

“...the self same intact human nature has been assumed into the divine hypostasis...and it no longer belongs to itself but to the Logos. But in this process the human personality is by no means completely cancelled out. Because it belongs to the human nature, it is still there, virtually, and is not distinguished or destroyed by the divine person, but assumed to it. This assumption does not imply the destruction of the human self, but its exaltation. In scholastic terms it is not a **defectus ad imperfectum**, but a **profectus ad perfectum**, a tremendous transformation into the divine. This process of perfection is possible because human nature like any created nature on account of its **potentia obediencialis**, is ordained towards union with the divine. The hypostatic union is the fulfil-

ment of the deepest longing that lies like an undeveloped seed in created nature, the longing for the most real union and unity with God. This is why there is nothing in any way unnatural about the process of Incarnation. Indeed, it is much rather the fulfilment of what the Creator from the beginning planted in nature as its ultimate culminating potentiality".<sup>13</sup>

In his book **Margaritha Ebedjesus Sobensis** appears as an ardent exponent of the homo assumptus theory apparently in the Nestorian sense. But, in the same book he says of Christ (the anointed) huiu masocha vam-sicha: hi manb-alahutheh hade den banasutheh, i.e. the same was the anointer and the anointed, that in his divinity and this in his humanity.

Those of the school of Babai the Great say with him that the union took place before the fetus was animated by the human soul. Hence their union in love does not mean what is meant by the union of husband and wife in love.

They call the Blessed Virgin Mary "Mother of our God", "Mother of God the Son", but not "Mother of God", since the Word God, they say, used without qualification may signify the Trinity, or any one of the Trinity, and so, they add, it is dangerous to say "Mother of God" (God used without qualification). Their ordinary formula is "Mother of Christ". Christ for them is "Our God", "God above all".



## Pluralism

From what is said above, it would seem that the East Syriac Christology may not be forthwith condemned on the basis of the scholasticism of the Thomist school (as many seem to do). There was much misunderstanding in the East Syrian condemnation of Ephesus and St. Cyril. The East Syriac polemics were directed chiefly against the "Monophysites" who, the East Syrians thought, professed a doctrine according to which the human nature of Christ was merged into His divine nature, or His divine nature was merged into His human nature, or a third nature was formed by the fusion of both.

Were they endeavouring to express in East Syriac the orthodox doctrine employing Theodorian categories and terms? Here we have to distinguish between dogma and 'Theology'. In the field of 'Theology' or 'theological systems' Catholics who hold the same dogma often quarrel among themselves accusing one another of holding erroneous theological systems that endanger the dogma, though each says that his 'theology' is meant to explain the same dogma which the others too hold. Although the East Syrians introduced into their ancient liturgy passages that praise Nestorius with his masters and condemn Ephesus with St. Cyril, still, they did not change or correct their ancient liturgical texts as propagators of new doctrines have done. Their own terms and categories they introduced in to the liturgy, but did not correct or change their ancient texts. In some pre-14th century additions made to the Divine Office we have

such expressions as: "The Highest drew milk from the breast as do sucklings and infants, was bound in swaddling clothes, and was placed in a manger"; "No less wonderful is that He who is seated on the throne of heaven should have been laid in a manger"; "The Ancient of days became the Son of Mary in later time"; He "is (one) who is born twice, divinely and humanly, eternally before all ages and temporally today (on Christmas day)"; "He is the child whose Father is heavenly and whose mother is earthly". These are not expressions to be considered slightly. Those who introduced them to the divine Office did not consider that they changed or modified their ancient belief.

Who knows if a study of the East Syriac writings in question in the light of East Syriac liturgical texts and in a spirit of ecumenism may not open up another aspect of legitimate theological pluralism? Under the magisterium of the Catholic Church the Catholic Syro-Malabarians can profitably take up this study in view of their Nestorian brethren of Malabar, and also of their pre-17th century relations with the East Syriac Church of Mesopotamia. In view of these relations the other Thomas Christians also can join them. Although the Portuguese and other Latins destroyed most of the East Syriac literature that was in Malabar (one Mass and the Divine Office were partially spared), they could now be had in MSS or in print, thanks to the foreign scholars and the foreign generous agencies.<sup>14</sup>

## 2) THE ANTI-CHALCEDONIAN OF JACOBITES

### Verbal Monophysism

Coming to the West Syriac anti-Chalcedonian Jacobite ("Monophysist") writings, we have not much to say since the Monophysism contained in them is only nominal. True, they speak of one **kiono** (nature) in Christ, though in reality they admit two. The great writer bar Hebraeus whom they hold as one of highest authority, in his book **Zalga**, which is a compendium of his **M-norath qudso**, affirms that the one **kiono** of Christ is 'apipo' i.e. a double one. The polemics before him were carried on against those who held two natures in Christ.

### In Malabar

Several West Syriac writings in addition to the liturgical texts have been brought to Malabar and not a few learned Malabar Jacobite priests have made use of them. The study of these writings does not seem to have been taken up by the independent Jacobites of Anjoor, while the Mar-Thomites and the St. Thomas Evangelicals seem to have even abandoned it. The latter two are Anglicanized (protestantised) in belief.

Any way all who use the West Syriac liturgy must take interest in the study of these writings in a spirit of ecumenism. The Thomas Christians of the East Syriac liturgy, both Catholic and non-Catholic, should see that they do not stand aloof in these ecumenical efforts, because all were one at one time.

## VI

### EAST AND WEST SYRIAC CHURCHES (CATHOLIC AND NON-CATHOLIC)

We deal only with the East and West Syriac Churches with which the Thomas Christians fostered or foster relations.

#### 1) THE EAST SYRIAC CHURCH

##### **Roman Primacy**

The East Syriac writers and writings mentioned above as Nestorian, when they deal with the Roman Primacy, emphatically proclaim the Primacy of St. Peter, his journey to and martyrdom in Rome as well as Rome's ecclesiastical superiority over all the Churches just as Catholics believe. Time and again such writings as v.g., the so called Nicaean or Arabic canons and their commentaries, insist that the Roman Patriarch is the successor of St. Peter and as such Has authority (sultana) over all the other Patriarchs, their own Patriarch not excluded. They say that Pope Celestine of Rome in the case of Nestorius and Ephesus was deceived by the Egyptian Pharaoh, Cyril of Alexandria. Hence they had not given up the belief in their communion with Rome although they had no contacts with Rome until the time of the crusades. They were not,

therefore, in the know of dogmatic developments that took place in the West.<sup>15</sup> During the crusades the East Syriac Patriarchs and certain bishops entered into cordial relations with Rome speaking of Rome's supremacy as something already held by them as part of their faith.

### Divided into two

After 1552 the East Syriac Church, which was known as Nestorian, was divided under two Patriarchs. To do away with the hereditary succession of Patriarchs a party sent one Sulaqa to Rome to be consecrated and installed as Patriarch since there were not among them Metropolitans to perform these ceremonies. Sulaqa was installed Patriarch in Rome. From the profession of faith Sulaqa made in Rome it is clear that the East Syriac Church had kept up the faith in Roman Primacy as said above.<sup>16</sup> Sulaqa's successors were explicitly confirmed in office by Rome. The second successor, though he tried much, could not contact Rome before his death.

But there was the hereditary line of Patriarchs and these with their party stood against Sulaqa and his party. They, however, do not seem to have denied the Roman Primacy.

Years after the 16th century the successors of Sulaqa ceased to ask confirmation from Rome and they gradually formed the present Nestorian Church which denies the Roman Primacy possessing, however, the above mentioned writings that admit the same Primacy.

Anglican and other Protestant influence has brought them to this state.

Those of the other line (namely the line that had stood against Sulaqa) began contacts with Rome and also got explicit Roman confirmation for their Patriarchs. These form the present Catholic East Syriac or Chaldaic Church. Praises of Nestorius and of his masters, condemnation of Ephesus and St. Cyril, passages that speak of homo assumptus (except in a few cases) have been removed from their books. They accept also Ephesus and the expression "Mother of God" (God used without qualification) as well as one **Qnoma** in Christ.

### **Stand of the Thomas Christians**

What about the stand of the Thomas Christians? As we said, until the end of the 16th century the Thomas Christians had hierarchical relations with the East Syriac Church. After 1552 until they were put under the Latin rule at the end of the 16th century, they were juridically related to the East Syriac Patriarchs who were explicitly confirmed in their office by Rome, though some Malabar bishops came from the Patriarchs of the other line.

