

POLITICAL THEOLOGY



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Chapter 1

Political Theology : Biblical Aspects

At the beginning of its history, the people of Israel are unlike other peoples in that they have no king, for they recognize the dominion of Yahweh alone. It is God who intervenes on Israel's behalf through charismatic individuals, as recorded in the Book of Judges. The people approach the last of these individuals, Samuel, prophet and judge, to ask for a king (cf. 1 Sam 8:5; 10:18-19). Samuel warns the Israelites about the consequences of a despotic exercise of kingship (cf. 1 Sam 8:11-18). However, the authority of the king can also be experienced as a gift of Yahweh who comes to the assistance of his people (cf. 1 Sam 9:16). In the end, Saul is anointed king (cf. 1 Sam 10:1-2). These events show the tension that brought Israel to understand kingship in a different way than it was understood by neighbouring peoples. The king, chosen by Yahweh (cf. Dt 17:15; 1 Sam 9:16) and consecrated by him (cf. 1 Sam 16:12-13), is seen as God's son (cf. Ps 2:7) and is to make God's dominion and plan of salvation visible (cf. Ps 72). The king, then, is to be the defender of the

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weak and the guarantor of justice for the people. The denunciations of the prophets focus precisely on the kings' failure to fulfil these functions (cf. 1 Kg 21; Is 10:1-4; Am 2:6-8, 8:4-8; Mic 3:1-4).

The prototype of the king chosen by Yahweh is David, whose humble origins are a favourite topic of the biblical account (cf. 1 Sam 16:1-13). David is the recipient of the promise (cf. 2 Sam 7:13-16; Ps 89:2-38, 132:11-18), which places him at the beginning of a special kingly tradition, the "messianic" tradition. Notwithstanding all the sins and infidelities of David and his successors, this tradition culminates in Jesus Christ, who is par excellence "Yahweh's anointed" (that is, "the Lord's consecrated one", cf. 1 Sam 2:35, 24:7,11, 26:9,16; Ex 30:22-32), the son of David (cf. Mt 1:1-17; Lk 3:23-38; Rom 1:3).

The failure of kingship on the historical level does not lead to the disappearance of the ideal of a king who, in fidelity to Yahweh, will govern with wisdom and act in justice. This hope reappears time and again in the Psalms (cf. Ps 2, 18, 20, 21, 72). In the messianic oracles, the figure of a king endowed with the Lord's Spirit, full of wisdom and capable of rendering justice to the poor, is awaited in eschatological times (cf. Is 11:2-5; Jer 23:5-6). As true shepherd of the people of Israel (cf. Ezek 34:23-24, 37:24), he will bring peace to the nations (cf. Zech 9:9-10). In Wisdom Literature, the king is presented as the one who renders just judgments and abhors iniquity (cf. Prov 16:12), who judges the poor with equity (cf. Prov 29:14) and is a friend to those with a pure heart (cf. Prov 22:11). There is a gradual unfolding of the proclamation of what the Gospels and other New Testament writings see fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, the definitive incarnation of what the Old Testament foretold about the figure of the king.

Jesus and Political Authority

Jesus refuses the oppressive and despotic power wielded by the rulers of the nations (cf. Mk 10:42) and rejects their pretension in having themselves called benefactors (cf. Lk 22:25), but he does not directly oppose the authorities of his time. In his pronouncement on the paying of taxes to Caesar (cf. Mk 12:13-17; Mt 22:15-22; Lk 20:20-26), he affirms that we must give to God what is God's, implicitly condemning every attempt at making temporal power divine or absolute: God alone can demand everything from man. At the same time, temporal power has the right to its due: Jesus does not consider it unjust to pay taxes to Caesar.

Jesus, the promised Messiah, fought against and overcame the temptation of a political messianism, characterized by the subjection of the nations (cf. Mt 4:8-11; Lk 4:5-8). He is the Son of Man who came “to serve, and to give his life” (Mk 10:45; cf. Mt 20:24-28; Lk 22:24-27). As his disciples are discussing with one another who is the greatest, Jesus teaches them that they must make themselves least and the servants of all (cf. Mk 9:33-35), showing to the sons of Zebedee, James and John, who wish to sit at His right hand, the path of the cross (cf. Mk 10:35-40; Mt 20:20-23).

The early Christian communities

Submission, not passive but “for the sake of conscience” (Rom 13:5), to legitimate authority responds to the order established by God. Saint Paul defines the relationships and duties that a Christian is to have towards the authorities (cf. Rom 13:1-7). He insists on the civic duty to pay taxes: “Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, fear to whom fear is due, respect to whom respect is due” (Rom 13:7). The Apostle certainly does not intend to legitimize every authority so much as to help Christians to “take thought for what is noble in the sight of all” (Rom 12:17), including their relations with the authorities, insofar as the authorities are at the service of God for the good of the person (cf. Rom 13:4; 1 Tim 2:1-2; Tit 3:1) and “to execute [God’s] wrath on the wrongdoer” (Rom 13:4).

Saint Peter exhorts Christians to “be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution” (1 Pet 2:13). The king and his governors have the duty “to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right” (1 Pet 2:14). This authority of theirs must be “honoured” (1 Pet 2:17), that is, recognized, because God demands correct behaviour that will “silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Pet 2:15). Freedom must not be used as a pretext for evil but to serve God (cf. 1 Pet 2:16). It concerns free and responsible obedience to an authority that causes justice to be respected, ensuring the common good.

Praying for rulers, which Saint Paul recommended even as he was being persecuted, implicitly indicates what political authority ought to guarantee: a calm and tranquil life led with piety and dignity (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-2). Christians must “be ready for any honest work” (Tit 3:1), showing “perfect courtesy towards all” (Tit 3:2), in the awareness

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that they are saved not by their own deeds but by God's mercy. Without "the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Tit 3:5-6), all people are "foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing [their] days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another" (Tit 3:3). We must not forget the miserable state of the human condition marred by sin, but redeemed by God's love.

When human authority goes beyond the limits willed by God, it makes itself a deity and demands absolute submission; it becomes the Beast of the Apocalypse, an image of the power of the imperial persecutor "drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev 17:6). The Beast is served by the "false prophet" (Rev 19:20), who, with beguiling signs, induces people to adore it. This vision is a prophetic indication of the snares used by Satan to rule men, stealing his way into their spirit with lies. But Christ is the Victorious Lamb who, down the course of human history, overcomes every power that would make it absolute. Before such a power, Saint John suggests the resistance of the martyrs; in this way, believers bear witness that corrupt and satanic power is defeated, because it no longer has any authority over them.

The Church proclaims that Christ, the conqueror of death, reigns over the universe that he himself has redeemed. His kingdom includes even the present times and will end only when everything is handed over to the Father and human history is brought to completion in the final judgment (cf. 1 Cor 15:20-28). Christ reveals to human authority, always tempted by the desire to dominate, its authentic and complete meaning as service. God is the one Father, and Christ the one Teacher, of all mankind, and all people are brothers and sisters. Sovereignty belongs to God. The Lord, however, "has not willed to reserve to himself all exercise of power. He entrusts to every creature the functions it is capable of performing, according to the capacities of its own nature. This mode of governance ought to be followed in social life. The way God acts in governing the world, which bears witness to such great regard for human freedom, should inspire the wisdom of those who govern human communities. They should behave as ministers of divine providence".

The biblical message provides endless inspiration for Christian reflection on political power, recalling that it comes from God and is an integral part of the order that he created. This order is perceived by the human conscience and, in social life, finds its fulfilment in the truth, justice, freedom and solidarity that bring peace.

Foundation and Purpose of the Political Community

Political community, the human person and a people

The human person is the foundation and purpose of political life. Endowed with a rational nature, the human person is responsible for his own choices and able to pursue projects that give meaning to life at the individual and social level. Being open both to the Transcendent and to others is his characteristic and distinguishing trait. Only in relation to the Transcendent and to others does the human person reach the total and complete fulfilment of himself. This means that for the human person, a naturally social and political being, “social life is not something added on” but is part of an essential and indelible dimension.

The political community originates in the nature of persons, whose conscience “reveals to them and enjoins them to obey” the order which God has imprinted in all his creatures: “a moral and religious order; and it is this order - and not considerations of a purely extraneous, material order - which has the greatest validity in the solution of problems relating to their lives as individuals and as members of society, and problems concerning individual States and their interrelations”. This order must be gradually discovered and developed by humanity. The political community, a reality inherent in mankind, exists to achieve an end otherwise unobtainable: the full growth of each of its members, called to cooperate steadfastly for the attainment of the common good, under the impulse of their natural inclinations towards what is true and good.

The political community finds its authentic dimension in its reference to people: “it is and should in practice be the organic and organizing unity of a real people”. The term “a people” does not mean a shapeless multitude, an inert mass to be manipulated and exploited, but a group of persons, each of whom - “at his proper place and in his own way” - is able to form its own opinion on public matters and has the freedom to express its own political sentiments and to bring them to bear positively on the common good. A people “exists in the fullness of the

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lives of the men and women by whom it is made up, each of whom ... is a person aware of his own responsibilities and convictions". Those who belong to a political community, although organically united among themselves as a people, maintain an irrepressible autonomy at the level of personal existence and of the goals to be pursued.

The primary characteristic of a people is the sharing of life and values, which is the source of communion on the spiritual and moral level. "Human society must primarily be considered something pertaining to the spiritual. Through it, in the bright light of truth men should share their knowledge, be able to exercise their rights and fulfil their obligations, be inspired to seek spiritual values, mutually derive genuine pleasure from beauty of whatever order it be, always be readily disposed to pass on to others the best of their own cultural heritage and eagerly strive to make their own the spiritual achievements of others. These benefits not only influence but at the same time give aim and scope to all that has bearing on cultural expressions, economic and social institutions, political movements and forms, laws, and all other structures by which society is outwardly established and constantly developed".

For every people there is in general a corresponding nation, but for various reasons national boundaries do not always coincide with ethnic boundaries. Thus the question of minorities arises, which has historically been the cause of more than just a few conflicts. The Magisterium affirms that minorities constitute groups with precise rights and duties, most of all, the right to exist, which "can be ignored in many ways, including such extreme cases as its denial through overt or indirect forms of genocide". Moreover, minorities have the right to maintain their culture, including their language, and to maintain their religious beliefs, including worship services. In the legitimate quest to have their rights respected, minorities may be driven to seek greater autonomy or even independence; in such delicate circumstances, dialogue and negotiation are the path for attaining peace. In every case, recourse to terrorism is unjustifiable and damages the cause that is being sought. Minorities are also bound by duties, among which, above all, is working for the common good of the State in which they live. In particular, "a minority group has the duty to promote the freedom and dignity of each one of its members and to respect the decisions of

each one, even if someone were to decide to adopt the majority culture”.

Defending and promoting human rights

Considering the human person as the foundation and purpose of the political community means in the first place working to recognize and respect human dignity through defending and promoting fundamental and inalienable human rights: “In our time the common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained”. The rights and duties of the person contain a concise summary of the principal moral and juridical requirements that must preside over the construction of the political community. These requirements constitute an objective norm on which positive law is based and which cannot be ignored by the political community, because both in existential being and in final purpose the human person precedes the political community. Positive law must guarantee that fundamental human needs are met.

The political community pursues the common good when it seeks to create a human environment that offers citizens the possibility of truly exercising their human rights and of fulfilling completely their corresponding duties. “Experience has taught us that, unless these authorities take suitable action with regard to economic, political and cultural matters, inequalities between citizens tend to become more and more widespread, especially in the modern world, and as a result human rights are rendered totally ineffective and the fulfilment of duties is compromised”.

The full attainment of the common good requires that the political community develop a twofold and complementary action that defends and promotes human rights. “It should not happen that certain individuals or social groups derive special advantage from the fact that their rights have received preferential protection. Nor should it happen that governments in seeking to protect these rights, become obstacles to their full expression and free use”.

Social life based on civil friendship

The profound meaning of civil and political life does not arise immediately from the list of personal rights and duties. Life in society takes on all its significance when it is based on civil friendship and on

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fraternity. The sphere of rights, in fact, is that of safeguarded interests, external respect, the protection of material goods and their distribution according to established rules. The sphere of friendship, on the other hand, is that selflessness, detachment from material goods, giving freely and inner acceptance of the needs of others. Civil friendship understood in this way is the most genuine actualization of the principle of fraternity, which is inseparable from that of freedom and equality. In large part, this principle has not been put into practice in the concrete circumstances of modern political society, above all because of the influence of individualistic and collectivistic ideologies.

A community has solid foundations when it tends toward the integral promotion of the person and of the common good. In such cases, law is defined, respected and lived according to the manner of solidarity and dedication towards one's neighbour. Justice requires that everyone should be able to enjoy their own goods and rights; this can be considered the minimum measure of love. Social life becomes more human the more it is characterized by efforts to bring about a more mature awareness of the ideal towards which it should be oriented, which is the "civilization of love".

The human being is a person, not just an individual. The term "person" indicates "a nature endowed with intelligence and free will": he is therefore a reality that is far superior to that of a subject defined by the needs arising solely from his material dimension. The human person, in fact, although participating actively in projects designed to satisfy his needs within the family and within civil and political society, does not find complete self-fulfilment until he moves beyond the mentality of needs and enters into that of gratuitousness and gift, which fully corresponds to his essence and community vocation.

The gospel precept of charity enlightens Christians as to the deepest meaning of political life. In order to make it truly human, "no better way exists ... than by fostering an inner sense of justice, benevolence and service for the common good, and by strengthening basic beliefs about the true nature of the political community and about the proper exercise and limits of public authority". The goal which believers must put before themselves is that of establishing community relationships among people. The Christian vision of political society places paramount importance on the value of community, both as a model for organizing life in society and as a style of everyday living.

Political Authority

The foundation of political authority

The Church has always considered different ways of understanding authority, taking care to defend and propose a model of authority that is founded on the social nature of the person. “Since God made men social by nature, and since no society can hold together unless some one be over all, directing all to strive earnestly for the common good, every civilized community must have a ruling authority, and this authority, no less than society itself, has its source in nature, and has, consequently, God for its author”. Political authority is therefore necessary because of the responsibilities assigned to it. Political authority is and must be a positive and irreplaceable component of civil life.

Political authority must guarantee an ordered and upright community life without usurping the free activity of individuals and groups but disciplining and orienting this freedom, by respecting and defending the independence of the individual and social subjects, for the attainment of the common good. Political authority is an instrument of coordination and direction by means of which the many individuals and intermediate bodies must move towards an order in which relationships, institutions and procedures are put at the service of integral human growth. Political authority, in fact, “whether in the community as such or in institutions representing the State, must always be exercised within the limits of morality and on behalf of the dynamically conceived common good, according to a juridical order enjoying legal status. When such is the case citizens are conscience-bound to obey”.

The subject of political authority is the people considered in its entirety as those who have sovereignty. In various forms, this people transfers the exercise of sovereignty to those whom it freely elects as its representatives, but it preserves the prerogative to assert this sovereignty in evaluating the work of those charged with governing and also in replacing them when they do not fulfil their functions satisfactorily. Although this right is operative in every State and in every kind of political regime, a democratic form of government, due to its procedures for verification, allows and guarantees its fullest

application. The mere consent of the people is not, however, sufficient for considering “just” the ways in which political authority is exercised.

Authority as moral force

Authority must be guided by the moral law. All of its dignity derives from its being exercised within the context of the moral order, “which in turn has God for its first source and final end”. Because of its necessary reference to the moral order, which precedes it and is its basis, and because of its purpose and the people to whom it is directed, authority cannot be understood as a power determined by criteria of a solely sociological or historical character. “There are some indeed who go so far as to deny the existence of a moral order which is transcendent, absolute, universal and equally binding upon all. And where the same law of justice is not adhered to by all, men cannot hope to come to open and full agreement on vital issues”. This order “has no existence except in God; cut off from God it must necessarily disintegrate”. It is from the moral order that authority derives its power to impose obligations and its moral legitimacy, not from some arbitrary will or from the thirst for power, and it is to translate this order into concrete actions to achieve the common good.

Authority must recognize, respect and promote essential human and moral values. These are innate and “flow from the very truth of the human being and express and safeguard the dignity of the person; values which no individual, no majority and no State can ever create, modify or destroy”. These values do not have their foundation in provisional and changeable “majority” opinions, but must simply be recognized, respected and promoted as elements of an objective moral law, the natural law written in the human heart (cf. Rom2:15), and as the normative point of reference for civil law itself. If, as a result of the tragic clouding of the collective conscience, scepticism were to succeed in casting doubt on the basic principles of the moral law, the legal structure of the State itself would be shaken to its very foundations, being reduced to nothing more than a mechanism for the pragmatic regulation of different and opposing interests.

Authority must enact just laws, that is, laws that correspond to the dignity of the human person and to what is required by right reason. “Human law is law insofar as it corresponds to right reason and therefore is derived from the eternal law. When, however, a law is

contrary to reason, it is called an unjust law; in such a case it ceases to be law and becomes instead an act of violence". Authority that governs according to reason places citizens in a relationship not so much of subjection to another person as of obedience to the moral order and, therefore, to God himself who is its ultimate source. Whoever refuses to obey an authority that is acting in accordance with the moral order "resists what God has appointed" (Rom 13:2). Analogously, whenever public authority - which has its foundation in human nature and belongs to the order pre-ordained by God - fails to seek the common good, it abandons its proper purpose and so delegitimizes itself.

The right to conscientious objection

Citizens are not obligated in conscience to follow the prescriptions of civil authorities if their precepts are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or to the teachings of the Gospel. Unjust laws pose dramatic problems of conscience for morally upright people: when they are called to cooperate in morally evil acts they must refuse. Besides being a moral duty, such a refusal is also a basic human right which, precisely as such, civil law itself is obliged to recognize and protect. "Those who have recourse to conscientious objection must be protected not only from legal penalties but also from any negative effects on the legal, disciplinary, financial and professional plane".

It is a grave duty of conscience not to cooperate, not even formally, in practices which, although permitted by civil legislation, are contrary to the Law of God. Such cooperation in fact can never be justified, not by invoking respect for the freedom of others nor by appealing to the fact that it is foreseen and required by civil law. No one can escape the moral responsibility for actions taken, and all will be judged by God himself based on this responsibility (cf. Rom 2:6; 14:12).

The right to resist

Recognizing that natural law is the basis for and places limits on positive law means admitting that it is legitimate to resist authority should it violate in a serious or repeated manner the essential principles of natural law. Saint Thomas Aquinas writes that "one is obliged to obey ... insofar as it is required by the order of justice". Natural law is therefore the basis of the right to resistance.

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There can be many different concrete ways this right may be exercised; there are also many different ends that may be pursued. Resistance to authority is meant to attest to the validity of a different way of looking at things, whether the intent is to achieve partial change, for example, modifying certain laws, or to fight for a radical change in the situation.

The Church's social doctrine indicates the criteria for exercising the right to resistance: "Armed resistance to oppression by political authority is not legitimate, unless all the following conditions are met: 1) there is certain, grave and prolonged violation of fundamental rights, 2) all other means of redress have been exhausted, 3) such resistance will not provoke worse disorders, 4) there is well-founded hope of success; and 5) it is impossible reasonably to foresee any better solution". Recourse to arms is seen as an extreme remedy for putting an end to a "manifest, long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country". The gravity of the danger that recourse to violence entails today makes it preferable in any case that passive resistance be practised, which is "a way more conformable to moral principles and having no less prospects for success".

Inflicting punishment

In order to protect the common good, the lawful public authority must exercise the right and the duty to inflict punishments according to the seriousness of the crimes committed. The State has the twofold responsibility to discourage behaviour that is harmful to human rights and the fundamental norms of civil life, and to repair, through the penal system, the disorder created by criminal activity. In a State ruled by law the power to inflict punishment is correctly entrusted to the Courts: "In defining the proper relationships between the legislative, executive and judicial powers, the Constitutions of modern States guarantee the judicial power the necessary independence in the realm of law".

Punishment does not serve merely the purpose of defending the public order and guaranteeing the safety of persons; it becomes as well an instrument for the correction of the offender, a correction that also takes on the moral value of expiation when the guilty party

voluntarily accepts his punishment. There is a twofold purpose here. On the one hand, encouraging the re-insertion of the condemned person into society; on the other, fostering a justice that reconciles, a justice capable of restoring harmony in social relationships disrupted by the criminal act committed.

In this regard, the activity that prison chaplains are called to undertake is important, not only in the specifically religious dimension of this activity but also in defence of the dignity of those detained. Unfortunately, the conditions under which prisoners serve their time do not always foster respect for their dignity; and often, prisons become places where new crimes are committed. Nonetheless, the environment of penal institutions offers a privileged forum for bearing witness once more to Christian concern for social issues: “I was ... in prison and you came to me” (Mt 25:35-36).

The activity of offices charged with establishing criminal responsibility, which is always personal in character, must strive to be a meticulous search for truth and must be conducted in full respect for the dignity and rights of the human person; this means guaranteeing the rights of the guilty as well as those of the innocent. The juridical principle by which punishment cannot be inflicted if a crime has not first been proven must be borne in mind.

In carrying out investigations, the regulation against the use of torture, even in the case of serious crimes, must be strictly observed: “Christ’s disciple refuses every recourse to such methods, which nothing could justify and in which the dignity of man is as much debased in his torturer as in the torturer’s victim”. International juridical instruments concerning human rights correctly indicate a prohibition against torture as a principle which cannot be contravened under any circumstances.

Likewise ruled out is “the use of detention for the sole purpose of trying to obtain significant information for the trial”. Moreover, it must be ensured that “trials are conducted swiftly: their excessive length is becoming intolerable for citizens and results in a real injustice”.

Officials of the court are especially called to exercise due discretion in their investigations so as not to violate the rights of the accused to confidentiality and in order not to undermine the principle of the

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presumption of innocence. Since even judges can make mistakes, it is proper that the law provide for suitable compensation for victims of judicial errors.

The Church sees as a sign of hope “a growing public opposition to the death penalty, even when such a penalty is seen as a kind of ‘legitimate defence’ on the part of society. Modern society in fact has the means of effectively suppressing crime by rendering criminals harmless without definitively denying them the chance to reform”. Whereas, presuming the full ascertainment of the identity and responsibility of the guilty party, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude the death penalty “when this is the only practicable way to defend the lives of human beings effectively against the aggressor”. Bloodless methods of deterrence and punishment are preferred as “they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person”. The growing number of countries adopting provisions to abolish the death penalty or suspend its application is also proof of the fact that cases in which it is absolutely necessary to execute the offender “are very rare, if not practically non-existent”. The growing aversion of public opinion towards the death penalty and the various provisions aimed at abolishing it or suspending its application constitute visible manifestations of a heightened moral awareness.

The Democratic System

The Encyclical *Centesimus Annus* contains an explicit and articulate judgment with regard to democracy: “The Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate. Thus she cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the State for individual interests or for ideological ends. Authentic democracy is possible only in a State ruled by law, and on the basis of a correct conception of the human person. It requires that the necessary conditions be present for the advancement both of the individual through education and formation in true ideals, and of the ‘subjectivity’ of society through the creation of structures of participation and shared responsibility”.

Values and democracy

An authentic democracy is not merely the result of a formal observation of a set of rules but is the fruit of a convinced acceptance of the values that inspire democratic procedures: the dignity of every human person, the respect of human rights, commitment to the common good as the purpose and guiding criterion for political life. If there is no general consensus on these values, the deepest meaning of democracy is lost and its stability is compromised.