The East Syriac polemical writings did not reach the Thomas Christians in any controversial atmosphere. Fr. Roz, S.J., (afterwards bishop, the first Latin Prelate of the Thomas Christians) in 1585 or 1586 prepared a study 'on the errors' of the Thomas Christians as found in their East Syriac books.<sup>17</sup> Therein at the very outset he says about the Thomas Christians (whom he calls

Nestorians—this is very important): “Although they professed the Roman Catholic faith, still, their books abound in the errors of Nestorius, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Diodore of Tarsus”. As a probable exception he mentions their East Syriac bishop of the time (this also is very important). He says that they publicly preached that the Blessed Virgin Mary is Mother of God (although says he, there were books in Malabar that did not admit this), and that they left out the names of Nestorius and others when they recited the Divine Office. In other words, they professed the Roman Catholic Faith, and when they were told (by the Portuguese?) they should invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary “Mother of God” (God used without qualification), and should not venerate Nestorius and others, they readily consented. A metal bell cast in 1584 for the church of Kuravilangad, Malabar, which is still used in that church, has an embossed East Syriac inscription (cast together with the bell) in which there occurs the expression **aemeh dalaha** (Mother of God—God used without qualification).

Again, on Dec. 7, 1601, the same Roz, S.J., as bishop of the Thomas Christians, gave testimony to the constancy of the faith of the Thomas Christians throughout the past (from the beginning of their Christian origin until the day of his writing) in the following words: “These Christians, the oldest (Christians) among those of this East...converted to our most holy faith from idolatry by the Apostle St. Thomas, although they have been living among heathens, Jews and Mohammadans, still,...have always (semper) to

this time (ad hoc tempus) most firmly (constantissimi) preserved (perstiterunt) in faith. . . .” He continues saying that they were under Chaldean Prelates who were infected with the Nestorian heresy.<sup>18</sup> This is very important in this context, especially when this is taken along with his words cited above about the faith of the Thomas Christians and of their East Syrian Prelate.

Hence what the Portuguese said, namely, that their Latin Archbishop of Goa Don Menesez, converted the Thomas Christians from heresy and schism at or a little before the infamous “synod” which he held in Malabar at Diamper in 1599, is utterly false. Any way they succeeded to put the Thomas Christians under their Padroado Latin rule at the end of 1599. The present Syro-Malabarians of the East Syriac liturgy are the successors in faith of the Thomas Christians to whose constancy of faith Roz did give testimony. We have already said how they, after the revolt of 1653, came under the Latin Portuguese Padroado and the Latin propaganda jurisdictions and how a few of them became Nestorians after 1874 and c. 1908 took the East Syriac liturgy of the Nestorians. (Of those of the West Syriac liturgy we will speak below).

## 2) THE WEST SYRIAC CHURCH

### **Roman Primacy**

Like the East Syriac, the West Syriac writings also accept the so-called Nicaean or Arabic Canons which clearly speak of the authority of the Roman Patriarch over all the other Patriarchs. But they do not seem to



repeat this with corroborative comments as do the East Syriac writings. They condemn Chalcedon and Pope Leo of Rome (of Chalcedon) while they venerate Dioscorus of Alexandria and his ardent followers. They, however, admit clearly the Primacy of St. Peter, his journey to and martyrdom in Rome. When the Jacobite Church was organised by Jacob Burdana in the 6th century under a Patriarch with the title "of Antioch", there does not seem to have been anti-Roman feelings among the Jacobites (except against the person of Pope Leo). Later on some Jacobites sought explicit Roman Communion, and after 1781 "the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch" was constituted. The Catholics of this Patriarchate, who also use the West Syriac liturgy, accept Chalcedon and two **kione** (natures) in Christ, venerate Pope Leo of Rome, and condemn Dioscorus of Alexandria and his ardent followers. Those who kept themselves aloof from them continued to remain as Jacobites with anti-Roman sentiments.<sup>19</sup>

### **In Malabar**

It was with anti-Roman sentiments that the first foreign Jacobite Prelate (Mar Gregory) came to Malabar in 1665, twelve years after the revolt of 1653 and the oath at the Coonan Cross. He succeeded in converting the minority of the Thomas Christians, who stood firm in the revolt, into Jacobitism. But anti-Roman sentiments did not take root among the Malabar Jacobites until they came under the influence of the Anglicans in the 18th century. In course of time the West

Syriac liturgy was gradually introduced among the Jacobites of Malabar.

We have spoken above about the divisions and subdivisions that have introduced different denominations among the Jacobites of Malabar. All these, except the Anglicans, use the West Syriac liturgy.

We have also said how the present Catholic Syro-Malankara Church of the West Syriac liturgy came into existence in 1930.

## VII

### SYRIAC LITURGIES

The Syriac liturgies are very old and are divided into the East and West Syriac which respectively use the East and West Syriac language. We will speak only of the East and West Syriac liturgies that are in use among the Thomas Christians. We shall have to treat a little at length about the East Syriac liturgy together with some general notions.

#### 1) THE EAST SYRIAC LITURGY

The East Syriac liturgy is the one which all the Thomas Christians were using until the West Syriac liturgy was introduced into Malabar among the Jacobites long after the 17th century. The Jacobites of Malabar even after they had accepted Jacobitism continued to use the East Syriac liturgy for a long time in its latinised and mutilated form as the Catholic Syro-Malabarians were doing.

The Thomas Christians got the East Syriac liturgy from the East Syriac Church of the Middle East. We do not know when exactly they got it. It could be that its development was known to them from the very

start because of the relations Malabar had with the Middle East.

### **Ancient liturgies**

The ancient liturgies of the Church developed in important Christian centres where the Fathers of the Church and other ecclesiastical writers flourished. Christ gave to the Apostles the elements of the liturgy, and the Apostles, each in his way, entrusted the same intact in substance to their disciples. These elements developed into definite liturgical forms by a slow, gradual, steady progress in important Christian centres mentioned above, under the careful vigilance of ecclesiastical Pastors. Each centre contributed its share in its own way to the development in question. The Bible and the Christian tradition were the chief factors that contributed towards this development. In other words, each ancient liturgy is a patristic synthesis based on the Bible and Christian tradition, and each has its own special characteristics though each expresses the same faith. Here lies the importance of the ancient liturgies of the Church: they are different expressions of the ancient faith bearing witness to the tradition of the Church coming down from Christ through 'the Apostles. Faith is too deep to be expressed in one way alone, and so different modes of its expression came into existence as its primitive witnesses. Hence the ancient liturgies are considered as inestimable treasures by the Church. This is why Vatican II in its decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches enjoins that changes or additions are not to be made in the (ancient) liturgies

unless they form one organic whole with the original No. 6).

### East Syriac liturgy and Malabar

a) Churches or places which were not centres of Christian knowledge did not develop their own liturgies, but received them from centres which were near or dear to them. They also gave them their own modality on minor points.

There is no shred of evidence to show that the Thomas Christians developed a liturgy of their own on the basis of the elements they got from the Apostle St. Thomas. They had relations with the Middle East. The Jews were influential in India with their Aramaic language, and according to tradition, among the first Thomas Christians of Malabar there were also Jewish converts. When liturgies began to develop there was already a great devotion towards the Apostle St. Thomas in the Middle East, especially in Edessa which possessed and venerated the relics of the Apostle which were translated thither from India. The whole Christian East from Edessa eastwards venerated St. Thomas as their special Patron, some as their direct, and others as their indirect Apostle. It was believed that St. Thomas sent Addai to Edessa, and Mari, deputed by Addai, introduced Christianity into Mesopotamia while St. Thomas himself had preached in Persia proper. Hence the spiritual relationship of the Thomas Christians to the Christians of the Middle East.

Edessa was the greatest Christian centre in the East outside *limes romanus*. Nisibis in the neighbour-

hood also came up to that status keeping up the Edessan traditions, St. Ephrem being the greatest undisputed exponent thereof. Even Narses and others who were followers of Theodore of Mopsuestia seem to have taught and written with this tradition in the background.

To all probability the East Syriac liturgy, the liturgy of the East outside the Roman empire, had its initial development in Edessa which was also a Judeo-Christian Syriac centre. As its earliest anaphora, the one that is attributed to Addai and Mari, shows, this development was Judeo-Christian in origin.<sup>20</sup>

The Edessan tradition passed over to the East Syriac Church of Mesopotamia whose head-quarters were Seleucia-Ctesiphon (transferred to Bagdad in the 9th century). The Thomas Christians had relations with Mesopotamia at a very early date, as also Malabar had had the same. The East Syriac Church of Mesopotamia entertained a special devotion towards the Apostle St. Thomas. Thus the Thomas Christians could feel in that Church a spiritual congeniality which could very well have made them happy to accept the East Syriac liturgy, the more so since they do not seem to have developed a liturgy of their own. The Jewish Thomas Christian element with its Aramaic (Syriac) language, the Judeo-Christian origin of the East Syriac liturgy, and the sacredness of the Syriac language could all have contributed their share in this. This could very well happen even before the Thomas Christians began to have hierarchical relations with the East Syriac Church of Mesopotamia.

Could it be that the Thomas Christians got their

developed liturgy from the Church of Persia proper first? The Church of Persia proper believed that St. Thomas was its Apostle. After the middle of the 8th century the Church of India (the Thomas Christians too) had hierarchical relations with the Church of Persia proper. We do not know when these relations had their beginning. The Church of Persia proper and the East Syriac Church of Mesopotamia were within the Persian empire whose capital was Seleucia-Ctesiphon which was also the head-quarters of the latter Church before the 9th century. Definitely from 410 onwards the Church of Persia proper was **de jure** indisputably put under the East Syriac Church of Mesopotamia. The Synod held in that year decreed that all the Churches under Seleucia-Ctesiphon (i.e. the East Syriac Church of Mesopotamia) should conform themselves to the liturgical practices of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. The Church of Persia proper does not seem to have had its liturgy in a language which was not East Syriac. Any way that Church had to follow the East Syriac liturgy of the East Syriac Church of Mesopotamia. If the Thomas Christians got their liturgy from the Church of Persia proper first, they had to adjust the same according to that of the East Syriac Church of Mesopotamia after 410. A little after the middle of the 7th century the Church of India (the Thomas Christians too) was taken away from under the Church of Persia proper and put directly under the East Syriac Church of Mesopotamia.

## East Syriac liturgy directly Aramaic and ancient

As said above, the earliest anaphora of the East Syriac liturgy, namely the one attributed to Addai and Mari, is Judeo-Christian in origin. The other anaphoras now in use, those namely that are falsely attributed to Nestorius and Theodore, though Greek in origin, have been modelled on the earliest one. The other items of the liturgy also, such as, vg. the Divine Office with an ecclesiastical calendar whose "temporal" is a masterpiece, are all composed in the style and diction of the Bible, not to say that they are suffused with Biblical ideas and allusions. The East Syriac liturgy goes directly to the Aramaic (Syriac) roots of the New Testament revelation. Great, therefore, are the treasures the Thomas Christians of the East Syriac liturgy possess in this liturgy which has also inestimable apologetic values as it expresses the faith of the primitive Church in a simple language and style, East Syriac itself being the language of Jesus Christ and the early Church.

Its apologetic values are enhanced by the fact that it still preserves distinctly its archaic aspect unlike some other liturgies which, though ancient, have been obscured not a little in this aspect as a result of Greco-Roman influence. Those who seek modernity and progress in everything with no sense of the importance tradition has in the Christian belief and worship may even deride at the typically archaic aspect of this liturgy. Here we may point out that the marvellous morality of some primitive tribes is a lesson in apologetics for many a devotee of modern progress. This does not mean



that these tribes should be kept in their primitive state. They ought to make progress, not by giving up, but by jealously keeping alive their sense of morality which can never be set aside or derided at as primitive and outmoded. Thus the East Syriac liturgy should grow, of course, from within, keeping its archaic aspect. In fact it has grown thus, and it must continue to grow. But no real growth takes place all on a sudden, or by the borrowing and the putting together of foreign elements. Those who help its growth must be the chosen ones of a community which knows and lives the spirit it embodies. As a preparation for this the liturgy in question must be brought back to its genuine form. For this there is need for a careful study of its ancient MSS and commentaries as well as of the works of the Fathers and writers who flourished in places where this liturgy developed. In dealing with matters liturgical one should be on the safer traditional side since the rule of prayer is the rule of belief (*lex orandi lex credendi*). This is all the more true when the liturgy is performed in the language of the people.

### **The present-day Syro-Malabarians and the East Syriac liturgy**

Coming to the present day Syro-Malabarians and the East Syriac liturgy, we will begin by mentioning a peculiarity of the earliest anaphora of this liturgy. This anaphora as well as its pre and post anaphoral parts (both of which are common to the other anaphoras also), contain Christological prayers (addressed to Christ) along with theological ones (addressed to the

Father or to the Trinity). Thus Christ is asked in some prayers to accept the sacrifice. Is this Christological aspect an emphasis made by the Judeo-Christians before their Jewish brethren to make them understand that Christ is God who as man offers and as God accepts the sacrifice? Or is it an anti-Arian development to emphasise the same idea against the Arians who denied Christ to be God? During the Arian troubles there developed anaphoras that were Christological throughout. Some even hold that the anaphora attributed to Addai and Mari was originally Christological throughout. This anaphora, as used by the Maronite West Syrians at one time, was Christological except for the Eucharistic prayer that introduced the **Sanctus**. But the **Sanctus** is a later introduction even in the original, and so the Eucharistic prayer might have been made theological (?). One wonders why some of the Christological prayers in question have been made theological by the Syro-Malabarians in 1968 although they were already approved by Pope Pius XII after they had been examined and accepted by the plenary meeting of the Cardinals who composed the S. Congregation for the Oriental Churches.<sup>21</sup> (Of this we shall speak again below).

The portuguese and the other Latin Prelates of the Syro-Malabarians latinised and mutilated the ancient East Syrian liturgy of Malabar preserving, however, the East Syriac language. As though to crown the latinisation the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy in 1929 presented to the Holy See for approbation an East Syriac translation of the Latin (Roman) pontificals. Pope Pius XI refused approbation saying:

“Latinism ought not to be encouraged among the Orientals; the Holy See intends not to latinise, but to catholicise. Half measures are neither generous nor fruitful.\* Let them therefore, continue in **status quo** (they were then using the Latin Pontificals in Latin), but let a commission be nominated entrusted with the task of revising the most ancient Pontifical which could be printed part by part” (Plenary, Dec. 1, 1934).

Thus the S. Congregation for the Oriental Church took up the task of restoring the East Syriac liturgy for the Syro-Malabarians. The Pontificals and the Mass with its accessories were restored and after Papal approbation (as said above) were put into execution in East Syriac and Malayalam in 1960 and 1962 respectively. Directions or texts for the other items were sent to the Syro-Malabar bishops by the S. Congregation for the Oriental Church. But after Vatican II, all, even the Pontificals and the Mass that had direct Papal approbation have been latinised with mistranslations of venerable liturgical formulae and even of Biblical expressions: The Portuguese and the other Latins did not go so far.<sup>22</sup> It is said that all this is experimental. Experiments with latinisation? For how long? Many are morally forced to succumb to this experiment. Can any inferior authority without an ad hoc authorisation from the Pope alter

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\* “Half measures are neither generous nor fruitful”—It is amusing to see that some are quoting this sentence out of the context in support of their ideas which are against those of the one who pronounced it.

that which the Pope decreed upon and approved? How could one abstain from saying that all this is also against Vatican II's decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches which enjoins (N. 6) that also in matters liturgical, the Orientals should endeavour to return to their ancient traditions (*ad avitas traditiones redire satagant*) if they have illegitimately fallen away from them. The Syro-Malabarians have had no ancient liturgical tradition except the East Syriac one. And this tradition was illegitimately tampered with and distorted by the Portuguese and the other Latins, and this too at the face of strong opposition on the part of the Syro-Malabarians of old. Pope Pius XI in his "Motu Proprio" *Sancta Dei Ecclesia* dated March 25, 1938, says:

"...if some, led by their too great love for unity and concord, without sufficiently understanding the things of the Orientals and the genius thereof, have been bent on corrupting their sacred rites or on reducing the same to the Latin rites, the Roman Pontiffs, our Predecessors, with all force have stood against such attempts without sparing any effort" (Acta Ap. Sedis, XXX, 1938, p. 154).

The Syro-Malabarians have, therefore, to return to their ancient East Syriac liturgy. This does not exclude adjustments to the modern needs provided that such adjustments form an organic whole with the ancient genuine form of this liturgy thus helping the growth of the same from within, and keeping the traditions intact as said above. But now even the restored things

are being corrupted in spite of Papal pronouncements and Conciliar decrees!

### **An objection**

When one speaks of returning to the ancient East Syriac liturgical traditions one not seldom notices a strong reaction on the part of some Syro-Malabarians who object that the Syro-Malabarians are not East Syrians or Chaldeans—an argument that can move the mass. Yes, the Syro-Malabarians are not East Syrians or Chaldeans by nationality; but they are such by their ancient liturgy. Ancient liturgies, as said above, developed in important Christian centres, and Churches or places that did not develop their own liturgies accepted them from the centres or Churches that were near or dear to them. The Germans, the English, the Irish etc., are not Romans by nationality, but they keep and practise the Roman liturgy even though some of them had in the past their own liturgies (v.g. the Gallican) and were, to some extent, forced to accept the Roman. But there is no evidence that the Thomas Christians developed a liturgy of their own as there is no evidence that the East Syriac liturgy was in any way imposed upon them. Then what are the Syro-Malabarians aiming at when they react against restoring the ancient liturgy their forefathers loved so much and also when they treat it as they are doing now?<sup>23</sup> Do they want to keep their liturgy deformed and corrupted by latinising it or basing it on the Latin? But are they Latins or Romans? Do they think of formulating a new liturgy? Will a new liturgy have any tradition like any of the

ancient liturgies, especially like the East Syriac one with its venerable associations with the Thomas Christians? Some may have recourse to adaptation. But what takes place is no adaptation at all. Adaptation is good and necessary, but it should not be corruption or latinisation. Had not the Thomas Christians advanced very far and laudably in adaptation even by formulating new rites through christianising all the christianisable customs of their Hindu brethren such as **pula**,<sup>a</sup> **irupathettu**,<sup>b</sup> **nalpathonnu**,<sup>c</sup> **srâdha**<sup>d</sup> etc.? Why do they not think of giving all these adaptations a new life according to the needs of the time instead of giving them up sometimes in favour of Latin usages, v.g. having **muppathu**<sup>e</sup> instead of **irupathettu** or instead of giving them up entirely?<sup>24</sup> Are they not doing violence to their liturgy without knowing its genius at all and by corrupting it according to the words of Pope Pius XI cited above? Ancient liturgies coming down, as they do, from the Apostles through a process of homogeneous growth are, each in its own way, of immense help to preach, defend and develop further the articles of faith delivered to the Church. A new or disfigured liturgy will have no such advantage, not to say that it ill-becomes ancient Churches that come down from the Apostolic or sub-Apostolic times to accept such a liturgy.