The Church's social doctrine sees ethical relativism, which maintains that there are no objective or universal criteria for establishing the foundations of a correct hierarchy of values, as one of the greatest threats to modern-day democracies. "Nowadays there is a tendency to claim that agnosticism and skeptical relativism are the philosophy and the basic attitude which correspond to democratic forms of political life. Those who are convinced that they know the truth and firmly adhere to it are considered unreliable from a democratic point of view, since they do not accept that truth is determined by the majority, or that it is subject to variation according to different political trends. It must be observed in this regard that if there is no ultimate truth to guide and direct political action, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism". Democracy is fundamentally "a 'system' and as such is a means and not an end. Its 'moral' value is not automatic, but depends on conformity to the moral law to which it, like every other form of human behaviour, must be subject: in other words, its morality depends on the morality of the ends which it pursues and of the means which it employs".

Institutions and democracy

The Magisterium recognizes the validity of the principle concerning the division of powers in a State: "it is preferable that each power be balanced by other powers and by other spheres of responsibility which keep it within proper bounds. This is the principle of the 'rule of law', in which the law is sovereign, and not the arbitrary will of individuals".

In the democratic system, political authority is accountable to the people. Representative bodies must be subjected to effective social

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control. This control can be carried out above all in free elections which allow the selection and change of representatives. The obligation on the part of those elected to give an accounting of their work - which is guaranteed by respecting electoral terms - is a constitutive element of democratic representation.

In their specific areas (drafting laws, governing, setting up systems of checks and balances), elected officials must strive to seek and attain that which will contribute to making civil life proceed well in its overall course.

Those who govern have the obligation to answer to those governed, but this does not in the least imply that representatives are merely passive agents of the electors. The control exercised by the citizens does not in fact exclude the freedom that elected officials must enjoy in order to fulfil their mandate with respect to the objectives to be pursued. These do not depend exclusively on special interests, but in a much greater part on the function of synthesis and mediation that serve the common good, one of the essential and indispensable goals of political authority.

Moral components of political representation

Those with political responsibilities must not forget or underestimate the moral dimension of political representation, which consists in the commitment to share fully in the destiny of the people and to seek solutions to social problems. In this perspective, responsible authority also means authority exercised with those virtues that make it possible to put power into practice as service (patience, modesty, moderation, charity, efforts to share), an authority exercised by persons who are able to accept the common good, and not prestige or the gaining of personal advantages, as the true goal of their work.

Among the deformities of the democratic system, political corruption is one of the most serious because it betrays at one and the same time both moral principles and the norms of social justice. It compromises the correct functioning of the State, having a negative influence on the relationship between those who govern and the governed. It causes a growing distrust with respect to public institutions, bringing about a progressive disaffection in the citizens with regard to politics and its representatives, with a resulting weakening of

institutions. Corruption radically distorts the role of representative institutions, because they become an arena for political bartering between clients' requests and governmental services. In this way political choices favour the narrow objectives of those who possess the means to influence these choices and are an obstacle to bringing about the common good of all citizens.

As an instrument of the State, public administration at any level - national, regional, community - is oriented towards the service of citizens: "Being at the service of its citizens, the State is the steward of the people's resources, which it must administer with a view to the common good". Excessive bureaucratization is contrary to this vision and arises when "institutions become complex in their organization and pretend to manage every area at hand. In the end they lose their effectiveness as a result of an impersonal functionalism, an overgrown bureaucracy, unjust private interests and an all-too-easy and generalized disengagement from a sense of duty". The role of those working in public administration is not to be conceived as impersonal or bureaucratic, but rather as an act of generous assistance for citizens, undertaken with a spirit of service.

Instruments for political participation

Political parties have the task of fostering widespread participation and making public responsibilities accessible to all. Political parties are called to interpret the aspirations of civil society, orienting them towards the common good, offering citizens the effective possibility of contributing to the formulation of political choices. They must be democratic in their internal structure, and capable of political synthesis and planning.

Another instrument of political participation is the referendum, whereby a form of direct access to political decisions is practised. The institution of representation in fact does not exclude the possibility of asking citizens directly about the decisions of great importance for social life.

Information and democracy

Information is among the principal instruments of democratic participation. Participation without an understanding of the situation of the political community, the facts and the proposed solutions to

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problems is unthinkable. It is necessary to guarantee a real pluralism in this delicate area of social life, ensuring that there are many forms and instruments of information and communications. It is likewise necessary to facilitate conditions of equality in the possession and use of these instruments by means of appropriate laws. Among the obstacles that hinder the full exercise of the right to objectivity in information, special attention must be given to the phenomenon of the news media being controlled by just a few people or groups. This has dangerous effects for the entire democratic system when this phenomenon is accompanied by ever closer ties between governmental activity and the financial and information establishments.

The media must be used to build up and sustain the human community in its different sectors: economic, political, cultural, educational and religious. "The information provided by the media is at the service of the common good. Society has a right to information based on truth, freedom, justice and solidarity".

The essential question is whether the current information system is contributing to the betterment of the human person; that is, does it make people more spiritually mature, more aware of the dignity of their humanity, more responsible or more open to others, in particular to the neediest and the weakest. A further aspect of great importance is the requisite that new technologies respect legitimate cultural differences.

In the world of the media the intrinsic difficulties of communications are often exacerbated by ideology, the desire for profit and political control, rivalry and conflicts between groups, and other social evils. Moral values and principles apply also to the media. "The ethical dimension relates not just to the content of communication (the message) and the process of communication (how the communicating is done) but to fundamental structural and systemic issues, often involving large questions of policy bearing upon the distribution of sophisticated technology and product (who shall be information rich and who shall be information poor?)".

In all three areas - the message, the process and structural issues - one fundamental moral principle always applies: the human person and the human community are the end and measure of the use of the media. A second principle is complementary to the first: the good of

human beings cannot be attained independently of the common good of the community to which they belong. It is necessary that citizens participate in the decision-making process concerning media policies. This participation, which is to be public, has to be genuinely representative and not skewed in favour of special interest groups when the media are a money-making venture.

The Political Community at the Service of Civil Society

Value of civil society

The political community is established to be of service to civil society, from which it originates. The Church has contributed to the distinction between the political community and civil society above all by her vision of man, understood as an autonomous, relational being who is open to the Transcendent. This vision is challenged by political ideologies of an individualistic nature and those of a totalitarian character, which tend to absorb civil society into the sphere of the State. The Church's commitment on behalf of social pluralism aims at bringing about a more fitting attainment of the common good and democracy itself, according to the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity and justice.

Civil society is the sum of relationships and resources, cultural and associative, that are relatively independent from the political sphere and the economic sector. "The purpose of civil society is universal, since it concerns the common good, to which each and every citizen has a right in due proportion". This is marked by a planning capacity that aims at fostering a freer and more just social life, in which the various groups of citizens can form associations, working to develop and express their preferences, in order to meet their fundamental needs and defend their legitimate interests.

Priority of civil society

The political community and civil society, although mutually connected and interdependent, are not equal in the hierarchy of ends. The political community is essentially at the service of civil society and, in the final analysis, the persons and groups of which civil society is composed. Civil society, therefore, cannot be considered an extension or a changing component of the political community; rather,

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it has priority because it is in civil society itself that the political community finds its justification.

The State must provide an adequate legal framework for social subjects to engage freely in their different activities and it must be ready to intervene, when necessary and with respect for the principle of subsidiarity, so that the interplay between free associations and democratic life may be directed to the common good. Civil society is in fact multifaceted and irregular; it does not lack its ambiguities and contradictions. It is also the arena where different interests clash with one another, with the risk that the stronger will prevail over the weaker.

Application of the principle of subsidiarity

The political community is responsible for regulating its relations with civil society according to the principle of subsidiarity. It is essential that the growth of democratic life begin within the fabric of society. The activities of civil society - above all volunteer organizations and cooperative endeavours in the private-social sector, all of which are succinctly known as the “third sector”, to distinguish from the State and the market - represent the most appropriate ways to develop the social dimension of the person, who finds in these activities the necessary space to express himself fully. The progressive expansion of social initiatives beyond the State- controlled sphere creates new areas for the active presence and direct action of citizens, integrating the functions of the State. This important phenomenon has often come about largely through informal means and has given rise to new and positive ways of exercising personal rights, which have brought about a qualitative enrichment of democratic life.

Cooperation, even in its less structured forms, shows itself to be one of the most effective responses to a mentality of conflict and unlimited competition that seems so prevalent today. The relationships that are established in a climate of cooperation and solidarity overcome ideological divisions, prompting people to seek out what unites them rather than what divides them.

Many experiences of volunteer work are examples of great value that call people to look upon civil society as a place where it is possible to rebuild a public ethic based on solidarity, concrete cooperation and fraternal dialogue. All are called to look with confidence to the

potentialities that thus present themselves and to lend their own personal efforts for the good of the community in general and, in particular, for the good of the weakest and the neediest. In this way, the principle of the “subjectivity of society” is also affirmed.

The State and Religious Communities

Religious Freedom, A Fundamental Human Right

The Second Vatican Council committed the Catholic Church to the promotion of religious freedom. The Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* explains in its subtitle that it intends to proclaim “the right of the person and of communities to social and civil freedom in religious matters”. In order that this freedom, willed by God and inscribed in human nature, may be exercised, no obstacle should be placed in its way, since “the truth cannot be imposed except by virtue of its own truth”. The dignity of the person and the very nature of the quest for God require that all men and women should be free from every constraint in the area of religion. Society and the State must not force a person to act against his conscience or prevent him from acting in conformity with it. Religious freedom is not a moral licence to adhere to error, nor as an implicit right to error.

Freedom of conscience and religion “concerns man both individually and socially”. The right to religious freedom must be recognized in the juridical order and sanctioned as a civil right; nonetheless, it is not of itself an unlimited right. The just limits of the exercise of religious freedom must be determined in each social situation with political prudence, according to the requirements of the common good, and ratified by the civil authority through legal norms consistent with the objective moral order. Such norms are required by “the need for the effective safeguarding of the rights of all citizens and for the peaceful settlement of conflicts of rights, also by the need for an adequate care of genuine public peace, which comes about when men live together in good order and in true justice, and finally by the need for a proper guardianship of public morality”.

Because of its historical and cultural ties to a nation, a religious community might be given special recognition on the part of the State. Such recognition must in no way create discrimination within the civil or social order for other religious groups. The vision of the relations

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between States and religious organizations promoted by the Second Vatican Council corresponds to the requirements of a State ruled by law and to the norms of international law. The Church is well aware that this vision is not shared by all; the right to religious freedom, unfortunately, “is being violated by many States, even to the point that imparting catechesis, having it imparted, and receiving it become punishable offences”.

The Catholic Church and the Political Community

Autonomy and independence

Although the Church and the political community both manifest themselves in visible organizational structures, they are by nature different because of their configuration and because of the ends they pursue. The Second Vatican Council solemnly reaffirmed that, “in their proper spheres, the political community and the Church are mutually independent and self-governing”. The Church is organized in ways that are suitable to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful, while the different political communities give rise to relationships and institutions that are at the service of everything that is part of the temporal common good. The autonomy and independence of these two realities is particularly evident with regards to their ends.

The duty to respect religious freedom requires that the political community guarantee the Church the space needed to carry out her mission. For her part, the Church has no particular area of competence concerning the structures of the political community: “The Church respects the legitimate autonomy of the democratic order and is not entitled to express preferences for this or that institutional or constitutional solution”, nor does it belong to her to enter into questions of the merit of political programmes, except as concerns their religious or moral implications.

Co-operation

The mutual autonomy of the Church and the political community does not entail a separation that excludes cooperation. Both of them, although by different titles, serve the personal and social vocation of the same human beings. The Church and the political community, in fact, express themselves in organized structures that are not ends in themselves but are intended for the service of man, to help him to

exercise his rights fully, those inherent in his reality as a citizen and a Christian, and to fulfil correctly his corresponding duties. The Church and the political community can more effectively render this service “for the good of all if each works better for wholesome mutual cooperation in a way suitable to the circumstances of time and place”.

The Church has the right to the legal recognition of her proper identity. Precisely because her mission embraces all of human reality, the Church, sensing that she is “truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history”, claims the freedom to express her moral judgment on this reality, whenever it may be required to defend the fundamental rights of the person or for the salvation of souls.

The Church therefore seeks: freedom of expression, teaching and evangelization; freedom of public worship; freedom of organization and of her own internal government; freedom of selecting, educating, naming and transferring her ministers; freedom for constructing religious buildings; freedom to acquire and possess sufficient goods for her activity; and freedom to form associations not only for religious purposes but also for educational, cultural, health care and charitable purposes.

In order to prevent or attenuate possible conflicts between the Church and the political community, the juridical experience of the Church and the State have variously defined stable forms of contact and suitable instruments for guaranteeing harmonious relations. This experience is an essential reference point for all cases in which the State has the presumption to invade the Church’s area of action, impairing the freedom of her activity to the point of openly persecuting her or, vice versa, for cases in which church organizations do not act properly with respect to the State.

(Compendium of the
Social Doctrine of the
Church: Pontifical
Council for Justice and Peace)

Doctrinal Note : On Some Question Regarding The Participation of Christians in Political Life

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, having received the opinion of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, has decided that it would be appropriate to publish the present Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life. This Note is directed to the Bishops of the Catholic Church and, in a particular way, to Catholic politicians and all lay members of the faithful called to participate in the political life of democratic societies.

constant teaching

1. The commitment of Christians in the world has found a variety of expressions in the course of the past 2000 years. One such expression has been Christian involvement in political life: Christians, as one Early Church writer stated, “play their full role as citizens”. Among the saints, the Church venerates many men and

women who served God through their generous commitment to politics and government. Among these, Saint Thomas More, who was proclaimed Patron of Statesmen and Politicians, gave witness by his martyrdom to the inalienable dignity of the human conscience. Though subjected to various forms of psychological pressure, Saint Thomas More refused to compromise, never forsaking the constant fidelity to legitimate authority and institutions which distinguished him; he taught by his life and his death that «man cannot be separated from God, nor politics from morality.

It is commendable that in today's democratic societies, in a climate of true freedom, everyone is made a participant in directing the body politic. Such societies call for new and fuller forms of participation in public life by Christian and non-Christian citizens alike. Indeed, all can contribute, by voting in elections for lawmakers and government officials, and in other ways as well, to the development of political solutions and legislative choices which, in their opinion, will benefit the common good. The life of a democracy could not be productive without the active, responsible and generous involvement of everyone, "albeit in a diversity and complementarity of forms, levels, tasks, and responsibilities".

By fulfilling their civic duties, "guided by a Christian conscience", in conformity with its values, the lay faithful exercise their proper task of infusing the temporal order with Christian values, all the while respecting the nature and rightful autonomy of that order, and cooperating with other citizens according to their particular competence and responsibility. The consequence of this fundamental teaching of the Second Vatican Council is that "the lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in 'public life', that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good". This would include the promotion and defence of goods such as public order and peace, freedom and equality, respect for human life and for the environment, justice and solidarity.

The present *Note* does not seek to set out the entire teaching of the Church on this matter, which is summarized in its essentials in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, but intends only to recall some principles proper to the Christian conscience, which inspire the social and political involvement of Catholics in democratic societies.

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The emergence of ambiguities or questionable positions in recent times, often because of the pressure of world events, has made it necessary to clarify some important elements of Church teaching in this area.

Central points in the current cultural and political debate

Civil society today is undergoing a complex cultural process as the end of an era brings with it a time of uncertainty in the face of something new. The great strides made in our time give evidence of humanity's progress in attaining conditions of life which are more in keeping with human dignity. The growth in the sense of responsibility towards countries still on the path of development is without doubt an important sign, illustrative of a greater sensitivity to the common good. At the same time, however, one cannot close one's eyes to the real dangers which certain tendencies in society are promoting through legislation, nor can one ignore the effects this will have on future generations.

A kind of cultural relativism exists today, evident in the conceptualization and defence of an ethical pluralism, which sanctions the decadence and disintegration of reason and the principles of the natural moral law. Furthermore, it is not unusual to hear the opinion expressed in the public sphere that such ethical pluralism is the very condition for democracy. As a result, citizens claim complete autonomy with regard to their moral choices, and lawmakers maintain that they are respecting this freedom of choice by enacting laws which ignore the principles of natural ethics and yield to ephemeral cultural and moral trends, as if every possible outlook on life were of equal value. At the same time, the value of tolerance is disingenuously invoked when a large number of citizens, Catholics among them, are asked not to base their contribution to society and political life - through the legitimate means available to everyone in a democracy - on their particular understanding of the human person and the common good. The history of the twentieth century demonstrates that those citizens were right who recognized the falsehood of relativism, and with it, the notion that there is no moral law rooted in the nature of the human person, which must govern our understanding of man, the common good and the state.

Such relativism, of course, has nothing to do with the legitimate freedom of Catholic citizens to choose among the various political

opinions that are compatible with faith and the natural moral law, and to select, according to their own criteria, what best corresponds to the needs of the common good. Political freedom is not - and cannot be - based upon the relativistic idea that all conceptions of the human person's good have the same value and truth, but rather, on the fact that politics are concerned with very concrete realizations of the true human and social good in given historical, geographic, economic, technological and cultural contexts. From the specificity of the task at hand and the variety of circumstances, a plurality of morally acceptable policies and solutions arises. It is not the Church's task to set forth specific political solutions - and even less to propose a single solution as the acceptable one - to temporal questions that God has left to the free and responsible judgment of each person. It is, however, the Church's right and duty to provide a moral judgment on temporal matters when this is required by faith or the moral law. If Christians must "recognize the legitimacy of differing points of view about the organization of worldly affairs", they are also called to reject, as injurious to democratic life, a conception of pluralism that reflects moral relativism. Democracy must be based on the true and solid foundation of non-negotiable ethical principles, which are the underpinning of life in society.

On the level of concrete political action, there can generally be a plurality of political parties in which Catholics may exercise - especially through legislative assemblies - their right and duty to contribute to the public life of their country. This arises because of the contingent nature of certain choices regarding the ordering of society, the variety of strategies available for accomplishing or guaranteeing the same fundamental value, the possibility of different interpretations of the basic principles of political theory, and the technical complexity of many political problems. It should not be confused, however, with an ambiguous pluralism in the choice of moral principles or essential values. The legitimate plurality of temporal options is at the origin of the commitment of Catholics to politics and relates directly to Christian moral and social teaching. It is in the light of this teaching that lay Catholics must assess their participation in political life so as to be sure that it is marked by a coherent responsibility for temporal reality.

The Church recognizes that while democracy is the best expression of the direct participation of citizens in political choices, it succeeds

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only to the extent that it is based on a correct understanding of the human *person*. Catholic involvement in political life cannot compromise on this principle, for otherwise the witness of the Christian faith in the world, as well as the unity and interior coherence of the faithful, would be non-existent. The democratic structures on which the modern state is based would be quite fragile were its foundation not the centrality of the human person. It is respect for the person that makes democratic participation possible. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, the protection of “the rights of the person is, indeed, a necessary condition for citizens, individually and collectively, to play an active part in public life and administration”.

The complex array of today’s problems branches out from here, including some never faced by past generations. Scientific progress has resulted in advances that are unsettling for the consciences of men and women and call for solutions that respect ethical principles in a coherent and fundamental way. At the same time, legislative proposals are put forward which, heedless of the consequences for the existence and future of human beings with regard to the formation of culture and social behaviour, attack the very inviolability of human life. Catholics, in this difficult situation, have the right and the duty to recall society to a deeper understanding of human life and to the responsibility of everyone in this regard. John Paul II, continuing the constant teaching of the Church, has reiterated many times that those who are directly involved in lawmaking bodies have a “*grave and clear obligation to oppose*” any law that attacks human life. For them, as for every Catholic, it is impossible to promote such laws or to vote for them. As John Paul II has taught in his Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* regarding the situation in which it is not possible to overturn or completely repeal a law allowing abortion which is already in force or coming up for a vote, “an elected official, whose absolute personal opposition to procured abortion was well known, could licitly support proposals aimed at *limiting the harm* done by such a law and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality”.

In this context, it must be noted also that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is

incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility towards the common good. Nor can a Catholic think of delegating his Christian responsibility to others; rather, the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives him this task, so that the truth about man and the world might be proclaimed and put into action.

When political activity comes up against moral principles that do not admit of exception, compromise or derogation, the Catholic commitment becomes more evident and laden with responsibility. In the face of *fundamental and inalienable ethical demands*, Christians must recognize that what is at stake is the essence of the moral law, which concerns the integral good of the human person. This is the case with laws concerning *abortion* and *euthanasia* (not to be confused with the decision to forgo *extraordinary treatments*, which is morally legitimate). Such laws must defend the basic right to life from conception to natural death. In the same way, it is necessary to recall the duty to respect and protect the rights of the *human embryo*. Analogously, the *family* needs to be safeguarded and promoted, based on monogamous marriage between a man and a woman, and protected in its unity and stability in the face of modern laws on divorce: in no way can other forms of cohabitation be placed on the same level as marriage, nor can they receive legal recognition as such. The same is true for the freedom of parents regarding the *education* of their children; it is an inalienable right recognized also by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In the same way, one must consider *society's protection of minors* and freedom from *modern forms of slavery* (drug abuse and prostitution, for example). In addition, there is the right to *religious freedom* and the development of an *economy* that is at the service of the human person and of the common good, with respect for social justice, the principles of human solidarity and subsidiarity, according to which "the rights of all individuals, families, and organizations and their practical implementation must be acknowledged". Finally, the question of *peace* must be mentioned. Certain pacifistic and ideological visions tend at times to secularize the value of peace, while, in other cases, there is the problem of summary ethical judgments which forget the complexity of the issues involved. Peace is always "the work of justice

and the effect of charity”. It demands the absolute and radical rejection of violence and terrorism and requires a constant and vigilant commitment on the part of all political leaders.

Principles of Catholic doctrine on the autonomy of the temporal order and on pluralism

While a plurality of methodologies reflective of different sensibilities and cultures can be legitimate in approaching such questions, no Catholic can appeal to the principle of pluralism or to the autonomy of lay involvement in political life to support policies affecting the common good which compromise or undermine fundamental ethical requirements. This is not a question of «confessional values» *per se*, because such ethical precepts are rooted in human nature itself and belong to the natural moral law. They do not require from those who defend them the profession of the Christian faith, although the Church’s teaching confirms and defends them always and everywhere as part of her service to the truth about man and about the common good of civil society. Moreover, it cannot be denied that politics must refer to principles of absolute value precisely because these are at the service of the dignity of the human person and of true human progress.

The appeal often made to «*the rightful autonomy of the participation of lay Catholics*» in politics needs to be clarified. Promoting the common good of society, according to one’s conscience, has nothing to do with «confessionalism» or religious intolerance. For Catholic moral doctrine, the rightful autonomy of the political or civil sphere from that of religion and the Church - *but not from that of morality* - is a value that has been attained and recognized by the Catholic Church and belongs to inheritance of contemporary civilization. John Paul II has warned many times of the dangers which follow from confusion between the religious and political spheres. «Extremely sensitive situations arise when a specifically religious norm becomes or tends to become the law of a state without due consideration for the distinction between the domains proper to religion and to political society. In practice, the identification of religious law with civil law can stifle religious freedom, even going so far as to restrict or deny other inalienable human rights». All the faithful are well aware that specifically religious activities (such as the profession of faith, worship, administration of sacraments, theological doctrines,

interchange between religious authorities and the members of religions) are outside the state's responsibility. The state must not interfere, nor in any way require or prohibit these activities, except when it is a question of public order. The recognition of civil and political rights, as well as the allocation of public services may not be made dependent upon citizens' religious convictions or activities.

The right and duty of Catholics and all citizens to seek the truth with sincerity and to promote and defend, by legitimate means, moral truths concerning society, justice, freedom, respect for human life and the other rights of the person, is something quite different. The fact that some of these truths may also be taught by the Church does not lessen the political legitimacy or the rightful "autonomy" of the contribution of those citizens who are committed to them, irrespective of the role that reasoned inquiry or confirmation by the Christian faith may have played in recognizing such truths. Such "autonomy" refers first of all to the attitude of the person who respects the truths that derive from natural knowledge regarding man's life in society, even if such truths may also be taught by a specific religion, because truth is one. It would be a mistake to confuse the proper *autonomy* exercised by Catholics in political life with the claim of a principle that prescinds from the moral and social teaching of the Church.

By its interventions in this area, the Church's Magisterium does not wish to exercise political power or eliminate the freedom of opinion of Catholics regarding contingent questions. Instead, it intends - as is its proper function - to instruct and illuminate the consciences of the faithful, particularly those involved in political life, so that their actions may always serve the integral promotion of the human person and the common good. The social doctrine of the Church is not an intrusion into the government of individual countries. It is a question of the lay Catholic's duty to be morally coherent, found within one's conscience, which is one and indivisible. "There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called 'spiritual life', with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called 'secular' life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social responsibilities, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture. The branch, engrafted to the vine which is Christ, bears its fruit in every sphere of existence and activity. In fact, every area of the lay faithful's lives, as different as they are, enters into the plan of God, who desires that these very

areas be the ‘places in time’ where the love of Christ is revealed and realized for both the glory of the Father and service of others. Every activity, every situation, every precise responsibility - as, for example, skill and solidarity in work, love and dedication in the family and the education of children, service to society and public life and the promotion of truth in the area of culture - are the occasions ordained by providence for a ‘continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity’ (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 4)”. Living and acting in conformity with one’s own conscience on questions of politics is not slavish acceptance of positions alien to politics or some kind of confessionalism, but rather the way in which Christians offer their concrete contribution so that, through political life, society will become more just and more consistent with the dignity of the human person.

In democratic societies, all proposals are freely discussed and examined. Those who, on the basis of respect for individual conscience, would view the moral duty of Christians to act according to their conscience as something that disqualifies them from political life, denying the legitimacy of their political involvement following from their convictions about the common good, would be guilty of a form of intolerant *secularism*. Such a position would seek to deny not only any engagement of Christianity in public or political life, but even the possibility of natural ethics itself. Were this the case, the road would be open to moral anarchy, which would be anything but legitimate pluralism. The oppression of the weak by the strong would be the obvious consequence. The marginalization of Christianity, moreover, would not bode well for the future of society or for consensus among peoples; indeed, it would threaten the very spiritual and cultural foundations of civilization.

Considerations regarding particular aspects

In recent years, there have been cases within some organizations founded on Catholic principles, in which support has been given to political forces or movements with positions contrary to the moral and social teaching of the Church on fundamental ethical questions. Such activities, in contradiction to basic principles of Christian conscience, are not compatible with membership in organizations or associations which define themselves as Catholic. Similarly, some Catholic periodicals in certain countries have expressed perspectives on political choices that have been ambiguous or incorrect, by

misinterpreting the idea of the political autonomy enjoyed by Catholics and by not taking into consideration the principles mentioned above.

Faith in Jesus Christ, who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (*Jn* 14:6), calls Christians to exert a greater effort in building a culture which, inspired by the Gospel, will reclaim the values and contents of the Catholic Tradition. The presentation of the fruits of the spiritual, intellectual and moral heritage of Catholicism in terms understandable to modern culture is a task of great urgency today, in order to avoid also a kind of Catholic cultural diaspora. Furthermore, the cultural achievements and mature experience of Catholics in political life in various countries, especially since the Second World War, do not permit any kind of ‘inferiority complex’ in comparison with political programs which recent history has revealed to be weak or totally ruinous. It is insufficient and reductive to think that the commitment of Catholics in society can be limited to a simple transformation of structures, because if at the basic level there is no culture capable of receiving, justifying and putting into practice positions deriving from faith and morals, the changes will always rest on a weak foundation.

Christian faith has never presumed to impose a rigid framework on social and political questions, conscious that the historical dimension requires men and women to live in imperfect situations, which are also susceptible to rapid change. For this reason, Christians must reject political positions and activities inspired by a utopian perspective which, turning the tradition of Biblical faith into a kind of prophetic vision without God, makes ill use of religion by directing consciences towards a hope which is merely earthly and which empties or reinterprets the Christian striving towards eternal life.

At the same time, the Church teaches that authentic freedom does not exist without the truth. “Truth and freedom either go together hand in hand or together they perish in misery”. In a society in which truth is neither mentioned nor sought, every form of authentic exercise of freedom will be weakened, opening the way to libertine and individualistic distortions and undermining the protection of the good of the human person and of the entire society.

In this regard, it is helpful to recall a truth which today is often not perceived or formulated correctly in public opinion: the right to freedom of conscience and, in a special way, to religious freedom, taught in the

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Declaration *Dignitatis humanae* of the Second Vatican Council, is based on the ontological dignity of the human person and not on a non-existent equality among religions or cultural systems of human creation. Reflecting on this question, Paul VI taught that “in no way does the Council base this right to religious freedom on the fact that all religions and all teachings, including those that are erroneous, would have more or less equal value; it is based rather on the dignity of the human person, which demands that he not be subjected to external limitations which tend to constrain the conscience in its search for the true religion or in adhering to it”. The teaching on freedom of conscience and on religious freedom does not therefore contradict the condemnation of indifferentism and religious relativism by Catholic doctrine; on the contrary, it is fully in accord with it.

The principles contained in the present *Note* are intended to shed light on one of the most important aspects of the unity of Christian life: coherence between faith and life, Gospel and culture, as recalled by the Second Vatican Council. The Council exhorted Christians «to fulfill their duties faithfully in the spirit of the Gospel. It is a mistake to think that, because we have here no lasting city, but seek the city which is to come, we are entitled to shirk our earthly responsibilities; this is to forget that by our faith we are bound all the more to fulfill these responsibilities according to the vocation of each... May Christians... be proud of the opportunity to carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are ordered to the glory of God”.

The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, in the Audience of November 21, 2002, approved the present Note, adopted in the Plenary Session of this Congregation, and ordered its publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, November 24, 2002, the Solemnity of Christ the King.

(Joseph Card. Ratzinger)

Church and Education in Kerala

Education is critically important to social development. According to Amartya Sen, it helps in building up human capabilities. Educational attainment is one of the main criteria in indexing human development. Among Indian States, Kerala stands at the top in the Human Development Index. From a historical perspective, the unique contributions of Churches towards this, particularly in the domains of education and health, are indisputable.

Though education as a ‘merit good’ played a remarkable role in the constitution of the so-called ‘Kerala Model of Development’, the present educational scenario of the State is confronted with a number of problems. Many educationists and social activists doubt whether the present educational system and its practices are fulfilling its noble objectives. It is quite unfortunate that the Church-driven educational institutions are also not free from this critique. In this predicament, it is high time to peruse the educational

situation of Kerala and get it transformed to serve the society in a better way. In this brief note, firstly we propose to acknowledge the contributions of Churches to the educational development of the State. Secondly, we plan to make a critical examination of the current educational situation. Finally, we also want to make some suggestions, from a visionary perspective, to restructure the educational functioning of Kerala. The Contributions of Kerala Churches to Education.

It is an acknowledged fact that the Churches of Kerala contributed substantially to the educational development of the State. Even prior to the European influence, the enlightened members of the Church in Kerala served the educational needs of the then traditional society. There were enlightened Christian teachers running 'Kalaris' to impart the 'three Rs' as well as the martial arts. The learned priests (malpans) provided the scriptural lessons and knowledge in some secular subjects. Nevertheless, the most acknowledged contribution of Churches to the Kerala society is in the promotion of modern education. It was first brought into this territory by the Protestant missionaries in the eighteenth century. Kerala was privileged to enjoy the educational and other services of various Protestant missions from the extreme north to the south. The Basel Mission in the northern region, the Church Missionary Society in the central part of Kerala, the London Missionary Society in the Thiruvananthapuram region, and Lutherans in Kanyakumari. The Roman Catholic Mission, especially along the coast of Kerala, has also to be acclaimed.

The European Missions inspired the indigenous Kerala Churches also to extend their services in the advancement of education in the State. In due course of time a number of educational institutions - ranging from the primary, secondary to the higher and technical - arose in different parts of the State. Other communities also joined in this mission. The native rulers of Kerala too were in favour of popularising modern education. After independence, the democratic governments also took a keen interest in extending education to the entire masses of the State. However, the outliers in Kerala are still in the periphery of the educational system.

The Present Educational Scenario: A Critique

Kerala's education is now confronted with a number of problems. The following is an overview of those.

Commercialisation of Education

Education in the States sprouted in the ‘public sphere’ and was considered a ‘merit good’. But now one can discern various degrees of ‘commoditisation’ in this sphere, from ‘selffinancing’ to outright profiting. When education is administered as a business, then the various participants in it become business stakeholders. It leads to individualisation and creation of selfish creatures. In this milieu, educational agencies are perceived as capitalists, teachers as workers, and students as inputs to be transformed into outputs or finished commodities. Much of the social and human element of education is eroded in this process.

Forceful Capitation and its Social Costs

Most of our private educational institutions forcefully collect capitation at the time of appointment and admission. This gives birth to a number of unhealthy practices. Once money becomes a privileged criterion, ‘merit’ will definitely be pushed back. The mass failure of students in most of the engineering colleges in the State in recent times is definitely an eyeopener of this phenomenon. In order to favour the resourceful clients, the managements would be forced to resort to unethical practices. This is definitely against the spirit of Christianity.

Eroding Standards in Education

This problem is particularly vexing in the case of higher education, including various types of professional courses. Kerala students in general are beaten back in almost all national level competitive examinations. Such desirable educational activities like reading and discoursing are widely missing not only among students but among teachers as well.

Deprivation of Academic Freedom

In the present educational system there is little space for students and teachers to express their innovation and creativity. In most cases the parents choose the courses for their children. The talents and potentials of the children are not taken into account. All the stakeholders are entrapped in a static framework.

Exclusion and Extinction

Everywhere we hear the slogan of inclusive growth and development. But equity and justice are evaporating from education.

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India has been following a policy of neoliberalism from 1991 onwards. Its impact is exclusively in all social fronts including education. However, in order to extend inclusion, educational loans are granted. But this is emerging as a big problem for the inability of a large number of loanees to repay the loan due to the dimming employment opportunities. So one fears that the suicide among farmers would spread to the educational loanees.

Way Out

The above description definitely legitimises the urgent need to rescue our education from this multidimensional crisis. There is no easy solution to it. However, we point to some suggestions as a way out.

Alternative Educational Financing

Educational organisers have to pool a fund to facilitate wealth by resorting to moral persuasion. If the integrity is ensured, people will definitely contribute to it.

Justice and Equity

If education is to be discharged as a mission, ‘justice’ and ‘equity’ should be the core principles. If we fail in it, it is better that the Church should not be engaged in education. A number of schemes targeting the poor and vulnerable have to be chalked out like scholarships, education grants etc.

Vocationalisation of Education

In starting new educational institutions and courses, ‘vocationalisation’ should be given priority.

Geographic priority

Instead of starting new educational institutions in the already educated terrains, the Church should give priority to the undeveloped regions.

Incentives and Punishments

Proper monitoring of any system requires both incentives and punishments. Though there are many limitations in the exercise of those in the present system, still Christian managements through active involvement can bring about a qualitative change.

Conclusion

In this article, we tried to highlight the contributions of the Indian Churches in the promotion of modern education in Kerala. This enabled the State to rank first among the Indian States in the Human Development Index. The article also examined the present educational scenario and exposed some of the negative aspects like growing inequality in educational opportunities and deteriorating standards, especially in higher education. We also proposed certain suggestions to improve the educational system of Kerala. Unless Kerala's education is revamped, the entire edifice of 'social development' by the State will falter. It is a great challenge for Kerala's Churches to carry out this onerous task.

Contribution of Christian Community in The Field of Education in India

Your browser may not support display of this image. Christians are still a minority in our Country They are not even up to three percent in population, though St. Thomas visited India as a Christian missionary in A.D. 52. Again, Francis Xavier another missionary came to India to propagate Christianity in 1542. In spite of all these, Christians remain a meager minority of this country. Why it happened so? One of the main reasons, is that there were no kings or emperors in this country to sponser these missionaries, whereas Islam spread in the whole of India, because there were emperors and kings to patronize and propagate this religion. That is the case of Buddhism also. Buddhism originated in India. Emperors like Asoka, embraced this religion and sent missionaries to Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal, Mangolia, Japan, China, Ceylon and son on. In all these countries, Buddhism spread like wildfire and even at present, there are millions in these countries as followers of this religion. But the pity is that, at present, it has only very few followers in India from where it originated. Lord Buddha founded this religion when Hinduism degraded with its superstitions and evil practices. Actually Buddhism is only a refined form of Hinduism. That is why it could not retain so many people in India to its rank and file.

Christianity is one of the predominant religions in the world. It is the main religion in Europe, United States, Canada, Australia and so on. In almost all the countires of the world like Asia, Africa, Latin

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America, Philipinese, Newsland etc, Christianity has its followers. So far as India is concerned, there are only a few states like, Kerala, Goa, Nagaland, Assam etc.. where the Christian population is not meager. Now in many of the Northern Indian states Christian missionaries face threat to their lives and Institutions.

Wherever the Christian community is there, they do a lot of charitable service for the uplift of the down-trodden. They do a lot of social activities to help the poor and needy. India can never forget the contribution of Christians in the fields of education and public health.

People of Kerala are proud of the High literacy, of our state. When compared to Kerala, almost all the Indian states are far behind in the field of education. How we could achieve this covetable position? When the kings ruled Travancore, admission to Govt. Schools and Colleges was denied to the backward and scheduled caste communities. The Christian missionaries who established, educational institutions through out the length and breadth of Kerala opened the gated of their schools and colleges for everybody without looking into caste or creed. Thus the downtrodden section of the people of Kerala, got an opportunity to educate themselves in these institutions and they were able to secure high positions in the society and to inspire their communities about the need of getting educated.

Later the S.N.D.P., N.S.S. and recently the M.E.S. started so many schools and colleges in Kerala to give opportunity for their youngsters to get educated in their own educational institutions. But even today the Christian Community is in the fore-front regarding the number of schools and colleges they have, and the quality of education that is given in these institutions. The educational institution of the Christian community could mould a good number of leaders from the backward and scheduled caste communities, who later fought against the social inequalities.

Even in the cultural field the contribution of Christian community cannot be ignored. The growth and development of the Malayalam language is heavily indebted to the contribution of missionaries like Herman Gundart and Nidhirickal Mani kathanar. Nasrani Deepika which is the first daily News paper in Kerala is the Contribution of C.M.I. missionaries.

Though the Christian population is meager in almost all the Indian states, the very few people in all these states do a lot of service to the weaker section of the society. Among the Indian states Kerala is having the maximum Christian population and the Christian community here send a good number of priests and nuns to the different state in India for mission work. These Priests and nuns do their service in the remote villages of many Indian states. They start schools, Colleges, Hospitals and poor homes for the uplift of the downtrodden section of people in these villages.

These poor people were exploited by the Landlords in these areas for the last many years. They were working like slaves, in the Agricultural fields of these Landlords. When they got educated, they began to question these social injustice. That is why these feudal Lords are threatening the priests and nuns who work for the uplift of these poor people.

All the nations of the world have appreciated the great service Mother Theresa had done to the poor and destitutes in Calcutta. She never looked into caste or creed. We can't understand the reason why some section of the people in India are criticizing the charitable service of the Christian community in every nook and corner of India.

Ours is the largest democracy in the world. Democracy will be successful only in a country where people are educated. But the curse of our country is the high percentage of illiteracy. The Christian missionaries who have migrated to different parts of India are conscious about this and they start educational institutions in places. Where they work. Almost all the reasonable people of this county appreciate the work done by the Christian missionaries in different parts of India. The contribution of the Jesuits in the educational field is really praiseworthy. Almost all the famous colleges and schools in different states of India belong to the Jesuit order. Nobody can disagree with the fact that though a minority community, Christians are doing yeoman service to the Nation.

(Mathew V. Kurian)

Chapter 4

The Role of Christians in the Shaping of Modern Kerala

It is obvious that there were multiple players and actors cutting across the boundaries of caste, creed and gender who actually took Kerala to the threshold of modernity and generally speaking no community, party or collectivity can claim exclusive monopoly in taking up its leadership. Kerala got evolved as a model modern state of India thanks to the concerted effort of diverse institutions, people and movements, which were often interrelated and interlinked. The diverse socioeconomic, educational and health care projects and programmes that the St. Thomas Christians implemented out of the inspiration from the message of love of Jesus have ultimately contributed to the building up of a literate, healthy and socially empowered state in Kerala. But in the recent historiography and narratives of Kerala's modernity only the voice of the hegemonic group, dominant community or party is made to be excessively heard peripheralizing and at times swallowing as well as silencing the voices of other players including the

minority communities and groups. This is a clever way of manoeuvring the historical past by the “majority” and the “powerful” for the exercise of domination by subverting and silencing what the “minority” groups had done for the shaping of modern Kerala. It is against this background that now historians are trying to identify the different layers of the historical processes that went into the shaping of modern Kerala. All these layers are as important as the so-called ‘dominant layer’ and the fabric of modern Kerala got constructed out of the collectivity of these layers, the cohesive forces emerging out of which sustain its vitality in a remarkable way. In today’s lecture I would like to concentrate only on one of these layers, i.e., the St. Thomas Catholic Christians, whose contribution added certain unique meanings and content to the type of modernity that appeared in Kerala.

Saint Thomas Christians in the Shaping of Modern Kerala

Agrarian Surplus, Banking and the Evolving Christian Middle Class

The St. Thomas Christians, who were often depicted in the Portuguese documents as the principal spice producers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, emerged as the dominant social group in the agrarian sector of Travancore by the second half of the nineteenth century. During the period between 1850 and 1900, there occurred a large scale migration under the leadership of St. Thomas Christians to the central upland parts of Kerala, particularly to the slopes of small hills and hillocks, which were till then uninhabited for want of sufficient labour force to clear their bushes and trees. One of the major reasons that triggered the migration process was the unprecedented increase in the Christian population thanks to the rise in the birthrate followed by decrease in the deathrate. In Travancore their number increased from 174566 in 1836 as per the account of William Henry Horsely¹ to 287409 by 1891².

However Travancore did not have enough cultivated land to accommodate and feed the extra population of one lakh St. Thomas Christians. Hence they were compelled to move towards the forest land in the hilly slopes and terrains of mid-upland parts of central Kerala for the purpose of extension of agriculture, particularly spice-cultivation. Because of the relatively thick forest, whose clearance needed labour force other than domestic labour, people did not dare

to extend agriculture to these terrains till then. However, by this time there occurred a chain of developments in Travancore, which helped to create sufficient labour force needed for large scale clearance of forest land and hilly slopes of mid-upland parts of central Kerala. This labour class was constructed out of the slaves liberated by Travancorean government in 1855. In fact the slaves were liberated not because of the love towards them, but also for the purpose of ensuring labour force required for plantation sector and for commercially oriented cultivation activities of the British. By liberating the slaves, the labour force till then enjoyed only by a few aristocratic families for generations, was released and was made available in the open market. Using these liberated slaves, the emerging affluent section tried to reclaim backwaters and create paddy cultivating space in Kuttanadu area and spice cultivating terrains in midland Kerala³.

Since the liberated slaves had no expertise or knowledge to do any other type of job and moreover they found it extremely difficult to get adjusted to the new crisis situation arising out of the sudden deprivation of accommodation and food, which they had been enjoying earlier as slaves, made them collaborate with the migrant agriculturists in expanding cultivation to the hill slopes of midland Kerala to overcome problem of poverty and accommodation-deficiency. The migrant agriculturists started setting up a long chain of agrarian villages with the help of the labour force supplied by the liberated slaves.

With the help of freed slaves the Christian agricultural entrepreneurs reclaimed marshy land and portions of backwaters for the purpose of extending rice cultivation in Kuttanadu area and several new Christian settlements were set up in the newly reclaimed land, which soon became major centers of wealth accumulation. On the one hand there were the new agrarian villages that came up in Kuttanadu area like Thayankary (1864), Mithrakary (1869), Puthukary (1869), Kavalam (1869), Karuvatta (1874), Punnappa (1892)⁴; on the other hand a large number of agrarian villages of St. Thomas Christians came up in midupland parts of Kerala like Arpookara (1852), Koothrappally (1874), Ayarkunnam (1885), Thuruthy (1885), Payippadu (1887), Cheruvandoor (1889), Vettimukal (1894)⁵. The movement of St. Thomas Christians to the bushy upland regions, forests and hill slopes for spice cultivation led to the establishment of agrarian villages in places like Plasnal (1848), Vilakkumadam (1849), Kuruvinal (1862)

Palayam (1864), Thidanadu (1865) Edamattam (1869), Kanjirathanam (1869), Mannarappara (1871) Kakkoor (1881), Edappady (1884) Poovathode (1887), Kudakkachira (1888) Chittar (1890), Anthyalam (1891), Maniyamkunnu (1891) Poovarani (1891), Mutholappuram (1892), Kaveekunnu (1893), Kunnonni (1893), Kurumannu (1893), Neeranthanam (1897), Pizhaku (1897), Mattakkara (1898), Ullanadu (1898) and Karur (1899)⁶. These places became the major production centres for a variety of spices including pepper, ginger, turmeric and lemon grass.

It is almost during the same period that the agriculturist segment of S. Thomas Christians started migrating to the upland regions near Kanjirappally including Anikadu (1869), Thamarakunnu (1891), Ponkunnam (1891), Manimala (1892), Elangulam (1896), Kottangal (1901), Elikulam (1908) and Thambalakkadu (1912) on the one side⁷ and on the other side to Peringuzha (1864), Kaloor (1882), Arikuzha (1889), Vazhakulam (1895), Ayavana (1895), Kaloorkad (1898) in the east near Muvattupuzha⁸.

Most of these tracks of land brought newly under cultivation were not actually forest area from the beginning; but were once upon a time property of various principality chieftains, local rulers, karthas and kaimals, which were attached to the Travancore state as its property (Pandaravaka) by Marthanda Varma during his northward conquest during the period between 1742 and 1752 after having killed the original owners. These newly attached tracks of land as state property (Pandaravaka) remained unattended to for almost a century causing bushes and trees to grow in these places as in a forest and it was into these terrains that the St. Thomas Christians started moving from 1850s onwards for extending agricultural activities with the help of liberated slaves. The Pattom Proclamation made by the Travancore state in 1865 conceded that the holders and cultivators of Pandaravaka land (land belonging to Travancore state) could exercise full ownership right over the land they held and cultivated and could buy or sell such land as any private property⁹. This in fact gave an unprecedented stimulus to the St. Thomas Christians to move towards the uncultivated state land of Travancore.