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- a) Feast after the period of defilement following the death of a person.  
 b) c) Feast on the 28th and 41st day after the death of a person, the latter is called 41st also.  
 d) Death anniversary.  
 e) 30th.

Now, the directly Aramaic roots of the apostolic Christianity of the Thomas Christians was and has been intimately connected with the East Syriac liturgy which too is directly Aramaic in origin and development. Not all Christian communities can take pride in so privileged a Christian tradition, since the liturgy in question is originally a direct traditional expression of the directly Aramaic roots of the apostolic Christianity of the Thomas Christians. Hence it will be unwise, to say the least, to spoil this liturgy by adulteration, or to give it up, or to minimise its importance by making efforts for formulating a New, i.e. an Indian liturgy in this century. India, moreover, is a mosaic of communities that have been formed on the basis of different cultures, customs, religious practices etc. and these communities live intermingled almost everywhere, jealously adhering to their traditions. It will, therefore, be difficult to have an Indian liturgy suited to the taste of all, especially now that each community has become conscious of its identity. Adaptation by way of Indianisation in the periphery, which is the Christianisation of the harmless religious practices of the different communities in question, can and must be promoted. This is just what the Thomas Christians of old did while they kept intact the East Syriac liturgy which, as we said, being directly Aramaic in origin was intimately connected with the directly Aramaic roots of their apostolic Christianity as the most traditional expression of the same. If the present-day Syro-Malabarians follow this policy in evangelisation, they will not be accused of taking Malabar into their mis-

sions—What a noble thing it is to communicate to the Hindus “the Syriac treasures” together with the Christian faith!

### A fear

Will not the return to the old, some ask, make the Syro-Malabar Church subject to the rule of foreign East Syriac or Chaldean Church? No. Liturgy and jurisdiction are not to be treated on the same plane. There could be several jurisdictions for the same liturgy. The present Syro-Malabar jurisdiction (Hierarchy) is a “developed” restoration, or a restoration in the developed form of the autonomy the Thomas Christians enjoyed under the Archdeacon during the foreign East Syriac or Chaldaic rule. In fact, Fr. Thomman Paremakal in his **Varthamanappusthakam** says that Malpan Cariattil and he gave up their efforts to get an Archdeacon (under the Portuguese Padroado Latin rule during the second half of the 18th century) when they got an ecclesiastical head in the person of one of their own, i.e. in the person of Cariattil who was nominated their Archbishop. This means that the Archbishop’s authority or rule was the developed form of that of the Archdeacon. The Archdeacon, as we saw, was the Archdeacon of All India. It is this All India jurisdiction the Syro-Malabarians should try to get back for their Hierarchy, of course, only over the Syro-Malabarians who are found dispersed all over India. Yes, the Syro-Malabarians should get this back and thus “go back”. The Latins abolished it after the 16th century. Such a going



back to the old will be for their Hierarchy a **profectus ad perfectum**.

## 2) THE WEST SYRIAC LITURGY

### **Its prerogatives**

The West Syriac liturgy also has its prerogatives. The chief anaphora is attributed to the Apostle St. James and is known as Jerusalem-Antiochean. Since the West Syriac liturgy developed in the Roman Empire (in and around Antioch); it exhibits many Greek touches. Its prayers have more rhetorical flourishes than those of the East Syriac liturgy. Its ceremonies are also more developed. It has a number of anaphoras, more than a hundred!

All that we said above about the ancient liturgies in general and about the Aramaic roots of the New Testament of the East Syriac liturgy can be applied to this liturgy also.

### **In Malabar**

We know when and how this liturgy entered Malabar. The Mar-Thomites in the latter half of the 19th century introduced some changes into it to suit the doctrine they had imbibed from the Anglican missionaries who were then in Malabar. The St. Thomas Evangelicals have taken the same from the Mar-Thomites (1960).

The Christianised Hindu customs we spoke of above are preserved by the Jacobites and, to some ex-

tent, also by the other Thomas Christians of the West Syriac liturgy.

The Catholic Syro-Malankarians of the West Syriac liturgy have left out from this liturgy only such things as are incompatible with the Catholic doctrine.

(We have spoken here only about the West Syriac liturgy that was brought to Malabar by the foreign Jacobites).

## VIII

### SYRIAC LITURGICAL WRITINGS

Syriac liturgical writings in the form of homilies and commentaries are a part of the rich Syriac literature.

#### 1) THE EAST SYRIAC

The East Syriac homilies and commentaries contain many mystical explanations of the liturgical ceremonies. The different items of the liturgy, their traditional order, the reasons for preserving this order etc. can all be known from these. The homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia must be counted among these. Then we have v.g. the homilies of Narses, the commentaries of Gabriel Qatraya, of Abraham bar Lipheh, of Pseudo George of Arbel, of bar Z'obi, of Ebedjesus Sobensis, of Patriarch Timothy II and others. All these commentaries range from the 5th century to the 14th century. The liturgical codification of Patriarch Jesuyab of the 7th century is very important.<sup>25</sup>

Those who set their hands to the reform of the Syro-Malabar liturgy will do well if they carefully study the above mentioned works along with the

texts, actions, gestures etc., they deal with. The deep meaning of “and with thee and with thy spirit”, which is the response of the congregation to the announcement of “peace” by the celebrant (the second part now left out in Malabar), the liturgico-theological signification of the protestation of faith in the Trinity just before communion (now improperly translated in Malabar) etc., could all be understood from the commentaries mentioned above. But, as things stand, will the Syro-Malabarians do anything in all this? They seem to be intent upon destroying all traditions through latinisations, by arbitrary compositions, and by what they call Indianisation. Some of them have become so Indian or Indo-Eastern that looking from India to the West even the Middle East is West. In other words, they seem to be intent upon destroying the directly Aramaic roots of their ancient Christianity. But they seem to be looking from India to the East; and thus their vision goes round the earth and stops in Europe, Europe in this way becoming East for them! Latinisation in this way becomes Easternisation! An oblique reference to the Orientals in Vatican II’s document on the Latin Liturgy has been so magnified as to eclipse the Vatican II’s clear and undisputed injunctions contained in the decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches.

(Of the “Nestorians” of Malabar there is no need of saying anything special).

## 2) THE WEST SYRIAC

We may mention in this connection the writings of Severus of Antioch (5/6th century), of Jacob of Edessa (8th c.), of Gregory of Arab (8th c.), of Jacob of Dara (9/10th c.), of Moses bar Kipho (10th c.), of Dionysius bar Salibi (12th c.), which all deal with matters liturgical.

The Jacobites of Malabar and also the Independent Jacobites of Anjoor have not tampered with texts or ceremonies of the West Syriac liturgy. The Jacobites have a great esteem for the works of the authors mentioned above.

For reasons indicated above, we leave out here the Mar-Thomites and the St. Thomas Evangelicals.

It seems that the Catholic Syro-Malankarians should pay attention to the contents of these works in a special manner because of the tendency of latinisation that is seen in some of them.

## IX

### SYRIAC CANONICAL COMPOSITIONS

We will now give a very general idea about the East and West Syriac Canonical compositions and about their relation to the Thomas Christians.

#### 1) EAST SYRIAC

##### Contents and Collections

The East Syriac Canon Law developed from a very early period. It was based on many of the sources common to the West and East (such as the Canons of the Apostles and certain synods of the "West") and on the synods of the East Syriac Church as well as on the acts of Patriarchs and rulings of authoritative persons of the same Church. There are several collections of these. The most important and authoritative of such collections is the Nomo-Canon of Ebedjesus Sobensis who wrote also other works as **Liber Patrum**. This collection of the Nomo-Canon of Ebedjesus Sobensis was approved by the synod held under Patriarch Timothy II (1318). It may be said that this is the Codex of Canon Law of the East Syriac Church.