The process of carving out of agrarian villages with the help of freed slaves out of the uninhabited terrains by the Christian

entrepreneurial agriculturists happened in the kingdom of Cochin as well. Thus we find many new Christian agrarian settlements emerging in places like Chakkarakadavu (1862), Melur (1865), Thuravoor (1874), Kadukutty (1876), Nedungattu (1880), Chunangamvely (1880), Kuzhippilly (1881), Mukkandoor (1884), Kaipattoor (1886), Kuttipuzha (1899), Mattoor (1900) and Pulluvazhy (1905)¹⁰. Meanwhile the attempts to reclaim backwaters and low lying water-logged areas for cultivation by the St. Thomas Christians led to the formation of such agrarian villages like Ezhupunna (1859), Kavil (1865), Kothavara (1870), Kulasekharamangalam (1877), Panavally (1878), Uzhuva (1879), Chaly (1891), Kunnumpuram (1892) and Kokkamangalam (1900)¹¹. The liberated slaves who supplied considerable labour force to the St. Thomas Christians in their attempts for extending agriculture, principally spice cultivation in these places, were eventually absorbed into these evolving agrarian villages by giving them small plots of land (often ranging between 5 to 10 cents) and getting them converted into Christianity or even otherwise. This in fact served as the crude economic base of the developments that finally took the liberated slaves to mainstream societal processes of modern Kerala. By 1936 there were about 5734 Christian families with 25, 446 members, formed out of the liberated slaves in and around Pala, Changanacherry and Kanjirappally¹².

The mid-upland terrains near Trichur like Mullasserry (1854), Engandiyoor (1856), Kandannoor (1856), Cherppu (1855), Eranellur (1861), Chengaloor (1870), Mundoor (1871), Chittalayam (1871), Kaloor (1874), Puthusserry (1875) Varantharappally (1875), Ayyanthole (1876), Pavaratty (1877), Thiroor (1878), Arimboor (1881), Kanjani (1882), Vayilathoor (1882), Edakkulam (1882), Trichur (1885), Porathoor (1886), Chowannur (1892), Erumapetty (1893), Peramangalam (1894), Manaloor (1894) and Vadanappilly (1896) also experienced the formation of agrarian settlements thanks to the entry of St. Thomas Christians for extending agriculture over there¹³. The central part of the erstwhile kingdom of Cochin located along the banks of river Chalakudy and its branches also witnessed the emergence of several Christian agrarian settlements during this period corresponding to the increasing participation of the Christians in primary production. The newly formed Christian agrarian pockets like Kallettumkara (1861), Oorakam (1867), Kaipamangalam (1871),

Mathilakam (1872), Aloor (1872), Karanchira (1873), Avittathur (1878), Cheloor (1880), Irinjalakuda (1881), Poyya (1890), Chendraponni (1895) and Kundur (1897) soon became the principal centers of wealth accumulation during this period.

It is interesting here to note that most of these Christian agrarian settlements eventually became centres of immense wealth accumulation. The Church leaders of the St. Thomas Christians resorted to various economic programmes under the aegis of parish churches by which a considerable chunk of this wealth was to be kept aside and channelized for further productive ventures like chitty and kuries without letting it to be spent in these villages. The members of this community were taught the lessons of thrift and the necessity of investing in profitable ventures for the purpose of generating enough resources to sustain the community against the background of its ongoing resistance to the Lusitanization and cultural colonialism thrust upon them by the Portuguese and the European form of Church administration. Fr Thomas Paremakkel, the governor of the diocese of Cranganore, had instructed as early as 1787 that all the churches should invest their surplus wealth in productive and profit-generating ventures so that the churches might remain self-reliant without depending on foreign help¹⁴. The long and stiff resistance of this community to the cultural colonialism of the Europeans was realized only because this community did not often depend on the money and resources provided by the Europeans; but instead generated enough resources from within using the economic institutions of chitty and kuries run under the supervision of parish churches of the St. Thomas Christians. In many places banks of different character and nature evolved out of such economic institutions.

Thiruvalla and Trichur became the heartland of banking business for the St. Thomas Christians. The Kandathil family of Thiruvalla (Manorama group), belonging to Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church had about 15 banks and the among the 42 scheduled banks of India, only Central Bank of India and Bank of India exceeded the Travancore National and Quilon Bank of Kandathil family in the volume of business in 1937. The Ambalapuzha Christian Bank founded by Chandy Vaidyan of Edathua was another leading bank of the St. Thomas Christians in the south. The Lourdes Catholic church in Trichur was the pioneer to introduce the church sponsored kuri in the kingdom of

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Cochin. The Chaldean Christians of Trichur started the first bank called the Chaldean Syrian Bank in 1918. The Catholic St. Thomas Christians of Trichur under the Chakolas started the Catholic Syrian Bank in 1920 and later South Indian Bank (1929), which are even now the leading small scale banks of India. Catholic Orient Bank (1922), Catholic Bank (1929) Malabar Bank (1929), Indian Insurance Banking Corporation (1933) and Kshemavialsom Bank were the other leading banks started by Chakola group and other Catholic St. Thomas Christians of Trichur. Pala Central Bank (1927), Forward Bank (1929), Federal Bank (1931), Orient Central Bank, Cochin Bank, Travancore Midland Bank (1944) formed the other leading banks of central Kerala, which were founded or sustained by Catholic St. Thomas Christians for a long period of time. The wealth flow from the newly formed agrarian villages of the St. Thomas Christians of mid-upland Kerala and the surplus from their commercial activities kept banking sector vibrant and active. In 1953 Trichur having 19 registered offices of banks stood second in position in India, while Calcutta, which had the largest number of registered offices had only 21. Majority of these 19 banks of Trichur were started and managed by the St. Thomas Christians of different denominations¹⁵.

Meanwhile some enterprising St. Thomas Christians under the leadership of Vallikkattil, Karikulam and Murikkummoottil families moved towards coastal areas for reclaiming backwaters for extending rice cultivation. A large space of backwaters having the depth of about 7-8 feet was encircled by bunds and piles made of coconut timber and mud, and the water inside the bund was pumped out with water wheels and then cultivation was done on a large scale under the leadership of Murikkummoottil Thomman Joseph. About 17500 acres of land was thus reclaimed by these Christian families in Kuttanadu for the sake of rice cultivation, when the entire nation was starving because of the dearth of provisions caused by first and second world wars¹⁶.

The active participation of this Christian community in the commercial and banking sector fetched for them immense wealth, which they ably invested in further productive ventures. In 1925 when the Nair Act was passed by Travancore state allowing the Nair taravad property to get fragmented, divided and sold, it was the St. Thomas Christians who purchased a major chunk of land from the Nairs when

they fragmented their property and sold it¹⁷. Thus during the period between 1920 and 1930 when Nairs sold land worth Rs. 8, 40, 10, 717, the St. Thomas Christians bought land worth the value of Rs. 6,06,97,547¹⁸. A good many of the St. Thomas Christians also moved towards plantation sector and eventually they turned out to be a significant moneyed middle class in the evolving capitalistic economy. In 1931 when economic census was taken along with demographic census, it was Meenachil taluk, having greatest concentration of St. Thomas Christians, that stood first in Kerala on the basis of percapita (Rs. 3259), while Kottayam, Thodupuzha, Ambalapuzha, Thiruvalla, Changanacherry and Muvattupuzha, which are the other core areas of St. Thomas Christian settlements, occupied the other succeeding positions¹⁹.

Indigenization of the Church and Educational Endeavours

Along with the material reorientation happening among the members of the St. Thomas Christian community, we find this community undergoing radical social and institutional changes from within. It was only by the end of the 19th century that the Catholic St. Thomas Christians started getting their own dioceses as well as indigenous bishops. With the erection of two Apostolic Vicariates (Trichur and Kottayam) for the Catholic St. Thomas Christians in 1887, this community got a chance for the first time to move towards an independent Church structure under Pope. It is interesting to note that the seats of these two Apostolic Vicariates were located in Trichur and Kottayam, which happened to be the core areas where wealth from the newly formed Christian agrarian villages in Central Kerala flowed in an unprecedented way, which in turn sustained the multilayered activities that Church took up in the succeeding period.

Bishop Adolf Medlycott and Bishop Charles Levinge, the Apostolic Vicars of Trichur and Kottayam respectively, chalked out several programmes for channelizing the wealth accruing in Christian agrarian villages for socially and educationally empowering the community. One of the important areas that they focused on was the sector of education. Till then the authorities of the Church administrative systems of Padroado and Propaganda Fide, under whose rule the members of this community were subjugated for centuries, did not allow the Catholic St. Thomas Christians to go for English education fearing that through

English education protestant ideas would get disseminated among the members of this community. However the Jacobite segment of the St. Thomas Christians had established several educational institutions thanks to their connections with the Anglican (CMS) missionaries and several of them got good employment and governmental positions, which the Catholic St. Thomas Christians unfortunately missed for a long span of time. It was Chavara Kuriakose Elias, the founder of CMI order who took initiative to introduce modern English education among this community in 1863. In 1891 while CMS had 164 schools with 3879 boys as well as 1031 girls and LMS had about 438 teachers to teach in their educational institutions, the Catholics had only one college, one high school and 54 parish schools for entire Kerala²⁰.

When Bishops Charles Levinge and Adolf Medlycott sent circulars to establish schools under parish churches, the response was highly positive. Many parish churches that could mobilize resources from agrarian and commercial sectors came forward to erect schools of different grades and levels. The most important among them were Enammavu (1885), Elthuruthu (1886), Kottapady (1887), Trichur (1889), Chevoor (1890), Palliserry (1890), Manaloor (1892) and Valappadu (1893) in Trichur area²¹ and Changanacherry (1891), Edathua (1895) and Pulinkunnu (1898) near Changanacherry area²².

The indigenous bishops of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry, who started leading this community from 1896 onwards gave utmost importance to educational activities²³. Consequently during the period between 1900 and 1935 about 192 schools were established under the diocese of Changanacherry, besides the TTI of Vazhappally (1911) and St. Berchman's College of Changanacherry (1922)²⁴. During this period Kottayam diocese had established 36 schools²⁵, while its number in Pala region was 93²⁶. In the present day diocese of Kothamangalam about 52 schools were started during this period out of which the schools of Nedungapra (1925), Mudappannoor (1926), Thazhavumkunnu (1929), Madakkathanam (1929), Chilavu (1929) and Ramalloor (1934) were started even much before the establishment of parish churches in these places²⁷. During the period between 1900 and 1935 about 106 schools were started in the diocese of Ernakulam²⁸, while the number of schools started in the diocese of Trichur during this time was equally significant. St. Thomas College of Trichur (1919) was the first higher educational institution set up by the Catholic St. Thomas Christians²⁹.

Soon the leadership of this community passed from the European missionaries to Indian bishops, who issued circulars that there should be at least one school under every parish church. The wealth generated from the agrarian expansion and stimulated trade was collected at the level of parish churches and primary schools were erected in every smaller agrarian villages and upper primary schools in semi urban areas and finally high schools in centres of intense Catholic concentration. It was in these schools that the children of the freed slaves had their education, as in other schools caste discrimination still continued. Most of the dalit leaders of Kerala of these days had done their education in such schools. In some places schools were erected much more before the establishment of parish churches, which is suggestive of the priority that this community gave to education at this point of time.

With the establishment of Syro-Malabar Hierarchy in 1923 this community got a concrete institutional and ecclesiological format³⁰. Most of the bishops who led this Church from 1896 happened to be from an agrarian background, as a result of which they could address effectively the agrarian segment of this community and get the agrarian surplus of their major centres easily channelized for erecting educational institutions with the purpose of empowering this community. Interestingly the religious women congregations that were founded during this time, like Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (1866), Franciscan Clarist Congregation (1888), Sisters of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (1908), Sacred Heart sisters (1914) had developed teaching as one of their major charisms and activities. Most of these congregations either started their own schools or got their members trained for teaching apostolate, which in turn is indicative of the importance that the Church leaders had then given to the mission of educating the poor and the peripheralized³¹. The elements of enlightenment and the radiance of knowledge that got disseminated from these schools played not an insignificant role in the shaping of modern Kerala.

Hospitals and Health Care

Health care sector form an important area where the St.Thomas Christians made sizeable contribution. The establishment of dispensaries in medium size settlements and relatively bigger hospitals

with treatment facilities of English medicine in larger centres became regular feature after 1920s. By 1920s there began increasing availability and use of English medicine, experimented, tested and found effective in the First world war (1914-18) and the Catholic Church of Kerala ably carried these medicines and medical knowledge to the interior parts, particularly to the newly formed agrarian villages. The English medicines were used as effective remedies in most of the newly formed agrarian villages not only to prevent but also to fight against many of the fatal diseases. Soon health care and medical service became the second most important activity of the Church in Kerala. Even the newly started women Religious Congregations like Sisters of the Destitute (1927), Sisters of St. Joseph (1928), Medical Sisters of St. Joseph (Dharmagiri-1944), Sisters of Charity (1944), Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate (1949) have medical care and nursing of the sick and the destitute as their principal activities. Many hospitals like Lisie (Ernakulam), Jubilee (Trichur), Pushpagiri (Tiruvalla), Dharmagiri (Kothamangalam), Little Flower (Angamaly) etc., were started in Kerala during this period either by the members of these congregations or by diocesan authorities with the help of religious sisters who got trained in health care and nursing. Out of them Jubilee and Pushpagiri have now become medical colleges with Post graduate study centres. Many of the dispensaries and hospitals thus started in central Kerala by the Church, as centres of English medicine, helped a lot to save the lives of thousands of poor and marginalized people, particularly those of the agricultural migrants at a time when malaria and other tropical diseases were rampant in the region³². In fact it was these medical institutions that have sustained the health of Malayalees in central Kerala, causing them to evolve and operate as the foundational base of the famous Kerala model of Development.

Social Assertion Movements and Freedom Struggle

The St. Thomas Christians formed an important social segment that often took lead or active part in social assertion movements and freedom struggle in Kerala. The leaders of this community played a vital role in the preparation of Malayalee Memorial of 1891³³. The St. Thomas Christian leaders like Nidhirikkal Mani Kathanar and Nidhirikkal Cyriac took lead role along with K.P. Padmanabha Menon and G.P. Pillai³⁴. Malayalee Memorial was a petition signed and

submitted to the ruler of Travancore by the members of Nair, Christian and Ezhava communities against the over preference being given to Tamil Brahmins in the appointment for Governmental jobs and the discrimination being meted out against the members of other communities. The Tamil Brahmins who formed less than 2% of the total population, occupied the principal jobs of Travancore since the northward expansion of Travancore in 1740s and 1750s. In 1891 the non-Malayali Brahmins held 1035 Governmental jobs in Travancore having the salary between Rs 10 and 50 and 101 jobs above Rs.50. While the Christians of various denominations in Travancore, in spite of their demographic strength of having more than 20% of the population got only 95 jobs with the salary between Rs.10 and 50 and 21 jobs with salary above Rs.50³⁵. It was Nidhirikkal Manikathanar and Cyriac Nidhirikkal who mobilized the St. Thomas Christians with the demand for equal share in the governmental jobs, the struggles for realizing which are often equated to be the beginning phase of freedom struggle in Kerala. For the purpose of mobilizing support for these struggles, Nidhirikkal Manikathanar started two dailies Nazrani Deepika (1887) and Malayala Manorama (1888); however later Malayala Manorama passed into the control of a trust related to Kandathil family³⁶.

Meanwhile the St. Thomas Christians also joined the Muslims and Ezhavas for fighting for equal job opportunities and representation in democratic bodies. Following the establishment of large number of Christian schools in different parts of Travancore, the number of Christians having better education and knowing English language got increased. In 1911 among the Christians who formed 31.51% of total population of Travancore, about 10129 were literate with knowledge in English language³⁷. Meanwhile the Nayars who formed 17.13% of the population had only 5446 English literates. In 1921 the number of the English literates among the Christians rose to 24059, which further went up to 27196 in 1931. Meanwhile the number of English literates among the Nairs was only 24059 in 1921, which rose to 18606 in 1931. Even though the Christians were numerically large and educationally far advanced they got only 3537 Government jobs (17.36% of the total appointments) by 1932, while the Nairs had 10585 government jobs (51.94% of the total jobs). The Ezhavas who formed 17.13% of the population had only 3.86 % of the Government jobs

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(787), while the Muslims who formed 6.94% of population had only 2.14% of jobs (436)³⁸. This was the background against which the St. Thomas Christians started clamouring for equal civic rights and equal job opportunities, for which they also sought the help of the Ezhavas and the Muslims.

The leaders of the St. Thomas Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims formed a League in 1918 for Equal Civil Rights to struggle for opening up all branches of Government service to all castes and communities. As Land Revenue Department, that provided the maximum jobs in Travancore, had also the responsibility to look into the matters of Devaswam, only Hindus could get jobs in this department. Hence the St. Thomas Christian leaders demanded the separation of Devaswam from the Land Revenue Department, so that non-Hindus might get selected for jobs in revenue department, as well. The separation of Devaswam from Revenue finally took place in 1922, following which Christians, Muslims and untouchables started getting jobs in Revenue department. It was against this background that for the first time a Christian, that too a Catholic - Morris Watt by name- was appointed as the Dewan of Travancore (1925)³⁹.

It was during the period between 1920 and 1936 that the St. Thomas Christians began to enter on a large number into Kerala's politics. One among them was Barrister George Joseph, who as the convenor of Anti-Untouchable Committee of Indian National Congress, initiated Vaikom Satyagraha in 1924. Under his leadership the satyagrahis demanded that the temple of Vaikom should be kept open for lower castes. However later he was compelled to keep a low profile in the movement because of the intervention from Gandhi, who told him that Christian participation in issues related temple entry might be misinterpreted⁴⁰. The leadership of Vaikom Satyagraha taken away from Barrister George Joseph was later given to T.K. Madhavan and K.P. Kesava Menon, for which T.K. Ravindran later criticizes the attitude of Gandhiji⁴¹. Despite this development, it must be specially noted that many Christians continued to participate in the Vaikom Satyagraha along with Muslims.⁴²

It was principally through their participation in Abstention Movement often known as Nivarthana Prasthanam that the St. Thomas Christians entered the domain of political leadership of Kerala. It was

the feeling that the members of this community, who were intellectually enlightened through advanced education and economically empowered by way of their participation in the sectors of agriculture, plantation, banking and business were not given due representation in the Legislative Council of Travancore and due share of governmental jobs in Travancore that took them to active politics and freedom struggle. By 1935-6 there were about 514 graduate and postgraduate Catholic candidates in the St.Thomas Christian pockets of Changanacherry, Pala and Kanjirappally⁴³. The number of graduate and post-graduate Catholics in and around Ernakulam, Kothamangalam, Thodupuzha and Muvattupuzha was 249 for this period ⁴⁴. The fact that these highly qualified Catholics did not get the jobs they deserved nor due representation in the democratic bodies of the state which they were eligible for made the St.Thomas Christians resort to the chain of strikes and to fight politically against the Travancorean state, which in fact formed the matrix of freedom struggle in Kerala.

The All Kerala Catholic Congress (AKCC), which had evolved by this time as the voice of the community, took up the leadership of this chain of struggles in the major settlements of the St.Thomas Christians. The roots of AKCC can be traced back to Nazrani Jathi Aikya Sangham which was started in 1866 at Mannanam; but later it began to operate using the platform of the print media Nazrani Deepika and around its readers⁴⁵. In 1905 Nidhirikkal Manikathanar founded Katholica Mahajanasabha out of Nazrani Jathi Aikya Sangham and gave shape to an organization out of which the presentday AKCC later got evolved. From 1907 onwards it came to be called Samooha Sammelanam and in 1918 it was renamed at Changanacherry as Keraliya Katholica Mahajanasabha⁴⁶. In the session held at Chertalai in 1930 its name was again changed into All Kerala Catholic Congress (AKCC). The AKCC, which mobilized people for the struggles against Travancore state during the time of Nivarthana Prasthanam, served as a platform for many St.Thomas Christians to get into the Indian national movement. Since 1918, when Equal Civil Rights movement was launched, both the Catholic and the Jacobite segments of the St.Thomas Christians used to make their political struggles and ventures jointly. The working committee president of Civil Rights League was John Chandy. Adv.E.J John came to the forefront of politics and freedom struggle of Travancore as a member of this political body⁴⁷.

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One of the topmost leaders from the St. Thomas Catholic community mobilizing its members for the freedom movement of Travancore during this period was M.M. Varkey. From 1924 onwards the St. Thomas Christians, particularly the Catholic segments under the inspiration of M.M. Varkey visited frequently both the king Sree Moolam and later the regent Queen demanding that Catholics should get equal job opportunities as the Nairs were then having and that they should get due share of representation in the democratic bodies. The four page news bulletin by name Kerala Dasan was the main literary weapon that Varkey resorted to for reaching out to the larger Catholic population preparing them for the chain of political struggles against the Travancorean government. In 1924, when the first issue of Kerala Dasan was published there was no Catholic employee in any of the highest key governmental positions⁴⁸. With the increasing demand from the Kerala Dasan for governmental jobs for Catholics, the Travancorean government forbade the publication of this newsletter. However with the ban on Kerala Dasan, Varkey did not sit quite; in its stead he started two publications by name Dasan and Yuvabharati reiterating the same demands. He exhorted the Catholics, Ezhavas and the Muslims to join hands together and to fight against the Brahminical and Nair domination in the governmental jobs of Travancore. The political and social leaders like T.K. Madhavan and N. Kumaran extended liberal support to the demands of Varkey. In 1926 Varkey was arrested and put behind the bars by the Travancorean government for having written and circulated the article titled "Live and let live". Later Varkey wrote in his autobiography Ormakaliloode that it was the Nairs, who got upset on his arguments for equal governmental position for the Catholics, that maneuvered behind the curtains for his arrest and imprisonment⁴⁹.

The moment M.M. Varkey came to know of vacancies in the public service of Travancore, he demanded that the share of the Catholic community should be immediately given. During this period the pamphlet titled "The Public Service of Travancore and the Catholic Claims" and authored by Varkey was distributed all over the kingdom and the Dewan Morris Watt was surprised to see the amount of discussion this pamphlet had then generated in Travancore. He says "wherever I go I see only the book 'Catholic Claims' and whoever I meet they talk about the 'Catholic Claims'. Who is the author of this

‘Catholic Claims?’⁵⁰ One of the major results emerging out of the chain of struggles initiated by Varkey and the like minded people was the appointment of a St. Thomas Christian (Catholic) - Barrister Joseph Thaliyath- as the Judge of Travancore High Court⁵¹; thanks to these developments many other Catholics were also eventually absorbed into the governmental services of this kingdom.

It was in continuation of this chain of struggles, which ultimately merged into freedom struggle that one has to look into the Nivarthana Prasthanam (Abstention Movement) started in 1932. ‘The Legislative Council’ that Travancore introduced in 1888 was the first democratic legislative institution in India set up with the backing of a law. Later in 1904 Sree Moolam Popular Assembly was also established. The events leading to the Nivarthana Prasthanam commenced in 1931, when the new ruler Balarama Varma introduced new voting criteria for both the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly and Legislative Council, consequent to which the Christians and the Ezhavas did not get adequate share of representation in the Legislative Council⁵². The Travancore State Catholic Congress submitted a memorial to the ruler of Travancore in 1932 requesting him to reserve seats to the Legislative Council on the basis of demographic strength⁵³.

Though the Christians formed 27% of the people who then paid an amount of more than Rs.100 as tax, they were given only 4 seats in the Legislative Council of 1931, while the Nairs were given 15 seats⁵⁴. The Christians, who had by this time amassed sizeable wealth and evolved as a significant middle class by way of their participation in agricultural activities, banking business, chitties and kuries, felt that it was a discrimination against them and denial of political and civil rights that they deserved. The Travancore Latin Christian Mahajana Sabha and the Travancore State Catholic Congress submitted separate “memorials” to the king to redress their grievances. They demanded apportionment of seats in the legislature on the strength of population and adult franchise⁵⁵. All the Christians of Travancore joined hands together to give a shape to political scheme of actions under the banner of All Travancore Christian Political Conference and ensured the support of Ezhavas and Muslims for their chain of struggles initiated in 1932. E.J. John, who was the spokesperson of this association and N.V. Joseph who was the president of Travancore State Catholic Congress started arguing that denial of due political representation to

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the Christians in Legislative Council was done with a communal agenda⁵⁶.

On 17th December 1932, the representatives of Christian-Muslim and Ezhava community organizations under the leadership of A.J. John gave origin to All Travancore Joint Political Conference, which was the precursor of present-day Congress party of Kerala⁵⁷. The leaders of All Travancore Joint Political Conference decided to abstain from the elections and resort to non-co-operation till their grievances were redressed. This movement that started in 1932 and continued till 1936 is called Abstention Movement or Non-Co-operation movement and to indicate its distinction and difference from Gandhian non-Co-operation movement I.C.Chacko called it Nivarthana Prasthanam. Abstention movement led by Christians was one of the most important political developments in Travancore that ultimately was made to become an integral part of freedom movement in Kerala⁵⁸. In fact the major leaders of freedom struggle of Kerala like A.J. John, T.M. Varghese, M.M. Varkey, N.V. Joseph, A.C. Kuriakose, Ezhava leaders like C. Kesavan, P.K. Kunju evolved out of the long chain of struggles connected with Abstention Movement.

Finally in 1937 the movement found results: A Public service Commission was constituted to ensure fair representation for backward communities in the public service and 40% of the jobs in the intermediate divisions were reserved for backward communities. Moreover the number of seats in Legislative Council was increased on the basis of the demographic strength of the community⁵⁹. The second result was that the franchise was widened and communal representation was introduced in the legislature. In the first election held in 1937 after the Abstention Movement the Travancore Joint Political Congress headed by the Christians obtained the absolute majority and T.M. Varghese was elected as the Deputy President, the highest office of the legislative Assembly⁶⁰.

The relatively dominant Christian presence in the leadership of the evolving State Congress made C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Dewan of Travancore to accuse freedom struggle in Travancore as an effort of the communal party of Travancore Christians. His efforts to divide the people on communal grounds between the Christians and other communities intensified the heat of the last phase of freedom struggle

in Travancore. The Christian leaders of State Congress like Mrs. Annie Mascarene, Akkamma Cherian, Rosamma Cherian, A.J. John, R.V. Thomas, P.J. Sebastian, E. John Philipose, Elenjickal Thariathu Kunjithommen, P.T. Chacko, Elizabeth Kuruvilla, K.J. Varkey, K.M. Chandy etc., were arrested and their entire property was confiscated by C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer for the purpose of nipping the bud of expanding nationalist movement in the state. Parallel to the mobilization done by State Congress, mammoth gatherings were organized all over Travancore by All Kerala Catholic Congress to put pressure on the autocratic state and to facilitate the introduction of democratic processes in Travancore and in one of such meetings in the ground of St. Thomas Church of Pala, about 3 lakh people participated⁶¹.

The foregoing discussion shows how the St. Thomas Christians, while defining their ecclesial character and ministries after the evolution as an independent Church under Pope, developed a set of activities and programmes that in turn helped to usher in various elements of modernity in Kerala. Though these Christians have got a historical past going back to the first century AD, their crystallization as an independent Church happened with the formation of different dioceses on the basis of ritual traditions to cater to their spiritual needs in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the consequent ecclesiastical formatting that happened in the twentieth century. The indigenous bishops heading these dioceses ably channelized the surplus getting accrued in the Christian agrarian villages to a variety of educational programmes and health-care projects, whose chief beneficiaries often were the peripheral and marginal segments of the society, besides the members of own community. The new Church leadership besides catering to the spiritual needs of the community took up educational activities and medical care endeavours as central mission of the Church and the schools, colleges, hospitals and dispensaries set up by the Church revolutionized the sectors of knowledge dissemination and health care in Kerala. The educational and medical advancements made through these institutions provided base for the famous Kerala model of development, which took new meanings and dimensions after independence. Meanwhile because of the long conflicts that this community had with the ecclesiastical institutions, devices and personalities thrust upon them from Europe,

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this community developed a very strong anti-European attitude and sentiment since 1520s, which in turn augmented the scale and intensity of national consciousness and pride among its members. These anti-European sentiments were intensely stimulated later and were eventually made to get merged into the mainstream National movements through their active participation in the social assertion movements and freedom struggle of Travancore. Any discourse on modernity in Kerala becomes unintelligible if the strand of educational, medical, economic and political activities of the St. Thomas Christians within the larger context is ignored and their role in the freedom struggle and the political making of Kerala is kept outside the range of study.

Endnotes

1. W.H. Horsley, *Memoir of Travancore, Historical and Statistical*, compiled from Various Authentic Records and Personal Observations, Trivandrum, 1838 reproduced by Achuth Sankar S.Nair (ed.), "William Henry Horsley's Memoir of Travancore (1838): Earliest English Treatise on the History of Travancore", in *Journal of Kerala studies*, vol. XXXI, 2004, p.63. That there were 1,74,566 Syrian Christians in Travancore is derived by adding 56, 184 Catholic Syrians and 1,18,382 Syrians who were said to be then living in the kingdom of Travancore.
2. This is the figure given in *Travancore Memorial*. See George Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala*, New Delhi, 1989, p.52
3. *Selected Proclamations*, pp.296-7; It is being generally held that the aggressive slaves were liberated through the royal proclamation of slavery abolition so as to get sufficient work-force for plantations. S. Ramachandran Nair, *Social Consequences of Agrarian Change*, Jaipur, 1991, pp.23-4; Pius Malekandathil, "Sabha Adhunik Keralathinte Roopikaranathil", p.27
4. "Changanacherry Roopatha-Pallikal", in *Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam*, Ernakulam, 1937, pp.7-14
5. "Changanacherry Roopatha-Pallikal", in *Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam*, Ernakulam, 1937, pp.7-14
6. *Ibid.*, pp.7-16
7. *Ibid.*, pp.7-13
8. "Ernakulam Athiroopatha-Pallikal", in *Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam*, pp.1-4
9. *Administration Report, 1864-5*, pp.28-30. The Pattam Proclamation enfranchised tenants of the state pattam and converted them into land-owners. However this reform was beneficial only to the upper strata in the society. S. Ramachandran Nair, *Social Consequences of Agrarian Change*, Jaipur, 1991, pp.20, 34
10. *Ibid.*, pp.1-3

11. Ibid., pp.3-4
12. Changanacherry Roopatha-Pallikal”, in Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam, pp.7-16
13. “Thrisivaperoor Rooopatha –Pallikal” in Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam, pp.2-19
14. Paremakkel Thommankathanar, Varthamanapusthakam., edited by Thomas Moothedan, Ernakulam, 1977, pp.324-6
15. M.A.Oommen, “Rise and Growth of Banking in Kerala”, *Social Scientist*, vol.V, No. (October 1976), pp..24-46
16. K.V.Joseph, Nazranikalude Sampathika Yatnangal, Kottayam, 2009, pp.66-8; Joseph Mathew Vallikattu, Kuttanadan Kayalnilangal, Trivandrum, 2008.
17. For details see S.Ramachandran Nair, *Social Consequences of Agrarian Change*, pp.60-71; *Census of Travancore (1931)*, pp.192-3; 489; Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908*, New Delhi, 1976, pp.240-60
18. S.Ramachandran Nair, *Social Consequences of Agrarian Change*, p.71; *Enquiry into the Sub-division and Fragmentation of Agricultural Holdings*, Travancore, 1941, p.27
19. K.V.Joseph, Nazranikalude Sampathika Yatnangal, pp.60-1
20. Nagam Aiya, Report on the Census of Travancore, Madras, 1894, pp381ff
21. “Schools”, in *Directory of the Archdiocese of Trichur*, Trichur, 2005.
22. “Changanacherry Roopatha- Schoolukal”, in Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam, pp.45-56
23. It was by the papal Bull *Rei Sacrae* issued on 28th July 1896 that the dioceses of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry were erected and indigenous priests were made bishops for these sees.
24. “Changanacherry Roopatha- Schoolukal”, in Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam, pp.45-56. Some of these schools were later upgraded while some others stopped functioning. The list includes all types of schools including primary , upper primary and high schools.
25. “Kottayam Roopatha- Schoolukal”, in Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam, pp.3-5
26. These 93 schools are already included in the list given in supra no. 110. The figure is quoted as to have an area-wise picture of the developments
27. “Ernakulam Athiroopatha”, in Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam, pp.1-5;10-19
28. “Ernakulam Athiroopatha”, in Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam, pp.10-19
29. “Thrissivaperoor Roopatha”, “,in Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam, pp.2-21
30. See the Papal Bull *Romani Pontifices* issued by Pope Pius XI on 21st December 1923
31. All the Religious Congregations started during this period for women, except the Holy Family Congregation founded by Bl.Mariam Theresia, took education as their main apostolate in the Church. Later Holy Family sisters, who had

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- family apostolate as their primary concern, started resorting to education as their secondary apostolate.
32. Most of these congregations established dispensaries and hospitals either in the newly migrated settlements or in places lying adjacent to the migrant villages. Many of the dispensaries have eventually evolved into full-fledged hospitals in later years, while some others were wound up recently with the mushrooming of super-specialty hospitals that made the existence of dispensaries redundant. See for details Pius Malekandathil, "Sabha Adhunika Keralathinte Roopikaranathil," pp.41-43
 33. The spirit of Malayali Memorial was that Travancore for Travancoreans and the movement was led by G.P.Pillai, an English educated Nair youth. G.P.Sekhar(ed.), *Select Writings and speeches of G.P. Pillai*, pp.100-110, 180-4; P.K.K.Menon, (ed.), *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, vol.II, Trivandrum, 1972, pp.1-16
 34. The Malayali Memorial with signatures of 10,037 persons was submitted to the Dewan on July 2, 1891 by a six-member delegation with K.P.Padmanabha Menon as the leader and G.P.Pillai, Cyriac Nidhiry Vakil, M.K.Padmanabha Pillai, Sivan Pillai and Kavalam Neelakanda Pillai as members. See P.S.Velayudhan, "Sri Narayana Guruvum, Kshetrasthapanavum", *Vivekodayam*, March, 1978, pp.41-2; Abraham M.Nidhiry, *Father Nidhiry, A History of His Times*, Kottayam, 1971; V.C.George, *Nidhirikal Mani Kathanar*, Thevara, 1950.
 35. *Census of 1875 and 1891 and the List of Public Servants of the Travancore Government for the years of 1872-73 and 1893-94*
 36. Pius Malekandathil, "Sabha Adhunika Keralathinte Roopikaranathil", *Mathavum Chintayam*, vol. 90, Issue 6 (November-December)2007, p. 30
 37. Robbin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908* (New Delhi, 1976), pp,5-9
 38. P.Chandramohan, "Christian Middle Class and their Fight for Civic Rights in Travancore", in K.J.John(ed.), *Christian Heritage of Keralaq: Grand Chevalier L.M.Pylee Felicitation Volume*, Cochin, 1981, pp.267-271. These were the major issues discussed in the editorials of *Deepika* on May 28 1918 and January 16, 1919.
 39. M.M. Varkey, *Ormakalilute (Malayalam)*, Kottayam, 1974, pp. 74 - 83.; P.Chandramohan, "Christian Middle Class and their Fight for Civic Rights in Travancore", pp. 265ff
 40. Barrister George Joseph organized the Vaikom satyagraha as convenor of the Anti Un-touchability Committee. For details see T.K.Ravindran, *Eight Furlongs of Freedom*, New Delhi, 1980; P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, vol.II, Trivandrum, 1972;K.P.Kesava Menon, *Kazhinjakalam*, Calicut, 1986; P.K.Madhavan, T.K. Madhavante *Jivitacharithram*, Trivandrum, 1926
 41. T.K.Ravindran, *Eight Furlongs of Freedom*, New Delhi, 1980
 42. S.Ramachandran Nair, *Freedom Struggle in Colonial Kerala*, Trivandrum, 2004, p. 98

43. “Changanacherry Roopatha- Sarvakalasila Bhirudharikal”, in Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam, Ernakulam, 1937pp.57-75
44. “Ernakulam Athiroopatha- Sarvakalasila Bhirudharikal”, in Rakshaniya Valsaram 1937 le Vaidika Panchankam , pp.31-41
45. V.C.George, Nidhirikal Mani Kathanar, pp.184-209
46. John Pallisserry, “Catholic Congress Oru Sannadha Sangham”, in AKCC Bulletin Silver Jubilee Souvenir, Kottayam, 1973, pp.140-5
47. The deputation led by E.J.John in 1920 to present a memorial to the Dewan consisted of fifteen St.Thomas Christians , two Ezhavas and one Muslim as members. See for details P.S.Velayudhan, Sri Narayana Guruvum Kshetrastapanavum”, March, 1978, pp.187-98
48. M.M.Varkey, Kerala Dasan, April 12, 1924
49. George Mathew, Communal Road to a Secular Kerala, New Delhi, 1989, pp.72-4; M.M. Varkey, Ormakalilude, Kottayam, 1974, pp.40-60
50. George Mathew, Communal Road to a Secular Kerala, p.74
51. Ibid.
52. Pius Malekandathil, “ Sabha Adhunika Keralathinte Roopikaranathil”, p.37
53. P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, vol.II, p.355
54. For details see S.Ramachandran Nair, Social Consequences of Agrarian Change, pp.104-145; George Mathew, Communal Road to a Secular Kerala, pp. 86-112
55. P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, vol.II, p.336; George Mathew, Communal Road to a Secular Kerala, pp.91-2
56. George Mathew, Communal Road to a Secular Kerala, pp.92-3; P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, vol.II, p.340
57. P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, vol.II, pp.336-42; K.K.Kusuman, The Abstention Movement, Trivandrum, 1976; P.S.Velayudhan, “Sri Narayana Guruvum Kshetrastapanavum”, pp.291-319
58. George Mathew, Communal Road to a Secular Kerala, pp.93-94
59. George Mathew, Communal Road to a Secular Kerala, pp.90-8
60. Ibid., pp.96-9
61. Pala K.M.Mathew, “ The Role of Christians in India’s Freedom Struggle”, in Silvester Ponnuthan , Chacko Aerath and George Menacherry(ed.), Christian Contribution to Nation Building : A Third Millennium Enquiry, Cochin, 2004, pp.31-3

(Dr. Pius Malekandathil)

Nazrani History and Discourse on Early Nationalism in Varthamanapusthakam

Varthamanapusthakam¹, which was written in 1785 by Fr.Thomas Paremakal as an account of his travel along with his friend bishop Mar Joseph Kariyattil to Madras, Africa, Brazil, Portugal and Rome and often hailed as the first travelogue in an Indian language, has been immensely used as a literary medium by the author to ventilate his dissent and anger against the hegemonic attitude and the colonial fabric which the European religious missionaries set up for the Church in India, particularly for the St.Thomas Christians of Kerala. Arguing vehemently that India should be ruled by Indians and not by foreigners, he goes on demanding as early as 1785 that Indian Christians should be ruled not by European religious missionaries but by Indians. Within the larger format of a travelogue detailing meticulously the socio-economic and political processes of the several countries he had visited in Africa, South America and Europe, he argues his case by showing how the foreign

missionaries fearing reduction of the span of their power and authority did not want to have an Indian bishop for the St. Thomas Christians.

Nazrani History and Discourse on Early Nationalism in Varthamanapusthakam

Fr. Thomas Paremakal and Fr. Joseph Kariyattil made their travels to Portugal and Rome on the decision of the general body of the St. Thomas Christians taken at Angamaly for the purpose of informing the Pope and the Queen of Portugal of the various discriminations, sufferings and difficulties that this community experienced over a considerable period of time from the foreign Carmelite missionaries working in Kerala. As the general meeting of the representatives of this community at Angamaly was dominated by feelings of anger and animosity against the European religious missionaries and the European bishop working then in Kerala, the travelogue has anti-Europeanism as its basic thread, critiquing the hegemonic and colonial fabric of the Church set up by the European missionaries. Stressing the need for going back to the pre-Portuguese days when democratic institutions of *yogams* (representative body at the grass root levels) *mahayogams* (representative bodies at higher levels) with *jathikkukarthaviyan* (head of the community) existed among this community for their administration, instead of one-man centered or European notion of bishop-centered administration, the travelogue challenges the notion of authority that the European missionaries had set up within the colonial fabric they newly created for the Church of the St. Thomas Christians.

Interestingly the narratives of this book, with copious accounts of hardships that the St. Thomas Christians had to face from the Church fabric set up by the European missionaries in Kerala, soon formed an inspiring literary device for this community in their later clamour for having Indian Catholic bishops for them instead of European bishops and also for reviving their age old liturgical traditions, customs and ritual practices. In the nineteenth century several copies of *Varthamanapusthakam* were made in handwritten form and circulated among the members of St. Thomas Christian community on a large scale inspiring them to work for their heritage preservation against the background of tamperings done by foreign missionaries. In the council of Verapoly that took place in the second half of nineteenth century, the missionary Church authorities even made an attempt to

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put this book on the Index in order to prevent the anti-missionary insinuations this book was then spreading². However somehow it escaped their wrath and continued to be read on a large scale almost as a precious literary corpus comprising the magna carta of this community.

The central purpose of this paper is to see how the European version of Christian experience and Church administration was challenged by Indians with alternative faith experience and administrative formats and also to see how the web of travel narratives was used as a powerful medium for getting ventilated and disseminated the spirit of dissent and meanings of Indian alternatives to larger collectivity of the community.

Historical Setting

The period from 1750 till 1830, which is often referred to as the period of revolutions and regime change all over the world was also a period of political fluidity in India, particularly in South India, where regime changes coincided with attempts for cultural appropriations and ethnic mutations. St. Thomas Christians, who usually trace back their origin to the preaching of St. Thomas and are often known as Syrian Christians or Nazarenes³, form a unique community in India that was increasingly subjugated to cultural and ethnic mutations because of the various processes of cultural grafting and colonial tampering that happened during this period. In fact the St. Thomas Christians who numbered about 60,000 and 75,000⁴ in the beginning of the sixteenth century were estimated to be about 1,00,000 by the second half of the sixteenth century⁵. By 1830s their number increased to 3,50,000⁶.

However by mid-eighteenth century the community was literally fragmented into different pieces and groups by the foreign ecclesiastical administrators mutating thoroughly their identities. The Catholic segment of the St. Thomas Christians was fragmented into two sections: On the one side there was the Portuguese Church administrative system called Padroado Real, in which the king of Portugal was given the privilege of operating as the patron. The Portuguese claimed authority and power over all the Christians residing in India, including the St. Thomas Christians, despite the fact that the latter were in India long before the arrival of the Portuguese. In course of time the

Padroado administrative system managed to subjugate a major chunk of Catholic St. Thomas Christians, particularly through the synodal proceedings of Diamper and finally brought them under its jurisdiction⁷, while the remaining Catholic fraction of St. Thomas Christians were controlled by a non-Portuguese Church administrative system called Propaganda Fide established under Pope in 1622⁸. On the other hand there was an attempt from the West Syrian bishops to extend their jurisdiction over the non-Catholic segment of St. Thomas Christians by grafting the cultural elements of West Syriac liturgy and ritual practices onto them from 1748 onwards, when Mar Ivanios from West Asia reached Kerala⁹. The native bishop Mar Thoma VI from the Pakalomattam family was peripheralized and sidelined by the successive bishops (particularly Maphrian Baselius Sakrallah from 1751 onwards) from West Asia following West Syriac liturgy, causing a division to happen within the Puthenkur or non-Catholic fraction of St. Thomas Christians¹⁰, with 50 churches siding with the new liturgical practices introduced by the West Syrian bishops and 5 churches siding with the native Pakalomattam bishop Mar Thoma VI¹¹.

The new bishops following West Syriac liturgy ordained priests who were already ordained by the native bishop Mar Thoma VI, which suggests that they were skeptical about the validity of Sacraments administered by the Indian bishop. Very often these West Syrian bishops selected their own candidates and ordained them as priests without even consulting the native bishop Mar Thoma VI. They also insisted on removing from the churches of Puthenkur (the churches of non-Catholic fraction) crucifixes and statues of saints and Mary, which were kept and venerated in these churches ever since the coming of the Portuguese¹². In the process of constructing a separate identity for non-Catholic segment of St. Thomas Christians based on West Syriac liturgy and theology, there evolved frequent conflicts between the adherents of new ideology and the old followed by division of churches between Catholic and the Puthenkur fractions of the St. Thomas Christians¹³ and the increasing peripheralization of native bishop Mar Thoma VI who vehemently resisted the thrusting of new rituals and practices from West Asia. It was against this background of increasing fragmenting of this community into various smaller fractions that the native bishop Mar Thoma VI wanted to get all the segments of St. Thomas Christians united, for which he initiated

moves for reunion with Catholic Church. Concomitantly the political union of Travancore realized during the period between 1742 and 1752 with Marthanda Varma's annexation of smaller principalities of Quilon, Kayamkulam, Porcad, Thekkenkur, Vadakkenkur, Angamali and Alengadu, where the S. Thomas Christians till then lived in scattered way, had all the more convinced them of the urgent need to have unity and cohesion among themselves in consonance with the union that had already happened politically¹⁴.

However the Carmelite missionary priests then working in Kerala were reluctant to receive bishop Mar Thoma VI into Catholicism saying that his intentions were not genuine¹⁵. The author of Varthamanapusthakam and most of the Catholics of the St. Thomas Christians believed that the request of Mar Thoma VI to get reunited with Catholic Church was refused by the European missionaries fearing that if he were to become a Catholic, then all the St. Thomas Christians would get united and rally around this Indian bishop and consequently the European bishop and missionary priests would not have any influence or power over this community¹⁶. In fact it was to convey to Pope the desire of Mar Thoma VI to get reunited with Catholic Church and to get necessary permission for the same, besides informing him of the various types of ill-treatment and discriminations that the community had to face from these missionaries, that Fr. Joseph Kariyattil and Fr. Thomas Paremakkal made their trip from Kerala to Europe in 1778. The book running into 78 chapters covers the details of their travel to Portugal and Rome. However in the process of giving us the information about the socio-economic and political processes that they witnessed during the period between 1778 till 1786 at Tuticorin, Madras, Cape of Good Hope, Venguela, Bahia, Lisbon, Catalonia, Genoa, Liberno, Pisa and Rome¹⁷, the author unveils the various aspects of conflicts that were happening between the European missionaries and the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala on matters related to the preservation of the age-old heritage and tradition of the latter and on the ill-treatments meted out to them by the European Carmelite missionaries.