## In Malabar

a) East Syriac canons were occasionally met with in Malabar. Roz, SJ., the first Latin Prelate of the Thomas Christians saw in Malabar 50 of the so-called Nicaean or Arabic Canons which have entered greatly into the composition of the East Syriac Canon Law.<sup>26</sup> Mar Joseph, Metropolitan of the Thomas Christians (+ 1569) made a copy of the Nomo-Canon of Ebedjesus Sobensis, presumably for his use. It is kept in the Vatican Library as Codex Vat. Syr 128. Among the books the infamous "synod" of Diamper condemned, there was one "De Synodis" which seems to have been a copy of the Nomo-Canon of Ebedjesus Sobensis. This "synod", it is known, was held illegitimately by the Latin Portuguese archbishop of Goa Dom Menezes in 1599 at Diamper in Malabar to latinise the Thomas Christians and to bring them under the Portuguese Padroado Latin rule.

b) We cannot, however, say how far the East Syriac Canon Law was followed by the Thomas Christians. The Thomas Christians formed an autonomous Church practically ruled over by the local Archdeacons. The customs and practices of the place (which were Christianised whenever necessary) were the norms for the canonical administration. The powers of Church assemblies (*yogam*)—local, regional and general—were great and extended to every sphere of ecclesiastical life, and laymen played an important rôle in these assemblies. The local assemblies exercised the power to inflict even excommunication on public delinquents.<sup>27</sup> Under these

circumstances the East Syrian Canon Law (of the Church of Mesopotamia) had no practical application in Malabar except, perhaps, to supplement what were wanting in local practices and customs.

After 1552 a few Roman documents were added to the East Syriac Canon Law. These too had no importance in Malabar except in cases mentioned above or were correctives thereof.

### **Latinisation in Malabar**

The Portuguese slowly and gradually introduced the Latin laws among the Thomas Christians both by personal initiatives and by the enactments of the Councils of Goa of 1575 and 1585. Then in 1599 the infamous "synod" of Diamper wiped out almost everything East Syriac censuring also many of the local practices and customs. The long Latin rule that followed made the Syro-Malabar Canon Law Latin. The indigenous Prelates of the Syro-Malabar Church only perfected this latinisation. Partial publications of the Oriental Canon Law by the Holy See have not changed the situation much.

### **Should go back**

According to Vatican II's decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches (N. 6), in canonical discipline also the Syro-Malabarians have to go back. A Pontifical Commission was instituted in 1972 to revise the Oriental Canon Law. Will the Syro-Malabar Church go back to the ancient system of church assemblies, of course,



in conformity with modern circumstances? There are now local church assemblies, but their powers are meant only for the administration of temporalities and they are also much restricted. We said above that the present Syro-Malabar Hierarchy is a development of the office of the Archdeacon. When there were more than one candidate for the office of the Archdeacon there was election (The Archdeacons were from the same family which certainly was an abuse, at least in the abstract, and will be an abuse today).

In going back to the ancient canonical discipline the East Syriac Canon Law can furnish guidelines for the Syro-Malabarians, not to say that common laws are all to be admitted and, if necessary, modernised. Apart from all this no student of the doctrine of Roman Primacy can set aside the East Syriac Canon Law, especially the Nomo-Canon of Ebedjesus Sobensis. Its importance lies in this that it developed outside the Roman Empire.

### **“Nestorians” of Malabar**

These have the church assemblies. But will they pay attention to the whole of the Nomo-Canon of Ebedjesus Sobensis? The foreign “Nestorians” do not. With those of Malabar there was a MS copy of this Nomo-Canon made during the life time of Ebedjesus Sobensis. The present writer was allowed to go through it in 1944 by their then foreign Prelate.

## 2) WEST SYRIAC

### Contents and Collection

The West Syriac (Jacobite) Canon Law also is rich in contents and it also developed on the ancient sources common to all (as said above) and on the sources special to the Jacobites (of the Middle East). The collection or the Nomo-Canon of bar Hebraeus is very well known. Wherever there is found difference in sources bar Hebraeus gives his NORM (hudoyo). This collection accepts the so-called Nicaean or Arabic Canons and reproduces the one according to which the Roman Patriarch is the Great Head (riso rabo) of all the Patriarchs.

### In Malabar

The Nomo-Canon of bar Hebraeus entered Malabar after the introduction of Jacobitism among the Thomas Christians. But the Malabar Jacobites were having their own way of Church administration under the successors of the Archdeacon who headed the revolt of 1653. The Nomo-Canon in question, however, came into prominence in Malabar when the foreign Jacobite Patriarch without the assistance of the synod of bishops excommunicated the first bishop of the Mar-Thomites (1875-76). It was then argued that the Patriarch's action was invalid, and the Mar-Thomites (they were then called Reformed Jacobites) published a translation of portions of the Nomo-Canon in question to strengthen their stand. But two MS copies of the Nomo-Canon in ques-

tion were produced in Syriac by the Jacobites as representing the canons accepted in Malabar, and according to these the Patriarch's action was valid. The MSS contained some other differences including the omission of the headship of the Roman Patriarch, substitution of the title "of Chalcedon" with "of Laodicea" (with regard to the canons of Chalcedon), restriction regarding the ordination of Catholicos or Maphrian etc. The civil court pronounced decision in favour of the Jacobites on the basis of the two MSS. The civil court decision strengthened the hold of the foreign Jacobite Patriarch on the Malabar Jacobites.

The same question and the differences found in the above mentioned MSS came up before the civil court when the foreign Jacobite Prelate in 1911 excommunicated, without the assistance of the synod of bishops, those Malabar Jacobite bishops who denied his authority over the temporalities of the Malabar Jacobite Church.

Those who stood against the Patriarch ordained their Catholicos and thus appropriated to themselves the powers that were reserved to the Patriarch such as ordaining bishops and consecrating chrism. They also made their own laws into which they inserted a clause that the Nomo-Canon of bar Hebraeus as published from Paris (by Paul Bedjan) is the one that is accepted by the Malabar Jacobite Church. This publication and the MSS mentioned above do not agree in the afore said points. In 1958 the Patriarch and his party were reconciled with those who stood against them and the laws

mentioned above were accepted by all. Still peace has not been restored.

The Jacobites of Malabar have their Church assemblies, both local and general, as well as the synod of bishops which function also for the election of bishops. All these are a transformation, so to say, of the old system followed by the Thomas Christians. The independent Jacobites of Anjoor do not seem to have any fixed laws though church assemblies are active among them.

The Marthomites and the St. Thomas Evangelicals have their own laws. The church assemblies, both local and general, are important for them.



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## SYRIAC ASCETICAL WORKS

### Asceticism among the Syrians

Ascetical life flourished no less intensely among the Syrians than it did in Egypt. Where it originated first, among the Syrians (in Mesopotamia) or in Egypt, is a point to be investigated. Students of Spiritual Theology should also investigate if and how Syriac Ascetical works such as those of Isaac of Ninveh and of others have influenced Western spirituality including Western mysticism. There was a time when monastic life flourished in a very high degree among the East and the West Syrians.

Among the Nestorians there is no monastic life now. The Catholic Chaldeans have it for men on the model of the Maronite Antonian monasticism. The religious institutes for women among the Catholic Chaldeans are of the Western type and are recent.

The Jacobites in the Middle East have still monasteries where men lead cenobitic life.

The Catholic Syrians have the Ephremite Sisters.

## In Malabar

Monastic life was not unknown among the Thomas Christians of old. Paulinus of St. Batholomeus, OCD., in the 18th century saw ruins of monasteries in Malabar at Angamale, Edapally, and Mylacomp.<sup>28</sup> Roz, the first Latin Prelate of the Thomas Christians, addressed his diocesan statutes in 1601 also to the **Rabbans**<sup>29</sup> who, it seems, were monks. It would seem that the life of these Ascetics was similar to that of the monks of Mesopotamia and that they were using the East Syriac ascetic literature.

“The Society of St. Thomas” instituted a little before 1626 under the second Latin Prelate of the Thomas Christians was modelled on the institute of the oblates of St. Ambrose which was begun by St. Chales Borromeo in Milan.<sup>30</sup>

## Among the Syro-Malabarians

All the religious Institutes that exist at present among the Syro-Malabarian Catholics are of the Western type and are also Congregations with simple vows. An effort to revive the East Syriac ascetical way of life in the 19th century failed at the very start. At present there are many Religious Institutes for men and women among the Syro-Malabarians. But no one seems to think of the ancient monasticism which will appeal to the non-Christian Hindus in a special manner. Would that the Indianisers had thought of this. Anyway Syriac ascetical works could be used with profit by the Syro-Malabarian religious.

### **Among the Jacobites of Malabar**

The Jacobites of Malabar have **Rabbans** or solitary monks who follow the Syrian ascetical life as practised among the foreign Jacobites. Bishops are generally chosen from among these. Religious institutes for men and women, started in the 20th century, do not seem to be fully Syrian. "The Bethany Brotherhood" was Syrian in type. But now it vegetates.

### **Among the Syro-Malankarians**

The Catholic Syro-Malankarians have their **Kurisumala Ashram** (or the Monastery at Kurisumala) where they lead the Cistercian life in the Syrian way. Other religious Institutes among them for men and women are (or have been made) of the Western type, though the Bethany Brotherhood and the Bethany Sisterhood, both begun in the Jacobite Church, were of the Syrian type.

The life of Rabbans was brought to the Catholic Church by two Rabbans who became Catholics in 1930. But it will become extinct, it seems, with the death of the only Rabban, one of the two. Still, the Syro-Malankarians make Rabbans of bishops elect.

(The Independent Jacobites of Anjoor do not seem to have the strict way of Rabban life. The Marthomites and the St. Thomas Evangelicals too have no such life. But the bishops of all these three denominations are celibate and wear the head dress of the Jacobite Rabbans).

## CONCLUSION

The Thomas Christians ought to be grateful to Providence for the inestimable treasures they possess in the Syriac language and literature. In order to know, appreciate, make use of and communicate to others these treasures that are their proud patrimony, at least the elite among their clergy must master the Syriac language and acquire a thorough knowledge of the Syriac literature. They should also be well versed in the history of their Churches and of the Syriac Churches of the Middle East. Let them think of the many Europeans, English men and Americans who have composed excellent grammars and dictionaries of the Syriac language, and have undertaken to give wide publicity to the Syriac treasures by the edition of Syriac works and their translations.

The study of the Syriac liturgies, especially of the theology contained in them, against the background of history, seems to be the best means for ecumenical contacts among the various Thomas Christian denominations.

The St. Thomas Evangelicals and the Mar-Thomites may not take interest in all this because of their pro-



testantised doctrine. From the Independent Jacobites of Anjoor we may not expect much. The Jacobites are interested in the matter. The (Catholic) Syro-Malabarians, if they have the will, can do much. But as a whole they seem to have an apathy towards everything Syriac. Their training has made them pay little or no attention to the matter, though their seminarians in some places learn a little Syriac. We will, therefore, speak here a little at length about them.

If the (Catholic) Syro-Malabarians continue to behave themselves as they do now, they will, within a short time, lose everything of their Syriac patrimony and of their venerable customs and traditions. Their ecclesiastical jurisdiction will have no meaning since there are other Catholic jurisdictions (especially Latin) in the same places where they live. The Southists among them may give some sense to their ecclesiastical jurisdiction since they are now an endogamous community which tries to preserve its racial traits and customs avoiding intermarriages with other communities and abstaining from evangelisation among the non-Christians. But the Northists, the great majority of the Syro-Malabarians, are of a quite different outlook.<sup>31</sup> With the loss of their Syriac patrimony together with their traditions and customs, they will have to merge into the neighbouring Latin jurisdictions, unless they become a strictly endogamous community and give up the work of evangelisation. This is only logical since they are latinising themselves and giving up their venerable traditions and customs, nay, even relatinising what was delatinised. Certainly things genuinely Latin are to be

preferred to things Oriental that are corrupted and adulterated by latinisation. Even if the Syro-Malabarians formulate a new liturgy the Latin liturgy will have the preference since it has the prerogative of being one of the ancient liturgies of the Church and of being in India prior to the new liturgy in question. How many of the Syro-Malabarians have seriously thought of the great influence that is and will be exerted in this direction by the several hundreds of Syro-Malabarians who now follow the Latin rite and work in almost all the Latin dioceses and religious Institutes of India, even in Malabar in the very midst of the Syro-Malabarians? Their number is steadily on the increase, while the nomination of bishops and religious superiors from among them will intensify their influence in the whole of the Syro-Malabar community which will thus be ready to give up everything of their Syriac patrimony. As things stand at present, the Syro-Malabarians are unable to utilise their service for the Catholic Church by developing through them their own Syro-Malabar Church. Since the Catholic Church is the communion of particular Churches under the Roman Pontiff, the development of the particular Syro-Malabar Church is the development of the Catholic Church itself. And a particular Church has the right and duty to utilise all its resources for its own development. It is not Catholic to adopt a suicidal policy as it is being done now which is by adopting the Western form of Christianity in an Oriental country like India by giving up the most ancient Oriental form of Christianity or weakening the same from within, What is more painful is that the Syro-Malabarians them-

selves promote this suicidal policy. Instead of this why cannot these vocations be utilised for evangelisation in the Syro-Malabar rite and for forming Syro-Malabar religious provinces of the Latin religious Institutes to work in India? Some in Malabar practise bi-ritualism and even tri-ritualism. But who does not see that is just to recruit more vocations to work in the Latin rite outside Malabar? What about the hundreds of Syro-Malabarian girls who go or are sent to the various Latin Congregations of Europe? Will they have houses of their own rite in India? The amount of money the Syro-Malabarians now lavishly spend for multiplying rival institutions and for putting up unnecessary buildings can very well be spent to help all these vocations work in their own rite in India, and if necessary, also outside.

The Syro-Malabarians of old fought with tooth and nail to preserve their identity together with all that came to them from the directly Aramaic roots of their ancient Christianity. What a difference between them and their children! Their children labouring under an inferiority complex and ignorance sell even their birth right for a little imaginary prestige caring only for jurisdiction which, as we said, becomes meaningless under these circumstances. Will those who wield jurisdiction be able to hold together a community like the Syro-Malabar community with nothing of its ancient patrimony?

If the clergy of a particular Church, especially the elite among them, are taught and trained in the Latin ways without being given any orientation that ought to be based on the sound traditions of their Church, they

themselves will be responsible for the disintegration of that Church. This is just what is happening in the Syro-Malabar Church.

One discerns a spark of hope in the St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary of Vadavathoor, Kottayam, which is a Syro-Malabar Seminary and is affiliated to the Pontifical Institute for Oriental Studies, Rome. But there must be a sincere and hearty cooperation on the part of all concerned which, under the present circumstances, is not easy to have. **Ignoti nulla cupido.** And as every ecclesiastic ought to know "the history of Christianity is littered with examples of those who fall victim to the prejudices and fashions of their age."<sup>32</sup>

## NOTES

1. Malabar is known also as Malankara, Malanadu, Malavaram, Malayalam (not the language) and Kerala; but Kerala now politically stands for that part of Malabar where the Malayalam language is spoken; on the north of this Kerala there is the District of Malabar which is not to be confounded with the Greater Malabar we deal with here.
2. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Washington, 1967, vol. XIII.
3. Havell, E. B., *History of Arian Rule in India*, London, 1918, p. 129. Dr. H.C.E. Zacharias says: "That commercial relations between Chaldea and Malabar go back at least to the VIIIth century B.C. is evident from the teak beams etc. found in the ruins of Chaldean Ur—and it is quite likely that the Sumerian founders of Babylonia themselves were of Dravidian stock (*Vide* E. B. Havell's *History of Arian Rule in India*, p. 129). This intercourse continued down the centuries; for the "Periplus" (written circa A.D. 90) still reports that "at the mouth of the Euphrates was the harbour Apologus, where sandal wood, teak and ebony is imported from Barygaza" (Broach). (See H.G. Roulinson's *Intercourse between India and Western World* (Cambridge, 1916, p. 113)—*Pax* The Quarterly Review of the Benedictines of Caldey, Spring, 1928, p. 19, article: *Church of Sts. Thomas and Bartholomew*. Cf. Woodcock G., *Kerala a portrait of the Malabar coast*, Fabod & Faber, London 1967 chap. 3.
4. The corresponding words in Malayalam are apan, amma, nan, rampam (rampam has gone out of use now).
5. *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 2 vols. Oxonii, 1879-1901, vol. I, p. 389.

St Jerome says *maran atha, talitha cumi, abba, cephas, bar, achel dama, Bartholomeu* are Syriac (ML 23. 853, 843, 845, 839).