When they started their travel to Europe in 1778, Fr. Thomas Paremakkal born on 10th September 1736 was 42, while Fr. Joseph Kariyattil, who had earlier done his priestly studies at Propaganda

College of Rome, was only 36 years old. The money needed for their travel was raised from the members of the community by selling or pawning their jewellery and property. The Catholic fraction of St. Thomas Christians belonging to the Padroado and Propaganda Fide administrative systems contributed liberally for their travel¹⁸. Thachil Mathu Tharakan, who was the principal trader for the Travancoreans and the English in Trivandrum in the second half of the eighteenth century was one of the greatest sponsors who came forward to bear the major share of their travel expenses¹⁹. Though 24 delegates of this community went from Kerala to Madras for boarding the ship to Europe, for want of sufficient fund to buy the tickets for their journey to Europe, the number was finally reduced to Fr. Thomas Paremakkal and Fr. Joseph Kariyattil, besides two seminarians²⁰.

The content of the book gives the impression that it was written to justify everything that they had done in Portugal and Rome for defending the cause of the community and in that sense it meant instant circulation and reading by the members of the community²¹. The original Malayalam manuscript of the book was obtained from the descendants of Thachil Mathu Tharakan, who bore a sizeable chunk of their travel expenses²². Though it was printed for the first time in 1936, copies of the manuscript were already being made and circulated even before²³. It should be here specially mentioned that Joseph Kariyattil and Thomas Paremakkal, who went to Portugal and Rome as priest delegates of the community, were not really dissidents of the Church, even though they were highly critical of the European missionaries. They were very much a part of the Church as Joseph Kariyattil was later made the bishop of Cranganore in Portugal in 1782²⁴ and on his death in 1786²⁵, Paremakkal became the governor of the diocese from 1786 till 1799²⁶.

Grievances, Voices of Dissent and Protest

The tone of the book is set in the very first page of the narrative, where the author depicts the way how the St. Thomas Christians were humiliated before the large crowd assembled for the burial of the bishop Florentius of Verapoly in 1773²⁷. The bishop actually belonged to ecclesiastical administrative system of Propaganda Fide and most of the St. Thomas Christians who went for the funeral of the bishop were from the jurisdiction of Padroado administrative system. On

seeing them the Provincial superior of the Carmelites came out to them and told:

*“What business have you got here? Your bishop is in Porcad ..This is our bishop and his burial is not something that matters you...Hence I want that you better leave the place and allow us to bury our bishop”*²⁸.

The author and the members of the community were deeply pained by these words and equally by the denial of a chance to participate in the funeral rituals of the bishop for the simple reason that they belonged to a different administrative organ of the same Catholic Church²⁹. The community immediately called for a general meeting of the mahayogam consisting of representatives from 72 churches in 1773³⁰. Despite the attempts of the European missionaries of Verapoly to prevent the St.Thomas Christian representatives from coming together³¹, a large number of priests and community members assembled at Angamaly. Since the representatives from various churches did not know as to how many days the meeting would actually last, they came with rice and food materials, while the local Christians of Angamaly gave salt, oil and firewood to them for cooking their food, as the meeting lasted for several days. Seeing the unprecedented flow of people to Angamaly the missionaries of Verapoly were said to have sent their own spies to keep a track of deliberations happening in the meeting³².

The initial tempo of the meeting was dominated by spiritual readings, speeches, prayers and meditation, which were later followed by vociferous outburst of emotions³³. The mood began to change with the enumeration of different types of discriminations and injustices that the St.Thomas Christian community had to face from the European missionaries³⁴. It should be here specially mentioned that a large number of saintly, pious, committed, selfless and zealous European missionaries worked in India and contributed remarkably to its socio-economic betterment at different time points; however the bitter anger and the attacks of this community and the Varthamanapusthakam were turned not against them, but against those who maintained a craze for power and the colonial attitude of racial superiority. The representatives from Edappilly narrated the way how the European missionaries put their Indian parish priest to death. Here it is to be

specially mentioned that the account is in the language of Fr. Thomas Paremakkal and unfortunately we do not have any other source material to cross-check the details given by him³⁵. Paremakkal writes:

‘On the feast-day of Theresa of Avila there was a 40 hours adoration at Verapoly. Fr. Jacob Puthenpurackal, the parish priest of Edappilly church also went for the adoration and returned to his parish church along with other people. The European Carmelite missionaries forgot to lock the church after dinner and on the next day the gold monstrance was found to be missing. Suspecting Fr. Jacob to be the thief he was taken by force to Verapoly by the missionaries and was denied food for several days. He fell ill and died. His last request before death for receiving Holy Communion too was denied. He was also denied a church burial, as his body was wrapped up in a mat and buried near a pond³⁶.

Citing the incident Paremakkal says that this happened because of the “helplessness of the people of Malankara (Kerala)” and “the might and power of the missionaries and their bishop³⁷”. He refers to this incident repeatedly in his travelogue, whenever he felt that the missionaries were obstructing the moves of the delegation of the St. Thomas Christians in Europe to obtain an Indian bishop.

Varthamanapusthakam also refers to the discussions that the mahayogam made about the arrogant and the lead roles that the European missionaries always wanted to appropriate in the churches of St. Thomas Christians. One among them was the case of festal processions in their churches, in which the European missionaries used to lead the procession without allowing the indigenous priests to take the lead with monstrance or cross, even if the latter were the celebrants³⁸. In the mahayogam of Angamali held in 1773 the European missionaries tried to pacify the members of St. Thomas Community, who were almost on the verge of revolting against the missionary authorities, by conceding some of their demands and assuring redress of their grievances³⁹.

However Thomas Paremakkal says that some of the European missionaries did not keep their word and continued their wrong doings and discriminations to humiliate the Indian clergy. Varthamanapusthakam speaks of the way how Fr. John de Santa Margarita, one of the

missionary signatories of the document, got Fr.Vargese Panachikal from Malayattoor church arrested in the midnight for having taken the cross to lead the festal procession. Paremakkal writes:

‘Fr. Varghese Panachickal was arrested with chains and tied to a cot and was beaten by the Vadukas employed by the missionaries and was then carried by force to Verapoly, which was then the seat of the European Carmelite missionaries and Vicar Apostolic in Kerala’⁴⁰.

Quoting the documents of Propaganda Fide E.R.Hambye admits that at that point of time some of the European missionaries resorted to the ‘punishments ‘ by imprisonment with chains and torturing for the purpose of taming the “quarrelsome priests” of the St.Thomas Christian community⁴¹. However Varthamanapusthakam refers to the strong resistance that the community of St.Thomas Christians staged against Fr. John de Santa Margarita for these ruthless atrocities and humiliation meted out to their priest Fr. Varghese Panachickal for such a silly reason of having taken lead in the festal procession. The St. Thomas Christians of Parur en masse blocked Fr. Santa Margarita in retaliation and prevented him from celebrating Holy Mass in their church⁴². Paremakkal congratulates the yogam (the representative body of the parish church) for having taken such a bold decision against the erring missionaries and views that the abuses of European missionaries could be checked only by strengthening the power of the yogam⁴³. Varthamanapusthakam refers to the intense conflicts that broke out by this time between some of the European missionaries and the St.Thomas Christians, who consequently declared nine of the European missionaries as ineligible for preaching in their churches and prevented them from entering their parishes⁴⁴.

Meanwhile the indigenous bishop Mar Thoma VI of non-Catholic fraction of St.Thomas Christians, who was opposed and sidelined by the West Syriac Jacobite bishop Mar Gregorios and his Kerala allies like Kattumangattu Rabban, wanted to get reunited with Catholic church along with 80,000 of his followers⁴⁵. However, the missionaries refused to accept him to Catholicism saying that his intentions were not genuine and his emissary Kallarackal Tharakan, who was a Christian minister in the principality of Thekkenkur, was vehemently abused and humiliated⁴⁶. On hearing about the abuses that the European missionaries showered on him Paremakkal writes:

'If a white carpenter or a cobbler come before them (missionaries) they receive these guests with respect and offer them chairs, while the emissary from the bishop was humiliated and abused and this is happening because of the helplessness of our community and because of the might and evil of the European missionaries'⁴⁷.

The author empathizes with the community and translates its feelings of helplessness and emotions of anger into his travelogue, which are later developed as a significant layer of his travel narrative with certain arguments for indigenization.

Fr. Thomas Paremakkal attacks vehemently the European missionaries for their high-handedness, racial superiority and arrogance. He writes: 'When you (European missionaries) come to our church we and our yogams accept and respect you so much; but in turn you give back to us suffering thrashings and atrocities and we used to bear it in the name of the Lord without complaining to anybody'⁴⁸. Though he generalizes the term missionaries all through his travel account and gives the impression that he was attacking the entire category of European missionaries, the truth was that he was not criticizing any single missionary or the larger category but attacking the evils that some of them perpetrated in the name of religious activity. The missionaries frequently attacked in his travelogue are the European Carmelite missionaries working under Propaganda Fide. However, they were not monolithic in composition; they had different layers. Most of them were from Italy, as a result of which they were not obedient to bishops and authorities from other nationalities, as it happened in 1775, when the Italian missionaries refused to collaborate with the new German bishop appointed by Propaganda Fide. As the bishop Francis de Sales was a non-Italian, the Italian Carmelite missionaries started writing denigrating and slanderous letters about the bishop to Rome. Since the bishop was not of their choice the missionaries wanted that he should leave Kerala. The bishop sought the help of Fr. Joseph Kariyattil who was a Professor in the seminary at Alengad narrating in tears the injustice being done to him by the Carmelite missionaries. On the initiative of Fr. Joseph Kariyattil and Thachil Mathu Tharakan, who had by this time become the principal trader for the Travancorean ruler and the English, the St. Thomas Christians took him in a solemn procession to Alengad⁴⁹. However, later the missionaries of Verapoly complained about it to the Diwan

of Travancore, who siding with the European missionaries punished the St. Thomas Christians with a fine of 12,000 kalipanams⁵⁰. The German bishop Francis de Sales, however, not desiring to antagonize the missionaries any further did not divulge the truth, which made the St. Thomas Christians pay the fine. Commenting on the fine of huge amount of money that the community had to pay because of the European missionaries, Paremakkel says:

*'... the drum gets the beatings while the drummer gets the money..., we pay the money while they are there only to occupy positions; they alight the palanquins, while we are there to carry it..'*⁵¹

On another occasion in the same mood Paremakkel writes that for all the blunders that the European missionaries committed in Kerala, the St. Thomas Christians had to pay the penalty. Thus he says that the church of Malayattoor had to pay fines to the local ruler for a European missionary priest for releasing a robber arrested by the local ruler. On another occasion a missionary priest kicked a faithful (Koonan Varkey) in the church while the bishop Francis de Sales was listening to the account of the church of Malayattoor and the St. Thomas Christians were made to pay fine for this atrocity as it was in their church⁵². This anti-missionary tone in the travel narrative is highly reflective of the intensified tension happening between the St. Thomas Christians and some of the European missionaries. The German missionary Fr. Paulinus of St. Bartholomew, who had frequently been among those who were criticized and attacked by Fr. Thomas Paremakkel in his travel account, gives a different version of the story saying that it was Fr. Thomas Paremakkel and other church leaders of the St. Thomas Christians who actually engineered these troubles⁵³, which again attests to the nature and scale of conflicts and restlessness that permeated among the adherents of the same belief system.

“India for Indians” and Discourses on Nationalism

“India for Indians”, emphasizing the demand that India should be ruled by Indians, is the title of one of the still unpublished works that Fr. Thomas Paremakkel had written in 1780s⁵⁴.

Long before the debates on nationalism shaking the intellectual circles of Europe Asia and Africa, Fr. Thomas Paremakkel vehemently

argued that foreigners should be kept away from India and that it should be ruled only by Indians. In Varthamanapusthakam Fr. Thomas Paremakkal speaks of a golden thread of national feeling that binds all the Indians together. The discourse on nationalism is set against the background of ill-treatment that Paremakkal and his colleagues experienced from the European missionary priest of Veerapandianpattinam on their way from Kerala to Madras in 1778. The missionary priest did not permit Fr. Joseph Kariyattil and Fr. Thomas Paremakkal to celebrate Holy Eucharist in the church of Veerapandianpattinam, near Tuticorin. On hearing this, the parishioners and the faithful were very sorry about it and later came out to the St. Thomas Christian delegation saying that the church actually belonged to them and not to the missionary priest and they offered every possible help to the delegation. On seeing the generosity of the local people Fr. Paremakkal writes in his book:

*‘.... these believers were sad not because they had known us, nor because we had done some good things to them; but because we all belong to one nationality; that is we are all Indians. It is this love for people of the same nationality that actually moved their hearts.’*⁵⁵

Fr. Thomas Paremakkal proudly maintains that even though Indians were under foreign rule, there was a type of intimacy and emotional linkage that bound all the Indians together. The idea of nationalism that Fr. Thomas Paremakkal propounds at this time comprises the feelings which create unity among the diverse Indians and the special uniqueness and commonality that make every Indian an integral part of India. The love that one shows towards the people of the same nation, the concern and the movement of the heart that one experiences on seeing their suffering and helplessness are the ingredients of the rudimentary nationalism that Fr. Paremakkal had envisaged⁵⁶.

Varthamanapusthakam postulates that the foundation of Indian nationalism rests on the basic principle that India should be ruled by Indians. In 1783 when the Portuguese Padroado authorities in Lisbon tried to make Fr. Joseph Kariyattil as the bishop of Cranganore in Kerala, the European missionaries then working in different parts of Kerala started sending of lot of complaints against him saying that “Keralites do not know how to rule”, “Keralites would not submit

themselves to a bishop from their own jati”, “ even the noblest in Kerala would not be ready to accept Fr. Joseph Kariyattil as their bishop” and “if an Indian were to become a bishop then there would be severe conflicts and divisions among the Christians of Kerala”. These were the major accusations sent to Portugal by the Portuguese Carmelite missionary Joseph de Solidade, the then bishop of Cochin, for the purpose of not making Fr. Joseph Kariyattil a bishop⁵⁷. However Joseph de Solidade himself was considered to be a problem figure and he had been in frequent conflicts with the Franciscans friars, who had greater influence in the court of Travancore⁵⁸. Against the attempts of European Carmelite missionaries to sabotage the moves for ordaining the Indian priest Fr. Joseph Kariyattil a bishop, his language in Varthamanapusthakam takes an extra-ordinarily sharper and piercing tone.

Paremakkal views these allegations as racial aspersions and humiliation to Indian pride. He writes: ‘... you say that Keralites do not know how to rule... don’t say that... our king (evidently referring to the king of Travancore) would not tolerate this, as he is also a Keralite⁵⁹. Again, referring to the allegation that Kariyattil’s bishop position would bring division within Christian community of Kerala, Fr. Paremakkel retaliates:

‘...it is you and your ancestors who brought division and conflicts to Kerala, which now nobody can solve...⁶⁰ You take the hand of one to beat the other and take his hand the beat the first person. You make us fight among ourselves so that we may always remain subjugated to you.⁶¹ ... You divide the Christians of Malabar into Mundukar, converted Christians, kuppayakar and put them into different groups, and thus people of Malabar who form one flesh and one blood are divided into different groups in such a way that nobody can ever rectify it⁶².

Paremakkal maintains that these foreigners intervene in such a way that the unity and national feelings prevalent among them get perpetually destroyed. Criticizing the arrogance of the European missionaries and refuting their allegation that the noblest among the Keralites would not accept Kariyattil as their bishop, Paremakkel writes:

'... you wrongly think that you (European religious missionaries) are much nobler than us because when you come to our churches we stand with respect and obey you and carry you on palanquins and our priests and the people walk in procession before you and you wrongly think that we show this respect and obeisance to you because we are less noble than you.... We are showing this respect not because of the fact that we are less noble nor because of your superiority, but because we have learnt from our parents that the priests and religious teachers are to be respected and revered in the name of almighty God'⁶³.

Fr. Paremakkal sees in the argument of Joseph de Solidade that Keralites would not accept Joseph Kariyattil as their bishop but only European missionaries a certain amount of colonial arrogance which some of the European missionaries also imbibed by this time. He retorts: "... We have priests among us, who administer and manage things thousand times far better than you people..."⁶⁴ In fact these discourses in the book are meant not only to justify the candidature of Fr. Joseph Kariyattil as the bishop of Cranganore, but also to defend and uphold the national pride of Indians, which Joseph de Solidade was immensely hurting with colonial arrogance and haughty language.

Some of the European missionaries, who wielded spiritual power over the St. Thomas Christians, turned out to be arrogant and extremely domineering and Paremakkal says that this happened mainly because this community was made to remain powerless by depriving them of the right to have a community/spiritual leader of their own from themselves. He writes:

'The foreign missionaries do not respect the feelings of the community, as it now does not have its own leader'⁶⁵. Earlier when it had its own leader, no foreign missionary dared to do any injustice or evil to this community'⁶⁶. In Europe, in Italy, France, England and Portugal, the kings and ecclesiastical heads are made from their own nationality. Even the Christians under the Turks have got their own rulers and bishops. In Kerala too, except in the case of St. Thomas Christians, the leaders of different communities are from their own communities'⁶⁷.

The author is asking as to how come that the St. Thomas Christians are denied of the right to have a spiritual leader from the community. He persuades the reader to think as to why in India the church leadership was given to European missionaries instead of Indians. Paremakkal writes: ‘The Portuguese would never like to have an Italian ruler over them, and the Italians never would accept a Portuguese ruler, a German ruler would never be accepted by the French and a ruler from France would never be accepted by the Germans. Why it is that these countries accept rulers only from their nationals and why it is not permitted to happen in the case of India.’⁶⁸

At such an early stage, when Fr. Thomas Paremakkal speaks of nationalism, he brings in mostly issues and institutions related to the domains of Church, where Indians and Indianness should be preferred to rather than the Europeans. Paremakkal argues that the community of St. Thomas Christians would make progress only if the person who rules it would be from the same community and nationality⁶⁹. Finally, when Joseph Kariyattil was made the bishop of Cranganore, he writes: ‘With the appointment of a bishop from among them, the Keralites have secured freedom from the yoke of the Europeans and he wants this liberation to be perpetuated by ensuring continuous bishop succession from among the Keralites.’⁷⁰

In order to understand the various dimensions and layers of Paremakkal’s notion of nationalism, one should analyze the channels that he traveled and the contexts that shaped his perceptions. It was during the time span of the travel of Fr. Thomas Paremakkal and Fr. Joseph Kariyattil to Europe (1778-1786) that the American War of Independence broke out for the purpose of expelling the British from America (1775-83). When these two Indian priests reached Brazil, Portugal, France and Rome, the major issues of debate and intellectual discussions in these places were in fact the wars of American revolution. Interestingly sufficient resources and fighting forces to fight against the British forces in America were mobilized by the colonists with the help of Churches and Church leadership of Congregationalists, Baptists and Presbyterians⁷¹. The endeavours of the Church leadership of America to throw away British colonial yoke did really influence the anti-European thinking and writing of Paremakkal and many others who happened to collaborate with him.

Four Goan priests, who collaborated with Fr. Thomas Paremakkel and Kariyattil in Lisbon and Rome later spearheaded a revolution in Goa to expel the Portuguese from India (1787). The leader of this group was Fr. Cajetano Vitorino de Faria, who was supported by Fr. Cajetano Francisco do Couto, Fr. Jose Antonio Gonçalves and Fr. Jose Custodio de Faria alias Abbe Faria, who, as founder of modern hypnotism, was a world famous psychologist and a leading thinker during the time of French revolution. Cajetano Vitorino de Faria was married and had two children and then he went for priestly studies. On becoming a priest he went to Portugal and using his closeness to the king of Portugal, he wanted to become the Archbishop of Goa, and pulled the strings to make his friends Fr. Cajetano Francisco do Couto as the bishop of Cochin and Fr. Jose Antonio Gonçalves as the bishop of Mylapore⁷². However their efforts did not find any fruit. Finally when Joseph Kariyattil was made the bishop of Cranganore, these Goan priests got estranged from their Malayalee counterparts and turned against Kariyattil, saying “either all the three whom we have suggested should be made bishops or nobody from India should be made a bishop.”⁷³

Later these Goan priests under Fr. Cajetano Vitorino de Faria planned a revolution in Goa against the Portuguese hegemony, in which about nineteen Goan priests made preparations to participate. Concomitantly the highest officers of Goan army under Manoel Cajetano Pinto, the lieutenant of Ponda division of the army, and his cousin Manoel Pinto from Saligao also joined the conspiracy for the purpose of expelling them from Goa⁷⁴. As the Pintos of Candolim holding important positions in the Church and the military force operated as the key figures of the conspiracy, mobilizing the military regiments of Ponda and Bardez this was often called Pinto Conspiracy or Pinto Revolt of 1787⁷⁵. However the main brain that brought the various disgruntled elements of Goa for a failed revolution in 1787 was Fr. Cajetano Vitorino de Faria, who had spent several years in Rome and Portugal along with Fr. Thomas Paremakkel for the purpose of getting Indians appointed as bishops for India, instead of the European bishops. But the revolution did not happen as the news about it got leaked out on 5th August 1787 (five days before the planned outbreak) and about 47 people including fifteen Catholic priests were arrested and put in jail. In 1788 fifteen of the lay people were executed, while

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fourteen priests were deported to Portugal⁷⁶. Fr. Jose Custodio de Faria (popularly known as Abbe Faria), who was the son of Fr. Cajetano Vitorino de Faria and was accused as one of the conspirators was one among those who were deported to Portugal. On reaching Europe Abbe Faria (1756 -1819) devoted his time to the study of psychology and became one of the pioneers of scientific study of hypnotism and a leading figure in the intellectual circles of France during the time of revolution⁷⁷.

One can find somewhere a common thread that links Fr. Thomas Paremakkal, who vehemently argued for the transfer of ecclesiastical positions from the Europeans to Indians, with the leading Goan priests who spearheaded a revolution in Goa to expel the Portuguese from India and Abbe Faria, who moved to Paris, the heartland of French Revolution for continuing his further academic and intellectual pursuits. Bishop Joseph Kariyattil died in Goa on 10th September, 1786⁷⁸. It was almost 11 months later that the priests of Goa initiated moves for expelling the Portuguese from India and were arrested on 5th August, 1787 on the leakage of information about conspiracy⁷⁹. Consequently Fr. Thomas Paremakkal was appointed as the governor of the diocese of Cranganore and on 1st February 1787 he convened a mahayogam at Angamaly, which took decisions to revolt against the European missionaries if they were to object to the appointment of Fr. Thomas Paremakkal as the next bishop. The entire representatives of the St. Thomas Christians under Paremakkal decided to throw away the yoke of the European missionaries and to invite a bishop from West Asia for his Episcopal consecration if their requests to make Paremakkal a bishop was not agreed upon by the Portuguese ruler, who was the ecclesiastical patron under Padroado system⁸⁰. Was it quite accidental that the people who shared their ideas together in Europe were seen in three different contexts of revolutions? Obviously the timing of rebellious gathering of the representatives of St. Thomas Christians of Kerala and their decision to turn towards non-European bishop from West Asia cutting ties with the European missionaries and the moves of many priests of Goa to expel the Portuguese from India (1787) shows that these incidents were not totally isolated; but were somehow linked at the inspirational level. The leaders of both the incidents during their stay and activities in Europe seem to have considerably been influenced by the victory of Congregationalist,

Baptist and Presbyterian Churches of America in throwing away the colonial yoke of the English⁸¹. It seems that the lead actors of these dramas who were woven together in Europe by the early ideas of nationalism responded differently in different places, exhibiting it variously depending on the exigencies.