6. a) We have the letter Abgar, king of Edessa, wrote to Our Lord and Our Lord's reply. They were forged in the 3rd century. Still they could reveal the idea of the forgerer regarding the identity or close similarity of the languages spoken in Edessa and by Our Lord. The letters are in Syriac. Eusebius gives the translations of these in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 13. They were taken from the archives of Edessa. (De Urbina Ig. Ortiz, S.J., *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1st ed. Roma, 1958, p. 41).

b) In Cochin, Malabar, there was the colony of those called "the white Jews". Now there are only one or two families. These white Jews hold that they are the successors of the Jews who colonised Malabar in a very early date, probably before the dawn of Christianity. They preserved their racial purity through marriages with Jews who from different countries have come and settled down in Malabar. There are in Malabar "the black Jews" who have separate synagogues. There is no intermarriage between them and the white Jews. Many of them have gone to Israel. Around 1945, I made friends with one among the white Jews by name Napthali Robi. He was an octogenerian and knew English, old Vatteluthu Malayalam, modern Malayalam, Aramaic and Hebrew. I used to visit him often. He told me that in his younger days Jewish children were all taught Aramaic and Hebrew according to the ancient custom. He said he had forgotten much of his Aramaic. Still, when I spoke to him East Syriac he could understand me without great difficulty. He recounted to me what he knew of Aramaic. He told me that their forefathers forgot Hebrew in the land of captivity and learned Aramaic, the language of the place. They brought this Aramaic, he told me, to the promised land with its quadrata script in which, he told me, they began to make copies of the Hebrew Bible giving up the Hebrew script. Thus the quadrata Aramaic became the Hebrew script also. He had read the works of Josephus Flavius and also some parts of the

Targams. Jonathan's Targam, he said, was very difficult to understand while the one of Onkelos was easier.

c) In this connection we could mention that the language of the Targams some call Chaldaic and because of the Hebrew influence in it (?) some call this Chaldaic "Jewish Aramaic" to distinguish it from the Syriac which they term "Christian Aramaic".

d) Why is East Syriac called Chaldaic (and Syro-Chaldaic)? It is because the Aramaic of Mesopotamia was called Chaldaic and East Syriac retains its pronunciation? or is it because the East Syriac Church which uses it flourished in Chaldea also, the place where flourished the Aramaic of the Jews? Was Our Lord's Aramaic much influenced by Hebrew as "the Jewish Aramaic" or "the Chaldaic" we spoke of above?

e) St. Jerome says (c. 412 AD) that the Gospel according to the Hebrews was written in Hebrew script (see above) and in the Syro-Chaldaic language—*Adv. Pelagianos*, 3.2, ML 23.570 (782). In the commentary on Dan. 2.4 he says that "From this place (2.4) to the vision of the third year of Balthasar (the book) is written in Hebrew script and in the Chaldaic language which is called Syriac"—ML 25.1, 499 (628). These words are very clear in the light of what we have said above. Syriac had a different script.

7. a) Fr. I. Zuzek, SJ., Rector, Pontifical Institute for Oriental Studies, Rome, in his introductory speech in the "Symposium Syriacum" held in the same institute from October 26-30, 1972, said:

"The adjective "Syriac" is one of a rich semantic content. Taken linguistically it connotes those who spoke and wrote in that dialect of Eastern Aramaic that we call Syriac and that occurs in two partially distinct forms, Eastern and Western Syriac... it is well... to be mindful of the fact that Syriac belongs to the same linguistic family as the Aramaic dialect

which was spoken by Christ Our Lord, as recorded by the Evangelists in such phrases as "Telitha qumi" and "Eli, Eli, lema Sebaqtani".

b) Here we deal with literary Syriac that has become the liturgical language of the Thomas Christians. We leave out the other forms of Syriac as well as the other dialects like Surath.

8. Wicki, J, SJ., *Documenta Indica*, 8 vols. Romae, 1948-1964, vol. 5, p. 416.
9. Giamil S, *Genuinae Relationes inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldeorum Ecclesiam*, Romae, 1902, Documentum XXII.
10. Cf. Marshall, *Guide to Taxilla*, Delhi, 1936, pp. 78, 79 and XXIII (a); Burnet, *Aramaic Inscriptions from Taxilla*, "Journal of Asiatic History", 1915, pp. 340-342; Couley, *First Aramaic Inscriptions from Taxilla*, *ibid.*, pp. 342-347; Herezfeld, *New Asokan Inscriptions from Taxilla*, "Epigraphia Indica", XIX, pp. 251-253.
11. Puthiakunnel T, *Jewish Colonies in India paved the way for St. Thomas*, "Orientalia Christiana Analecta", N. 186, Romae, 1970, pp. 187 sq.
12. Among the non-ecclesiastical we may mention translations of Aristotle's works. It is said that the Arabs made a faulty translation from this Syriac and took it to the West; that the West of the Middle ages knew of Aristotle from this Arabic and that this knowledge paved the way for a correct translation.
13. Karl Adam, *The Christ of Faith*, London, Burns and Oates, 1957, p. 200.

We reproduce here a few words of St. Augustine as cited by Galtier, SJ., in his *De Incarnatione et Redemptione*, p. 79:

"Ipsa est illa ineffabiliter facta hominis a Deo Verbo suscepto singularis ut Filius Dei et filius hominis simul, filius hominis propter susceptum hominem et



Filius Dei propter suscipientem Unigenitum Deum veraciter et proprie diceretur...qui verum suscipiendo hominem in homine apparuit...habendo hominem inventus est ut homo... Verbum, illo suscepto, caro factum est...suscepit hominem tanta, unitate personae ut idem ipse esset etiam filius hominis... (homo ille) Verbo copulat (ut est) in tantam personae unitatem ut idem ipse esset Filius Dei qui filius hominis, et filius hominis qui Filius Dei...Verbum Dei suscepit hominem seque et ille fecit unum Jesum Christum”.

To translate into English two more: “the man who was assumed...the son of man who adhered to the Son of God...whom the Wisdom of God was carrying about”.

St. Augustine wrote these before the Nestorian controversy. Pope Pius XII in his Encyclical *Sempiternus Rex*, says:

“...Chalcedonense Concilium, Ephesino prorsus congruens, lucide asserit utramque Redemptoris nostri naturam in unam personam atque subsistentiam convenire, vetatque duo in Christo poni individua, ita ut aliquis homo assumptus integrae autonomiae compos penes Verbum collocetur” (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1951, N. 14, pp. 625-644)

Cf. Abramowski L and Goodmann A. E., *A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts*, I, II, Cambridge, 1972;

*Babai Magni Liber de Unione*, Parisiis, J. Gabalde, “Bibliotheca Scriptorum Syrorum, Series secunda”, T. LXI, Rue Bonaparte 9, 1925;

*Nestorian Liturgical MSS and Books* (passim);

Scipioni Luigi, OP., *Recreche sulla Christologia del Libro di Nestorio*, Friburgo, Svizzera, 1936.

14. But would the Syro-Malabarians do anything in this? As we said, their East Syriac MSS were all destroyed by the Latins except a few liturgical ones. These were arbitrarily corrected, mutilated and rearranged with

translations from the Latin (Roman) liturgy. Only a very little of this has been printed. Even this very little is being given up or changed by the Syro-Malabarians. Thus what little of the Syriac treasures their forefathers transmitted to them by enduring persecutions and sufferings at the hands of the Latins the Syro-Malabarians are now abandoning or changing. They are an Apostolic Church and also an Eastern Church. Even in the name of progress they should not build something new on nothing old, or on the caricature of the old, or on the Latin. Progress is not corruption or adulteration or giving up of the past, but homogeneous growth from within shedding things outmoded and, if necessary, *assimilating* things from without in such a manner that the new form an organic whole with the past, which past in no way is affected by this process since this process resembles what takes place in a tree which sheds old leaves and gives birth to new ones. A community that is cut off from the moorings of its tradition will not survive long as it ought to, though it may exhibit some external prestige and power. Vatican II, in its Decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches (N. 6) enjoins that the Orientals should endeavour to return to their ancestral traditions if they have illegitimately fallen away from them. The present tendency among the Syro-Malabarians seems to be to present new things under ancient labels, even under labels wrongly chosen. The laity and most of the clergy unwittingly take to them. Such is the great havoc the Latin formation of the clergy has done to the Apostolic Syro-Malabar Eastern Church. We shall have to return to this topic again.

15. Khayyath E, *Syri Orientales seu Chaldei Nestoriani et Romanorum Pontificum Primatus*, Romae, 1870.
16. Giamil S. op. cit., Appendix I, Document III.
17. *De Erroribus Nestorienorum qui in hac India Orientali versantur*, Orientalia Christiana, No. 40.
18. Jesuit Archives, Rome, Goa, 15, f. 52.

19. In this connection we have to make mention of another Church of the West Syriac liturgy of the Middle East. It is the Catholic Maronite Church with its own Patriarch of Antioch. It was some what latinised as the result perhaps of contacts with the Crusaders. The Maronites hold they have always been Ephesians and Chalcedonians. The Melchite Ephesian and Chalcedonian Church of the (West) Syriac liturgy has become extinct as such.
20. Its *Sursum* dialogue mentions the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel which is a typically Jewish characteristic. Again, the prayer said in the pre-anaphoral part after Pater Noster of ferial days is the same as the one said in Jewish synagogues but with the addition of the mention of the Most Holy Trinity—a Christianised Jewish prayer. One would think that this prayer was used in the liturgy before the addition of the Pater Noster.

Raulin F. dealing with this liturgy says: "Our liturgy therefore, should be considered as the best of all; for all throughout it manifests that sacred character of antiquity which does not yield to fraudulent imitation, namely, simplicity, unction of the Holy Spirit and incomparable sincerity, so much so, that except for some blessings and a few other words which seem to be of a more recent formulation, all who attentively read through it will be convinced that it savours of Apostolic times with regard to some of the most important liturgical parts"—*Historia Ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Synodo Diamperitanae*, Romae, 1745. What a pity that the Thomas Christians who use it minimise its importance thinking that it is not Indian or does not agree with the Latin liturgy! What if they tamper with it as they do now? If they practise long contemplation and rigorous asceticism in the Indian style and join these to the directly Aramaic roots and traditions of their apostolic Christianity as expressed in the East Syriac liturgy, they could touch the heart of India, without losing anything of their precious patrimony.