It is all the more interesting to note that Fr. Thomas Paremakkal and bishop Joseph Kariyattil returned to India in the same ship in which the Goa priests, who later planned the revolt against the Portuguese, also traveled⁸². On their way back to India they reached Bahia in Brazil in the month of July, 1785 and lived there for a couple of days till their ship got repaired⁸³. Now some scholars argue that the Mineiro revolt of Brazil spearheaded by the priests in 1789 against the Portuguese hegemony in South America was connected with these Indian priests at least at the inspirational level⁸⁴. There was in fact a great amount of connectivity among these otherwise isolated events. This is discernable mostly by the fact that these events had something in common because of the thread of early nationalist movement and freedom struggle that appeared in different parts of colonial world among the like-minded people in the last quarter of the eighteenth century probably imbibing adventurous lessons from American war of Independence, where British colonial masters were thrown out by the colonists.

Indian Alternatives

Thomas Paremakkal opposes the European ecclesiastical structural formats and develops arguments for Indian alternatives for Church administration not only because of anti-Europeanism but also for reasons of strengthening the foundations of nationalism. He views that the national identity should be based on its cultural uniqueness, heritage and rich traditions. He was concerned more about the cultural traditions of St. Thomas Christians, which the European missionaries were increasingly tampering with for the purpose of establishing their hold over this community. He views that there were three institutions which should be preserved and strengthened at all costs in order to handle the arrogant and haughty segment among the European missionaries and to uphold the dignity of Indian Christians. They are (a) Jathikkukarthaviyan (Archdeacon or the leader of the community), (b) yogam (the representative body of families at the level of parish

churches) and (c), mahayogam (the representative body at the apex level consisting of elected members from individual churches). The representatives of mahayogam who met at Angamaly in 1773⁸⁵ and in 1787⁸⁶ earnestly argued for the age old institution of Archdeacon to be reinstated. Paremakkal writes:

'The foreign missionaries do not respect the feelings of the community, as it now does not have its own leader.' Earlier when it had its own leader⁸⁷, no foreign missionary dared to do any injustice or evil to this community⁸⁸.

At a time when the overassertive segment of the European missionaries was handling the Church administrative affairs, Varthamanapustakam gives the message that the identity, heritage and cultural tradition of this community could be better be protected only by having a community leader of Indian origin⁸⁹.

Paremakkal was also highly critical about the one-man-centered or bishop-centered Church administrative system that the European missionaries introduced in India. He was a staunch supporter of the democratic institution of yogam or palliyogam which formed an important ingredient in the church administration of the St. Thomas Christians. He projects yogam as the Indian alternative to Church administration. The administration of the St. Thomas Christians was carried out by Jathikkukarthaviyan (community leader) in agreement with the yogam and mahayogam. This type of administration provided space for getting the individual initiatives of the leader strengthened by the wisdom of the representatives. Moreover such an administrative system accommodated the grass root level demands and aspirations of the members. The Jathikkukarthaviyan, however, could not act independently of yogam or act against the yogam, as he was bound by the majority decision of the representative body. The representative body of yogam operated among this community as an institution with republican form of power. It used to decide as to who should celebrate the Holy Mass and who should not, who should be accepted in the church and who should not be⁹⁰. Elaborating on the power of yogam Paremakkal writes:

'... Our churches were built not by you nor by your ancestors; nor did we sell ourselves nor our church people to you. If our

*yogam, is willing to accept you, we would accept. If our yogams do not want to accept you, you cannot forcefully make us accept you*⁹¹.

However the importance that this representative body had in the administration of Church affairs of this community was not incomprehensible for the western world. Even the administrative head of such supreme institutions, like Propaganda Fide, rebuked Fr. Thomas Paremakkel and Fr. Joseph Kariyattil for bringing two seminarians to Rome for priestly studies as sent by the yogam. He says: 'If yogam sends somebody, then we have no responsibility to accept them.. Those who have come uninvited do not get space here....'⁹² However, later they were taken for studies; but not because the yogam had sent them there- but because Fr. Joseph Kariyattil, the former student of Propaganda Fide had taken them there⁹³.

The decisions pertaining to this community were taken jointly by the bishop and the yogam and hence both the institutions were vital unlike the European perception of Church, where bishop was the ultimate authority and decision-taker since the time of Feudalism. Paremakkel is battering the western notion of single person exercising hegemonic control over the community, without allowing space for the voice of community to be heard through their representatives.

The third institution which Varthamanapusthakam projects as vital for the maintenance of the autonomy of this community was mahayogam or the highest representative body of elected members from various churches. The mahayogam formed the highest platform to find solutions to the administrative, social and communitarian issues that used to crop up time to time. It was a mahayogam (1773) that decided that Fr. Thomas Paremakkel and Fr. Joseph Kariyattil should go to Rome to get concrete solutions from the Pope and the same mahayogam made arrangements for mobilizing resources for their travel⁹⁴. The decisions of the mahayogam, often known as padiyola, were inviolable and were considered as serious and binding on all members of the community as canon law in the Western Church. Those who violated them were considered as cheaters of the community and it was against this background Fr. John da Santa Maria was blocked from entering the church of Parur, saying that he violated

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the decision and agreement being made in the mahayogam of Angamaly. (1773)⁹⁵. It was in the mahayogam of 1787 the representatives from 81 churches of Kerala decided that this community should stand alone breaking ties with the European missionaries if their request to make Fr. Thomas Paremakkel was not accepted. It also decided that except for ordination and for getting holy oil, no other relationship should be maintained with other churches and church leaders⁹⁶.

However some of the missionary authorities were not happy with the assertions that mahayogam used to make, as its decisions at times clipped the wings of their power. There were several occasions when they indirectly tried to convey the message that participation in the mahayogam was a sinful or a rebellious act. Thus in 1773 when the representatives of St. Thomas Christian Churches met at Angamaly, there was a great amount of criticism and commotion against the European missionaries from the representatives. Finally when a missionary priest stepped in without being invited to give the final blessings, he made all the participants in the mahayogam to recite the prayer of repentance “mea culpa.. . mea culpa”, giving the impression that their meeting of mahayogam and its entire deliberations were sinful and rebellious. Paremakkel vehemently criticizes the way how the entire participants were made to say the prayer of repentance by the European missionary⁹⁷.

Thomas Paremakkel realized that self-reliance is the foundation of freedom and national pride. He maintained that the Church of St. Thomas Christians should be self-sufficient and should not depend on the Europeans for any help. In 1787 the mahayogam that met under his leadership decided that the churches of this community should invest their surplus money for productive ventures, wherein the money should be given on interest in four different parts of Kerala and with the interest deriving out of it the expenditure of Church administration had to be met⁹⁸. He maintained that freedom and the pride of being an Indian will come only when the running of Church affairs was done without any foreign help. He viewed that foreign help, however insignificant it was, would bring in a feeling of dependence and subordination. Paremakkel writes:

'Don't think that the two bottles of Mass wine and three quarter kilogram of wheat that you(European missionaries) supply to priests for making host for Mass would be sufficient to get the priests of St.Thomas Christians subjugated to you⁹⁹. If we can sustain ourselves and our churches with our own efforts and with our hard work, we can raise money from our own efforts for the bread and wine for Mass¹⁰⁰... Before your coming to Kerala, our churches, bishops and priests were maintained not by your subsidy but with the donations that we and the yogam used to make¹⁰¹.

The nationalist pride and his refusal to submit himself to the arrogance of foreigners made him develop self-reliance as the basis his Church administrative and economic system, which the St.Thomas Christians continue to main to a certain extent even now.

Thus though Varthamnapusthakam is a travelogue by its literary feature, it reflects the intensity of conflicts and dissent that had got shaped among the St.Thomas Christians in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Paremakkal representing the dissenting voices puts them in black and white and adds them as a substantial layer of his narrative of travel. While attacking the paradigms of the European missionaries, Paremakkal attacks not from outside as a heretic or a schismatic, but writes from inside as an administrator of the church, both as a reformer suggesting Indian alternatives and as a patriot bringing Indianness to the domains of church. However the words and the language of attack that Paremakkal uses against the European missionaries are sharper than those of critics and enemies of missionaries; however it should be said that they flow from the fire of suffering that this community was made to undergo during the period of colonial interventions and cultural mutations. From the same fire of suffering and tribulations emerged his notions of nationalism and arguments for India to be handed over to Indians.

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Endnotes

1. Paremakkal Thomakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam* (Malayalam), edited by Thomas Moothedan (An English translation of the book was brought out by Placid Podipara as a publication from Oriental Institute, Rome, 1971), Ernakulam, 1977.
2. It is being told that some of the pages containing highly critical comments about the foreign missionaries were removed from the book by the then church authorities.
3. For details see Eugene Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, tran.by E.R.Hambye, Calcutta, 1957; Placid Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay, 1970; A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.I, Bangalore, 1989; Joseph C. Panjikaran, “Christianity in Malabar with Special Reference to the St.Thomas Christians of the Syro- Malabar Rite”, in *Orientalia*, vol.VI, 1926
4. Tome Pires, *A Suma Oriental de Tome Pires e o Livro de Francisco Rodrigues*, ed.by Armando Cortesão, Coimbra, 1978, p.180; João Teles e Cunha “De Diamper a Mattancherry: Caminhos e Encruzilhadas da Igreja Malabar e Catolica na India: Os Primeiros Tempos (1599-1624)” in *Anais de Historia de Alem-Mar*, vol.V, 2004,pp.283-368; João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, “Os Portugueses e a Cristandade Siro-Malabar(1498-1530),in *Studia*, 52, Lisboa, 1994
5. Josef Wicki(ed.), *Documenta Indica*, vol.VI, Rome, 1948, p.180; vol.VII, p.475
6. According to the account of William Horsely there were about 1, 74, 566 Syrian Christians (56, 184 Romo–Syrians and 1,18,382 Syrians) in Travancore in 1836. W.H. Horsley, *Memoir of Travancore, Historical and Statistical*, compiled from Various Authentic Records and Personal Observations, Trivandrum, 1838 reproduced by Achuth Sankar S.Nair(ed.), “William Henry Horsley’s Memoir of Travancore (1838): Earliest English Treatise on the History of Travancore”, in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, vol.XXXI, 2004, p.63. Almost the same number of Syrian Christians lived in the kingdoms of Cochin and Calicut. By 1891 the number of Syrian Christians in Travancore increased to 2, 87, 409. See George Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala*, New Delhi, 1989,p.52 Now the number of St.Thomas Christians is about 4 million.
7. For details on Padroado system see Thomas Pallippurathukkunnel, *A Double Regime in the Malabar Church*, Alwaye, 1982, pp.3-4. See also Isabel dos Guimaraes Sa, “Ecclesiastical Structures and Religious Action”, in *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800*, edited by Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, Cambridge, 2007, pp.255-80; João Paulo e Costa, “The Padroado and the Catholic Mission in Asia during the 17th Century”, in *Rivalry and Conflict: European Traders and Asian Trading Networks in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, edited by Ernst van Veen and Leonard Blusse, Leiden, 2005,p.71-88. The subjugation of St.Thomas Christians to the Portuguese Padroado system happened with the synod of Diamper held in 1599, with which their age old traditions were finally mutated and the Lusitanian and Latin cultural and liturgical traditions were grafted on to them. For details see Jonas Thaliath, *Synod of Diamper*, Rome, 1958.
8. The defects in the functioning of the Padroado system later made Pope Gregory XIV to set up Propaganda Fide in 1622 and entrusted a major portion of Asia under the ecclesiastical administrative arrangement of Propaganda Fide. In fact

Propaganda Fide was started to undertake evangelization work in areas and zones not controlled by the Portuguese. The Padroado system was suppressed by Pope in 1838, despite the severe opposition from the Portuguese crown, and the strained relationship between Rome and Portugal continued up to 1886. For more details see Dominic, "The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda (1637-1838)", in H.C.Perumalil and E.R.Hambye, *Christianity in India*, Alleppey, 1972, pp.102-103

9. The West Syrian ritual practices were grafted on to the non-Catholic fraction of the St.Thomas Christians with the arrival of Mar Ivanios, a West Syrian bishop, in 1748. He shaved the head of the priests and ordained priests without the consent of the indigenous bishop Mar Thoma V and also burned crucifixes and images of saints used in the churches. The second team of West Syrian bishops came under Mar Baselius Sakrallah in 1751, who introduced Jacobite ideology and West Syrian ritual practices. See also Paulinus Bartholomeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, Rome, 1796, p.86
10. M.Kurian Thomas, *Niranam Grandhavari*, Kottayam, 2000, p.87; Pius Malekandathil, "Kothamangalam Roopathayude Charithra Pachathalavum Kraisthava Koottaymakalude Verukalum"(Malayalam), in Pius Malekandathil (chief editor) *Anpinte Anpathandu: Kothamangalam Roopathayude Charitram*, 1957-2007, Kothamangalam, 2008, pp.46-7; 86-88. E.R.Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.III, pp.27; 51-64
11. Paremakkel Thomakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, p.369. The West Asian bishops who introduced West Syriac liturgy got the support of anti-Pakalomattam groups in Kerala , including that of Kattumangattu Geevargese Rabban , who opposed bishop succession happening from the uncle to nephew pattern in the Pakalomattam family. *Ibid.*, p. 369. See also Pukidiyil Joseph Ittop, *Malyalathulla Suriyani Krithianikalude Charithram*, Kottayam 1869, pp.123-4
12. Paulinus Bartholomeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, Rome, 1796, p.86. Even the name of Mar Thoma VI was changed by the West Syrian bishops into Dionysius E.R.Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.III, pp.51-56.
13. Paremakkel Thomakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, p.371. As a result of heightened tensions between the two, churches and church properties that were till then commonly used and shared by them were partitioned between the Jacobites and the Catholics from 1760 onwards in places like Angamali, Akaparambu, Kothamangalam, Kuruppampady, Karakkunnam etc. See M.Kurian Thomas, *Niranam Grandhavari*, p.89; Pius Malekandathil, "Kothamangalam Roopathayude Charithra Pachathalavum Kraisthava Koottaymakalude Verukalum", pp.46-8; 86-88
14. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. I, Trivandrum, 1906, pp. 343-51; Shangoonny Menon, *History of Travancore from the Earliest Times*, New Delhi, 1878, pp.135-55.
15. Antony George Pattaparambil, *The Failed Rebellion of Syro-Malabar Christians: A Historiographical Analysis of the Contributions of Paulinus of St. Bartholomew*, Rome, 2007, pp.241-3. Quoting the letter of Fr.Paulinus of St. Bartholomew, he says that Mar Thoma VI while trying to get reunited with Catholic Church secretly contacted the Jacobite Patriarch of Baghdad for assistance. *Ibid.*, p.243. We do not know whether it was actually true or a biased view of Paulinus, who

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- worked almost as a leader of the European missionaries opposing the admission of Mar Thoma VI to Catholicism.
16. Paremakkel Thomakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, p.334. He also says that the European missionaries did not want Mar Thoma VI to become a Catholic bishop as they did not want the St.Thomas Christians to be liberated from the 'yoke' of European missionaries. Paremakkel Thomakathanar elsewhere says that even a Monsignor working then in Propaganda Fide had also told him that "if an Indian became a bishop, then who (among the missionaries) could survive there?" *Ibid.*, p.171
 17. They left Madras on October 14th 1778. Paremakkel Thomakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, p.68. In 1779, they crossed Cape of Good Hope and reached Venguela.*Ibid.* p.102. In the same year the delegation reached Bahia in Brazil and Lisbon in Portugal. *Ibid.*, pp. 109; 118-9
 18. Paremakkel Thomakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, p.126
 19. *Ibid.*, pp.18-9
 20. The delegation consisted initially of 22 people; however for want of sufficient fund to pay the ticket charges only two, Joseph Kariyattil and Thomas Paremakkel (besides two seminarians) left for Europe. *Ibid.*, p.65. The names of the seminarians are Brother Chacko Malayil from the parish of Neendoor and Bro. Palackal Panchasara Mathew, out of whom the latter died in Rome during the course of his studies. They had to pay 278 gold coins (139 gold coins for two people) for the travel of four people from Madras to Portugal and later another 35 gold coins for their travel between Portugal and Rome. *Ibid.*, pp.76; 219 . Fr. Joseph Kariyattil kept the rest of money (43, 280 chakrams) for meeting other types of expenses of the group. *Ibid.*, p.80.It shows the great amount of resource mobilization tat this community undertook for the purpose of carrying out this trip.
 21. This is evident from the fact that on several occasions he says that he is narrating the developments so that the members of the community might know of it. Paremakkel Thomakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, p.134
 22. *Ibid.*, pp.18-9
 23. There were at least 4 copies of *Varthamanapusthakam* in circulation in 1970s. One prepared by Fr. Ouseph Vezhaparambil in 1898, the second one was transcribed by the CMI priests in 1902 and the third one was made by Fr. Mathai Paremakkel in 1903. However the copy with the Tharakan family is considered to be the original work of Fr.Thomas Paremakkel. See Paremakkel Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam* (Malayalam), edited by Thomas Moothedan, p.17. The first printing of this work was done in 1936 by Plathottathil Luka Mathai. However, the printing from the original was done in 1977 by Janatha books, Thevara. Nevertheless an English translation of the book was already published by Placid Podipara from Oriental Institute of Rome, in 1971.
 24. Fr. Joseph Kariyattil was appointed as a bishop on 16th July, 1782 and was consecrated a bishop on 17th February, 1783. Paremakkel Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp. 265; 296

25. The group reached Goa on 1st May, 1786; however on 10th September 1786 bishop Joseph Kariyattil died of “mysterious reasons” and Fr. Thomas Paremakkal attributes it to the treachery of the missionaries. *Ibid.*, p. 380. We do not know for sure whether Paremakkal’s version of the story is true or not. However, there are many local historians like M.O.Joseph who say that bishop Joseph Kariyattil was poisoned to death. M.O.Joseph, *Suriani Kristhianikal*, pp.46-440.
26. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, p.16
27. *Ibid.*,p. 27
28. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp.27-8. Here I should also say that later the missionaries sent an envoy expressing their regret for having sent out the St.Thomas Christians from the funeral of the bishop and they expressed their readiness to do penance for it. *Ibid.*, pp.33-4
29. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp.27-28
30. *Ibid.*, pp.27-8; 30
31. *Ibid.*, p.30
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 30;33 After the beginning of the meeting of the mahayogam (meeting of the representatives of 72 churches), three European missionaries came to Angamaly to take track of the situation and they were secretly put up in the presbyteral house by the supporters of the European missionaries.
33. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp.31; 34
34. *Ibid.*, pp.28-9
35. Commenting on the incident cited by Fr.Thomas Paremakkal, E.R. Hambye says that some misdeeds were committed by the European Carmelite missionaries to defame the local clergy. E.R.Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.III, p.28
36. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp.36-8. For having killed Fr. Jacob, later the Travancorean government is said to have punished two European missionaries, viz., Fr. John and Fr. Paulinus. However Paulinus of St.Bartholomew, a Carmelite missionary (John Philip Vesdini) from lower Austria (present day Croatia) then working in Kerala viewed Thomas Paremakkal as the cause for disorders among the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala. See Antoney George Pattaparambil, *The Failed Rebellion of Syro-Malabar Christians*, pp.244-5
37. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp.38-9;61
38. *Ibid.*, p.41
39. See E.R.Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, pp.28-9; Paremakkal Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, p.42
40. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam* , pp.42-3; 54
41. E.R.Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, p.28
42. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp.54-55
43. *Ibid.*, pp.54-55
44. *Ibid.*, p.54. Later when Fr. John de Santa Margarita, who had arrested and tormented the priest of the St.Thomas Christians for having taken the lead in festal procession, was made the bishop (Vicar Apostolic) of Verapoly, Fr. Thomas

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- Paremakkal and Fr. Joseph Kariyattil informed the Roman authorities about the atrocities he had earlier done to the native priests of Kerala and his appointment as bishop was finally cancelled in 1780. Ibid., pp.145; 204
45. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, Varthamanapusthakam, p.125
46. Ibid., p.61
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., pp.329-330
49. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, Varthamanapusthakam, pp. 49-51
50. Ibid., pp.62-3
51. Ibid., p.64
52. Ibid., p.329. The church of Malayattoor had to pay a fine imposed by the local ruler for having released a robber by a European missionary called Padre Clemis. Actually he was tied there in the vicinity of church by the local ruler on the feast day of Malayattoor church and for the arrogant behaviour of the missionary the faithful had to pay the fine.
53. Antoney George Pattaparambil, *The Failed Rebellion of Syro-Malabar Christians*, pp.244-5; See also Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana*, Rome, 1794; Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, Rome, 1796.
54. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, Varthamanapusthakam, p.12
55. Ibid., p.71
56. On reaching Rome both Fr. Joseph Kariyattil and Fr. Thomas Paremakkal did something reciprocating the help that they had received from these people. They prepared a short life history of Devasahayam Pillai (Neelakanda Pillai) in Latin and submitted a request to the Congregation for Canonization for the purpose of making him a saint. The Nair officer Neelakanda Pillai, who embraced Christianity in 1745 and took the name of Devasahayam Pillai under the influence of E.B. de Lannoy, the commander-in-chief of Travancorean army, was martyred in 1752. Fr. Joseph Kariyattil and Fr. Thomas Paremakkal traveling through Thakla almost 26 years after his martyrdom (1778) came to know of his heroic suffering and death and on the basis of the information thus gathered from the region that they prepared his biography and requested for his canonization. This was the first case when an Indian submitted a request to Rome for the purpose of canonizing an Indian. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, Varthamanapusthakam, p.197. See also E.R. Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.III, p.86; J.B. Buttari, *Devasagayam Pillai's Conversion and Martyrdom*, tran. by P. Dahmen, Trichy, 1908.
57. Paremakkal Thommakathanar, Varthamanapusthakam, pp.305-307; see also Francis Thonippara, *Saint Thomas Christians of India: a Period of Struggle for Unity and Self-Rule (1775-1787)*, Bangalore, 1999, pp. 222-3
58. Antoney George Pattaparambil, *The Failed Rebellion of Syro-Malabar Christians*, pp. 244, 248; E.R. Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, vol.III, pp.55-9; 68-70; 75-77, 89, 136
59. Ibid., p.321
60. Ibid., p.327
61. Ibid., p.315