21. The Syro-Malabar Hierarchs were asked twice to give their suggestions regarding the whole text of the Mass including the anaphora and the Rubrics (afterwards printed separately as Ordo) and they gave their suggestions twice. More experts were also consulted. The Cardinals took into consideration all these.
22. The use of the active instead of the passive voice in the translation of the "forms" of Sacraments is not to be found fault with. In the Malayalam language the passive is artificial and uncouth. The Copts and the Ethiopians use the active. To come to a few instances of latinisation: anointing and litany of saints in the Pontificals, Latin form of Pater Noster and the Latin "Apostles' creed" in the Mass with the transposition of items against the traditional order. Again, in the Mass: reducing the number of blessings over the mysteries and of kissing the Altar (*modo Latino*), elevation of the Sacred host, *modo Latino*, celebrating the mass facing the people, Latin way of making the sign of the cross on one's self, omission of *halleluyas* after the Epistle (the Latins have resumed this), omission of the liturgical embolism after Pater Noster before communion (the Latins have not done this), etc. etc. New compositions have been introduced into the Divine office, but they are new and do not form an organic whole with the past. It is said in the preface of the Malayalam translation of the Psalms that the translation is based on the Syriac Pshitha version. It is evident to those who know Syriac that it is not so. This means that anything can pass for anything! They have even made an experimental Indian Mass which some call "Hindu Mass". In imitation of the reformed Mass of the Latins an invocation of the Holy Ghost is put before the words of Institution. The Latins of India have given it a hearty welcome. Who knows if this is not the thin end of the wedge that will, in the course of time, wipe out the very existence of the Oriental Syro-Malabar Church. Interritual enterprises whether

in Malabar or outside are all drifting along in this line. Not seldom the very Syro-Malabarians who take part in them help to strengthen the force of this current. Clamour for Indianisation is made both by the Syro-Malabarians and the Latins, and both are Indians. Hence Indianisation must be something common to both. The result? The loss of the Syro-Malabar entity! A people like the present Syro-Malabarians who know nothing of things liturgical or of their traditions, welcomes anything that is short, provided it is presented in the vernacular. Add to this the propaganda that things traditional are not for the modern man, while things Latin are up-to-date. The result is an inferiority complex which gladly welcomes any Latinism except the Latin jurisdiction. Apart from all other considerations the Syro-Malabar jurisdiction is in itself too dear to be given up at present. But who thinks of the future of the Particular Oriental Apostolic Syro-Malabar Church that took its roots in a directly Aramaic or Syriac milieu? Those who look with a sore eye at this privileged lot of the Syro-Malabar Church may be laughing in their sleeves now. They know very well that the Syro-Malabar jurisdiction also will die out in the long run and that its prestige is only momentary if the Syro-Malabarians behave themselves as they do now. They can easily note in which direction the wind is blowing. Although the Holy See restored the sacred vestments to their genuine form, the Syro-Malabarians have begun to use the Gothic vestments and are reluctant to give up the surplice. Imitating the Latins, all the anointings of the *Rituale Romanum* were introduced into the rite of the Sacrament of the sick although in the text given by the S. Congregation for the Oriental Church there was only one. But now (1972-1973) the *Rituale Romanum* has given up all except one on the forehead and hands. Should not the Syro-Malabarians hurry up to imitate the Latins? According to the ancient usage 'Confirmation' should be administered together with Baptism; the text given to the Syro-

Malabarians by the S. Congregation for the Oriental Church also had made it so; but the two Sacraments are now separated as among the Latins. The excuse may be that the faithful like it. A nice excuse! But has any one cared to educate the faithful?

23. Some now say that the S. Propaganda Congregation once "ordered" the Syro-Malabarians not to have any relations with the Chaldeans. They also give publicity to this "order". This may make many believe that the restoration of the Syro-Malabar liturgy to its genuine Chaldean form is against the "order" in question. Yes, when the Chaldeans in the last century, against the express orders of Rome interfered in the Syro-Malabar Church and many in good faith, and a few in bad faith, followed them or were drawn to them, the S. Propaganda Congregation sent the "order" mentioned above. But the restoration of the liturgy is quite a different thing. It was Pope Pius XI himself who directly ordered that the ancient Chaldean Pontificals were to be given to the Syro-Malabarians. Again, in 1957 the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches met the expenses of the journey the present writer made to Iraq to the Chaldean Patriarch and bishops to study matters pertaining to the Chaldean liturgy and customs since he was then working in the Commission instituted by the S. Congregation for the Oriental Churches to restore the Syro-Malabar liturgy to its ancient genuine Chaldean form. Those who give publicity to the "order" in question may not be aware of all this. But are they ignorant also of Vatican II's injunction? Or, are they under the vain fear that the restoration of the liturgy will bring them under the Chaldean jurisdiction? We will speak of this below.
24. Those who speak loudly of adaptation by way of Indianisation do not seem to reflect that no one has ever said that the Syro-Malabarians are not Indians. What is Western or Latin in them ought to be given up instead of preserving them or introducing again

things similar as it is being done now. The curious thing in all this is that the Indianisers even take dispensation to eat meat, fish, egg and milk products during Lent and other holy seasons. What will be the reaction of those orthodox Hindus who never eat meat, fish or eggs? Would that the Indianisers had lived a simpler life, had given up the European way of dressing and eating, had faithfully observed the fasts and abstinences prescribed by their ancient rite instead of making them all like those of the Latins! They could in this way also avoid giving scandal to the non-Catholic Thomas Christians who scrupulously observe all the fasts and abstinences of their Rite. The present cry and efforts for Indianisation are apt to make the others think that Hinduism is superior to Christianity. The paradox is that the Hindu sense of penance and mortification as seen in the external actions is entirely given up by the Indianisers. The Latins of India who are conscious of the Western form of their Christianity may clamour for Indianisation. Why should the Syro-Malabarians join them? Is it because they are conscious of the guilt of their own latinisation which, however, they would not efficaciously repent of? Some ask: Do not the Latins take many things from the Oriental liturgies, Why cannot the Syro-Malabarians take certain things from the Latin liturgy? But what the Latins now take are from the common traditional patrimony which they had lost and which the Orientals have conserved. It is not, therefore, a borrowing from the Orientals. Even what the Latins take back from the common patrimony the Syro-Malabarians are now giving up! But all that the Latins do may not be right even for the Latins. The Latins have no great respect for traditions in matters liturgical. Again, have the Latinising innovators seriously thought that the Latin and the East Syriac liturgies have developed on different lines?

25. William Cornelis Van Unik's *Nestorian questions on the administration of the Eucharist by Ishoyab IV*

- (Amsterdam 1970) can be profitably used by those who deal with the Syro-Malabar liturgy.
26. Paulinus a S. Bartholomeo, OCD., *India Orientalis Christiana*, Romae, 1794, p. 64.
  27. Idem, *Viaggio Alle Indie Orientali*, Romae, 1796, p. 137; Anonymous, *Istoria della Missione del Malabar* (c. 1750), Propaganda Archives, Romae, "Congr. Part. vol. 109".
  28. Paulinus a S. Bartholomeo, OCD., *Viaggio...* (op. cit.), p. 80.
  29. *Codex Vatican. Borgia Indian*. 18.
  30. Hambye, E. R., SJ., E. H., SJ., *The Congregation of St. Thomas the Apostle*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, vol. 186, Romae, 1970, pp. 123 sq.
  31. The accusation is often heard that the forefathers of the present Syro-Malabarians were not making converts from among the non-Christians. Fr. Thomman Paremackal (+1799 in chapter LXXII (No. 8) of his *Varthamanapusthakam* gives the following answer:

"In olden days the people belonging to the honourable, to the prominent and also to the poor families, houses and races of Malabar generally used to accept the holy faith with no aversion or dislike for it. Those who accepted it, as children of the same father, procured everything needed for soul and body and for the whole community, in the spirit of Christian charity and unity without any quarrel or misunderstanding...."

This is not a mere assertion without foundation. British Museum, London, Add. MS, 9853 is a report about Malabar written in 1604. The author is supposed to be Roz, SJ., the first Latin Prelate of the Thomas Christians. On f. 86 the report enumerates four Thomas Christian families, Cotur, Cataval, Onamthuruth and Narimattam which had existed even before the arrival of Thomas Cana in Malabar (at least



from before the 8th century) and were in existence when the report was written. The report says that these families greatly helped the non-Christians who were converted to Christianity over the centuries.

32. It is a pity to hear of those Syro-Malabarians who propagate the ideas that there is no meaning in speaking of Oriental or Syrian spirituality, that the works of Oriental fathers are not deep, that it is unworthy of modern ecclesiastics to take degrees in Oriental theology or in Oriental sciences.



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