62. Ibid., pp.327-8
63. Ibid., pp.318-9
64. Ibid.
65. The reference is to jathikkukarthaviyan or Archdeacon. For details on the institution of Archdeacon see Jacob Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India, Kottayam*, 1972; Joseph Thekkedath, *The Troubled Days of Francis Garcia S.J., Archbishop of Cranganore (1641-59)*, Rome, 1972.
66. Paremakkel Thommakathanar, *Varthamana Pusthakam*, p.32.
67. Ibid., pp.32-3
68. Ibid., p.323
69. Ibid., p.322
70. Ibid., p.299
71. William H. Nelson, *The American Tory*, 1961, p.186; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Cambridge, 1967, pp.273-4, 299-304
72. J.H.da Cunha Rivara, *A Conjurção de 1787 em Goa e varias Cousas desse Tempo Memoria Historica*, Nova Goa, 1875, pp.13-4;42-56. Fr.Thomas Paremakkel met these Goan priests in Rome and Lisbon in 1780s and he refers to the details of the entire project of these three Goan priest. See Paremakkel Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp.119, 222,280,282-6. Fr. Thomas Paremakkel, who was along with these priests in Lisbon, mentions in detail about their plan to make Fr. Cajetano Vitorino de Faria as Archbishop of Goa, Fr. Cajetano Francisco do Couto as bishop of Cochin, Fr. Jose Antonio Gonçalves as bishop of Mylapore and a Franciscan Friar as bishop for Malacca. For details see Paremakkel Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam* , pp.247-8
73. Paremakkel Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp.277, 280
74. J.H.da Cunha Rivara, *A Conjurção de 1787 em Goa*, pp.10-23
75. J.H.da Cunha Rivara, *A Conjurção de 1787 em Goa* , pp.10-2; See also Charles Borges, *Goa and the Revolt of 1787*, New Delhi, 1996.
76. J.H.da Cunha Rivara, *A Conjurção de 1787 em Goa* , pp.36-8
77. For details see Hannes Stubbe, “Jose Custodio de Faria in the History of the World of Psychology: A Dialogue between Indian and European Psychologies”, in Pius Malekandathil and Jamal Mohammed (eds.), *The Portuguese, Indian Ocean and European Bridgehead: Festschrift in Honour of Prof. K.S. Mathew*. Fundação Oriente, Lisbon/ IRISH, Tellicherry,2001,pp.337-53. Egas Moniz, *O Padre Faria na Historia do Hipnotismo*, Lisboa, 1925. Abbe Faria was born of Cajetano Vitorino de Faria out of a legitimate marriage. Fr. Thomas Paremakkel says that Cajetano Vitorino de Faria left his wife and his two children to become a priest and later took his son Jose Custodio de Faria (Abbe Faria) to the Propaganda college of Rome for his priestly studies. Paremakkel Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam* , p.119. See also J.H.da Cunha Rivara, *A Conjurção de 1787 em Goa* ,p.88
78. Paremakkel Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp.24; 363
79. J.H.da Cunha Rivara, *A Conjurção de 1787 em Goa*, pp.10-38
80. Paremakkel Thommakathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, p.380

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81. The leaders and ministers of these Churches used to preach revolutionary themes in their sermons; however the ministers of Anglican Church stood with the British. William H. Nelson, *The American Tory*, 1961, p.186; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Cambridge, 1967, pp.273-4, 299-304
82. Paremakkal Thommankathanar, *Varthamanapusthakam*, pp.355; 359
83. *Ibid.*, pp.356-63
84. Philomena Sequeira Antony, *The Goa-Bahia Intra-Colonial Relations*, 1675-1825, Tellicherry, 2004, p.40
85. *Ibid.*, p.45
86. *Ibid.*, p. 382
87. The reference is to jathikkukarthaviyan or Archdeacon. For details on the institution of Archdeacon see Jacob Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India*, Kottayam, 1972; Joseph Thekkedath, *The Troubled Days of Francis Garcia S.J., Archbishop of Cranganore (1641-59)*, Rome, 1972
88. Paremakkal Thommankathanar, *Varthamana-pusthakam*, p.32.
89. *Ibid.*, pp.32-33
90. Yogams blocked some 9 missionary priests from entering the churches of the St.Thomas Christians. *Ibid.*, pp.51-2
91. *Ibid.*, p.331
92. *Ibid.*, p.163
93. *Ibid.*,p. 170
94. *Ibid.*, pp.18-19; 27-46; 65; 76.
95. *Ibid.*, pp.54-55
96. *Ibid.*, p.380
97. *Ibid.* p.46
98. *Ibid.*, p.382
99. *Ibid.*, p.324
100. *Ibid.*, p.324
101. *Ibid.*, p.325

(Dr. Pius Malekandathil)

Nazrani Christians and the Social Processes of Kerala, 800-1500

The socio-economic processes of Maritime India began to undergo decisive changes by ninth century, when its vast coastal terrains were considerably influenced by the economic forces emitted by the long distance trade between the ports of Persian Gulf regions and of Canton in China. One of the most significant impact of this trade-route on Indian economy was that the long-distance traders, who had to temporarily break their voyage on Indian coast because of the adverse monsoon winds on the other side of the Ocean, became instrumental in identifying and developing port-sites near the mouth of various rivers, through which commodities held in high demand in other parts of the world could be obtained. Consequently a long of chain of ports of varying degrees of economic importance began to emerge on the east and west coast of India, making many consumption-oriented regional economies located

closer to these ports start producing commodities needed by these foreign merchants.

On the one hand the process of production oriented towards market began to get relatively intensified in some of these places, while on the other hand, there was a concomitant phenomenon of migration of mercantile communities to India to take maximum advantage out of the changed situation. The local rulers who noticed the advantages of using these economic changes for their political intentions began to extend support and patronage to foreign merchants and mercantile migrants reaching their ports, who were eventually transformed as their supportive base for the political dreams of expanding their territories. One of the most evident cases of this nature could be traced back to the set of commercial privileges granted by the ruler of Ay kingdom to the Christian migrant traders of Quilon like Mar Saphor and Mar Prodh from the erstwhile Sassanid Persia in the mid-ninth century. Though the purpose of the grant was to generate enough wealth so as to strengthen the hands of the ruler and to realize his political plans, this grant bolstered and legitimized the increasing evolution of Christians as a significant trading group in Kerala out of the economic linkage established between the spice-producing Christians in the hinterland and the migrant Christians from Persia but having far-flung mercantile networks in the Indian Ocean. In this development, these Christians acquired certain traits from the social and cultural processes taking place in their neighborhood that in turn were to form their distinctive marks for the centuries to come.

Christian Mercantile Migrants of Quilon and the Socio-economic Significance of Tharisapally Copper Plate

Among the different groups of Christian migrants to India at different time periods, the merchant leaders Mar Sapor and Mar Prodh, who reached Kurakeni Kollam (Quilon) in circa 823 AD,¹ formed highly decisive because of the long-standing economic impact they had exerted in deep South. They had erected a church at Kurakeni Kollam, called Tharisapally, which besides being a place of prayer was eventually made to become the centre of economic life of the port-town of Quilon.² The migration of these two Christian merchant leaders to Quilon was to be located against the historical background of the expansion of traders from Abbassid Persia and the extension

of their commercial networks into the Indian Ocean. It started with the shifting of the headquarters from Damascus of the Umayyad Khalifs to Baghdad by the Abbassids (750-870) in 762AD, with a view to having access to the Indian Ocean via Tigris and to controlling its trade. Generally the long-distance trade from Abbassid Persia used to emanate from Oman or Sohar in the Persian Gulf and terminate in Canton controlled by the rulers of T'ang dynasty (618-907) of China.³ With the increasing expansion of the political domains and commercial networks of the Abbassids, the Christian merchants who used to conduct trade in the erstwhile Sassanid territories, particularly in the Fars and Persian Gulf regions, had to move over to safer destinations, including Kerala, where they had previous contacts.⁴ The intensified commercial activities from Abbassid Persia must have prompted Mar Sapor and Mar Prodh to move towards Kerala, which had earlier been an important commercial destination for the Christian merchants from Sassanid Persia. When they reached Quilon, they carried along with them an extensive network of commerce that the Sassanid merchants had earlier developed over centuries and they made use of these mercantile connections for keeping the wheels of commerce move around the Tharisappally of Kollam.⁵

Though these merchant leaders were said to have reached Quilon in 823, the different economic privileges to the Tharisappally were granted only in 849, almost 26 years after their arrival in the town. This suggests that Ayyanadikal Thiruvadikal (ruler of Ay kingdom), the feudatory of the Chera ruler Sthanu Ravi Varma, conferred the various privileges upon this mercantile community and its church not at their very first sight, but having tested the worth and utility of the recipients, both the church and the immigrant Christian mercantile community, in the process of resource mobilization. In fact the various privileges were a reward for the Christian mercantile community for the activation of maritime trade in Kollam and for ensuring the flow of sizeable share of trade surplus into the coffers of the rulers as Kopathavaram (share of the king - Sthanu Ravi Varma) and Pathipathavaram (share of the local ruler - Ayyanadikal).⁶

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These privileges were inscribed on copper plates, which are often known as Tharisapally copper plate for the simple reason that the church of Tharisa of Quilon was the beneficiary of the grants. The most important among these privileges included the right to keep parakkol,⁷ panchakandy⁸ and kappan⁹ (different types of weights and measures) of the city of Kollam under its safe custody,¹⁰ which the Christians of Quilon enviously held till 1503, when these were finally taken away from them following the malpractices done with them by some of its trading members.¹¹ That the church was made the custodian of weights and measures of the city shows that Tharisapally was not mere a center of worship alone, but represented an economic institution or a corporate body of traders that was entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring standardization of the weights and measures of the city and of enhancing the integrity of trade.

Ayyanadikal Thiruvadikal made a gift of four Ezhava families,¹² four Vellala families,¹³ one thachan¹⁴ and one Vannan (mannan)¹⁵ family to the Tharisapally and handed over to it the right to collect a wide variety of taxes from them, which Ayyanadikal used to levy earlier for himself like thalakkanam, enikkanam (professional taxes from toddy tapers and tree-climbers), mania meypan kollum ira (housing tax), chantan mattu meni ponnu (tax for using the title chantan (Channan or Shanar evidently to show his high social status), polipponnum (tax given on special occasions), iravuchorum (balikaram or tax collected to feed the Brahmins, refugees and destitutes), and Kudanazhiyum (collection of a nazhi - a type of liquid-measurement - of toddy as tax from each pot tapped)¹⁶.

Moreover the church was also given the right to collect eight kasu from each cart that used to take merchandise by land into the market of Quilon (vayinam) and four kasu from each boat that was used to carry cargo to the port (vediyilum).¹⁷ Though apparently the above details would give the impression that the local ruler was giving up many of his incomes for the sake of the church, in fact it was a small loss for the sake of appropriating larger gains by extending attractive atmosphere for overseas merchants in the port of Quilon. The entire development is to be understood as a move to strengthen and empower the Christian mercantile community and probably many others involved in long distance trade that in turn was expected to facilitate easy flow of wealth to Quilon for the purpose of empowering the hands of the ruler.

As Ayyandikal Thiruvadikal prescribed in the copper plate, the merchant guilds viz., Anjuvannam, Manigramam and Arunnoottuvar were entrusted with the right to protect the church and its property, obviously because of their economic importance.¹⁸ Anjuvannam and Manigramam were also asked to inquire into contentious matters and find solutions, if somebody was to encroach upon the privileges conferred upon the church.¹⁹ The fact that Anjuvannam, which is generally considered as a Jewish merchant guild and Manigramam of Kollam which is generally considered as a Christian guild,²⁰ had by this time assumed power as karalars of the city²¹ would indicate that the merchant guilds had already wielded considerable amount of authority and power, with the help of which they were able to implement the will of the ruler inscribed in the copper plate and protect the church from all types of probable violations in the future. The context against which the Manigramam merchant guild of Kerala was mentioned in the copper plate (as custodian of a Christian church) suggests that its ethnic composition must have entirely been different from that of Tamilnadu, where its members had been predominantly Hindus. In Kerala this guild seems to have by this time evolved into a powerful commercial institution operating among the Christian merchants for long-distance movement of commodities in the Indian Ocean, particularly between Kerala and the economic zones of Persian Gulf, Red Sea and the Levant.²²

The various economic privileges and rights which the ruler of Venadu granted to Mar Sapor Iso indicate the desire of the local rulers to keep themselves linked with the powerful Christian merchant groups by keeping them in good honour and by legitimizing their claims and ventures. The alliance between the local ruler and mercantile community became necessary because of the increasing dependence of the local ruler on the foreign Christian traders for the purpose of mobilizing wealth for strengthening his political institutions. The local rulers knew very well that the commercial ventures and the market systems could then be kept active and operational on the coastal pockets only with the help of overseas merchants, and that too by the Christian merchants, against the background of declining trade in inland Kerala following the intensified feudalization process that started with proliferation of land-grants and consumption - oriented production activities.²³ Consequently the ruler of Ay kingdom and his master

Sthanu Ravi Varma began to increasingly bank upon overseas merchants for obtaining wealth in the form of customs duties so as to get their hands strengthened particularly at a time when they were to counter the political and commercial challenges of the Pandyas.²⁴

By this time, in the midst of Chera - Pandya conflicts in deep south, the Pandyas had managed to capture Vizhinjam along with the ruler and his relatives as well as treasures. When Vizhinjam was lost to the Pandyas, the Cheras turned towards Quilon, which the latter developed as the provincial headquarters of their kingdom. It was against this background of political developments that they encouraged the foreign Christian merchants to settle down in Quilon by conferring concessions and privileges upon them and their worshipping place. The attempts for the intensification of the trade of Quilon were necessitated not only for developing a competitor for the Pandyan-controlled port of Vizhinjam, but also for generating sufficient wealth for the political ventures of the Cheras in the south.²⁵

These developments in the long run empowered the foreign Christian merchants and gave the Christians of Kerala an economic identity of being traders, following which in the evolving process of social spacing they were given the status of Vaisyas. It seems that there was already an attempt to create a trading caste in Kerala out of the foreign mercantile Christians, with the mass migration of Brahmins by eighth century and their consequent appropriation of hegemonic position and this was necessitated not only to fill in the vacuum created by the absence of Vaisyas, but also to weaken the commerce of the Buddhists and Jains, who were also their religious rivals. In this process the Christians were kept in the social ladder on a scale equivalent to that of the Vaisyas of the areas north of Vindhya and Satpura.²⁶ Some crude traces of this phenomenon could be found in the Tharisapally copper plate, where it is mentioned that the koyiladhikarikal Vijayaraghava Devan²⁷ (probably a Brahmin minister) also joined hands with Ayyanadikal Thiruvadi (along with Ilamkur Rama Thiruvadi and others) in taking the decision to grant economic privileges to Tharisapally and its members, obviously to strengthen the economic and social standing of the latter. The encouragement given to Christian traders by way of privileges is to be viewed against the larger attempts of the dominant Brahmins to strike at the roots of the Buddhists and the Jains, against whom the Brahmanical

religion had already started a crusade from 6th/7th centuries onwards.²⁸ For them, empowering Christian traders was an alternative device to weaken the trade of the Buddhists and the Jains, as it was the surplus from their trade that helped to uphold the ideology of both the religions in hegemonic position and to raise serious challenges to Brahminism.

Process of Urbanization and the Network of Angadis

The founding of the town (Nagaram) of Kurakkeni Kollam (Quilon) was attributed to Mar Sapor Iso (Innakaram kandu neeretta Maruvan Sapiriso), as per the information gathered from Tharisapally copper plate. Kurakkeni Kollam, which was known differently as Koulam Male in Jewish Genizsa papers²⁹ and in Arabic sources³⁰ as well as Gu-lin (in the Song period) /Ju-lan (in the Yuan period) in Chinese documents,³¹ does not appear in any source prior to 823 AD, which also suggests that the formation of the town must have taken place after the arrival of Sapor Iso only. The Malayalam Calendar, often known as Kollam Era, was started in 825 AD and was attributed to have begun to commemorate the founding of the town of Quilon by Mar Sapor. Probably, the rich astronomical traditions, which Mar Sapor and other Christian merchants brought from the erstwhile Sassanid Persia, must have been instrumental in developing this calendar in the inceptional stage.³²

By the time Suleiman visited Quilon in 841, it was already a town, as he writes in his *Salsalat-al-Taverika*.³³ Mar Sapor Iso seems to have brought elements of Sassanid urban culture along with him and exteriorized them physically at Quilon. Eventually with the intensification of trade between Abbassid Persia and Tang China,³⁴ there appeared a port-hierarchy in Kerala with a chain of satellite feeding ports revolving around the principal port of Quilon, which in turn was made to become the main port of call for long-distance traders moving between China and Persia. This process in turn caused immense wealth to get concentrated in the town of Quilon, which by later period the Cholas wanted to appropriate by capturing this port-town. In the midst of intense conflicts between the Cheras and the Cholas, Raja Raja Chola (985-1014) took over Quilon and its satellite port Vizhinjam. However at this juncture, it was a Jewish merchant leader by name Joseph Rabban of Muyirikode (Cranganore), who came to the rescue of the Chera ruler Bhaskara Ravi Varma

(962-1020), to whom the former handed over his ships, men and materials for the purpose of conducting war with the Cholas.³⁵ Despite these political vicissitudes, the trading activities of Quilon, being intensified by different merchant groups with international linkages, accelerated the process of urbanization in this port-town, as was later testified by Benjamin of Tudela (c.1170).³⁶ Foreign Christians from West Asia, Jews³⁷ and the Chinese³⁸ formed the mercantile elites in the port-town of Quilon, where each segment seems to have had its own separate settlements and quarters.

When the foreign Christians from West Asia were involved in the overseas trade of Quilon, the indigenous Christians engaged in spice-production in the hinterland part of Kerala began to take part also in the regional trade supplying cargo to the Christian overseas merchants on the coast. Along with it, eventually there appeared the culture of clustered living³⁹ and trading activities around their settlements, symbolized by angadis. Most of these angadis were located around the churches of Christians and formed the nuclei out of which vibrant urban centers developed in later period in central Kerala. The angadis developed as trading establishments with accommodation facilities for the Christian merchants, who conducted trade in the front part of the edifice facing towards the street, while the hinter part of it was used for their lodging as in any normal house. The spice-producers of St. Thomas Christians used to sell their cargo in these angadis located near their churches and commodity movement from hinterland to the port of Quilon meant networking of different angadis through the transportations means of bullock-carts on land routes and boats through riverine channels. The economic identity of the Christians as traders was preserved and maintained in the inland Christian settlements with the help of angadis,⁴⁰ by which the enterprising local merchants linked the inland production centers with the mercantile networks of Manigramam and the wider channels of overseas commerce. Consequently Christian traders linked with Manigramam merchant guild spread to different parts of Kerala in the process of linking angadi trade of the region with the overseas commerce emanating from Quilon. Some of these traders were patronized by the inland local rulers, as is evidenced by the Thazhekkadu inscription (1024 AD) obtained from the premises of Thazhekadu church (near Irinjalakuda), which speaks of king Rajasimhann conferring privileges on the

Christian traders like Chathan Vadukan and Iravi Chathan, who were members of the Manigramam merchant guild.⁴¹

By the end of fifteenth century the angadis of central Kerala were linked with the leading maritime centres of exchange like Cranganore, Cochin, Quilon and Kayamkulam, where the commercially-oriented Christians began to concentrate in large numbers for trading purposes. In Cochin they were said to have been organized under a merchant guild called Korran (may be Ku^{oo}an in Tamil), from which Francisco de Albuquerque bought 4,000 bahars of well-dried pepper in 1503.⁴² The economic importance of the merchant group of Thomas Christians for Quilon is also evident from the fact that the leading members of this community were chosen as the commercial emissaries in 1502 by the queen of Quilon for the purpose of inviting Vasco da Gama from Cochin for conducting trade with her port⁴³ The prominent Christian merchant in Quilon was Mathias,⁴⁴ and in Kayamkulam was Tarqe Tome (Tarakan Thomas),⁴⁵ from whom the Portuguese used to purchase pepper regularly since in 1503.

Christians as Spice Producers and Fighting Force in Central Kerala

When commercially-oriented Christians and descendants from foreign Christian merchants began to concentrate on the major junctional routes of trade and maritime centres of exchange, the traditional Christians who were often known as St. Thomas Christians and who used to trace back their origins to the apostolic work of St. Thomas,⁴⁶ still continued to be predominantly agriculturists and focused on spice production availing cargo for the commerce of the former. With the increasing demand from the revival of spice trade from 9th century onwards, we find Christians specialized in spice-production moving to the hinterland part of Kerala in their attempts to extend spice-cultivation. The increasing inland-movement of the St. Thomas Christians is evident from the establishment of churches in places like Kayamkulam (824), Athirampuzha (853), Kottayam (9th cent.), Nagapuzha (900), Manjapra (943), Mavelikara (943), Pazhuvil (960), Arakuzha (999), Nedisala (999), Kottekad (1000), Kadamattom (10th cent.), Kanjur (1001), Kaduthuruthy Cheriapally (10th cent.) Kunnamkulam (10th cent.), Pala (1002), Muttam (1023), Cherpunkal (1096), Vadakara (11th cent.), Bharananganam (1100),

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Changanacherry (1117), Thripunithara (1175), Cheppadu (12th cent.), Chengannoor (12th cent.), Kudamaloor (12th cent.), Ernakulam (12th cent.), Kothanalloor (1220), Mulanthuruthy (1225), Kothamangalam Valiapally (1240), Karthikapally (13th cent.), Kuruppumpady (13th cent.), Alengad (1300), Muthalakodam (1312), Njarackal (1341), Koratty (1381), Poonjar (14th cent.), Alleppey (1400), Kanjirappilly (1450), Kothamangalam Cheriapally (1455), Kudavechur (1463) etc.⁴⁷ All these churches were established during the period between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries along the fertile riverbeds of central Kerala as a development that took place following the expansion of spice-cultivation.

The active involvement of St. Thomas Christians in the spice-production was testified by Bishop John Marignoli (c. 1346), who visited Malabar on his way back from Cambulac (Peking in China) and referred to the Christians of Quilon as “rich people” and as “owners of pepper plantations”.⁴⁸ The increasing role of St. Thomas Christians in the production of spices is also attested to by the Portuguese documents which say that ‘all the pepper was in the hands of the St. Thomas Christians and that majority of the pepper that went to Portugal was sold by them’.⁴⁹ Their continued involvement in the expansion of spice cultivation by resorting to clearance of forest is referred to by Jornada, which says that there were several Christian settlements then in the forests.⁵⁰

Meanwhile a considerable number of St. Thomas Christians began to be recruited as fighting force for the local rulers, particularly with the disintegration of the Cheras and the consequent fragmentation of central authority in the 12th century. Most of the Christian settlements had their own kalaris (schools for training in martial arts and fencing) run mostly by Christian panikkars and in places where there was no Christian kalari they had to join the kalaris run by Nairs.⁵¹ Jornada says that some Christian Panikars had eight to nine thousand disciples, both Christians and Nairs, getting trained as fighting force for the local rulers.⁵² One of the most famous Christian Panikkars of this period was Vallikkada Panikkar who had his kalari at Peringuzha on the banks of river Muvattupuzha, one of whose descendant was Mar Ivanios, who later got reunited with Catholic Church in 1930, laying foundation for the Syro-Malankara church in India.⁵³

The rulers of Vadakkenkur and Cochin banked very much upon the Christian fighting force for their wars of defence and expansion. In 1546 the king of Vadakkenkur offered the Portuguese about 2000 soldiers for the purpose of helping them to lift the Ottoman siege on Diu.⁵⁴ Later in 1600 the king of Cochin also offered St. Thomas Christian soldiers to the Portuguese for the project of conquering Ceylon, though the project was not materialized for other reasons.⁵⁵ The military tradition of the St. Thomas Christians was preserved by this community as something integral to it and they even resorted to the usual practice of the fighting force to form chaverpada (suicidal squad) to protect their bishop Mar Joseph from being arrested by the Portuguese by the end of 1550s. About 2000 Christian soldiers organized themselves into an amoucos or suicidal squad to prevent the Portuguese from arresting their bishop.⁵⁶

The St. Thomas Christians used to go to their churches along with their swords, shields and lances in their hands, as Antonio de Gouvea mentions in *Jornada*.⁵⁷ Eventually weapon houses (Ayudhapurakal) were constructed in front of the churches for the purpose of keeping of swords, guns and lances during the time of church service, whose remnants are now visible in front of the churches of Ramapuram, Pala and Cherpunkal.⁵⁸ However, later when all the smaller principalities of central Kerala were amalgamated into Travancorean state during the period between 1742 and 1752 and with the creation of a standing army under Marthanda Varma, the importance of Christians as a fighting force for the regional political players declined considerably.

Social Spacing

Out of these nuanced developments in the economy and polity, there emerged certain dynamic forces for re-arranging the format of the society of Kerala which also defined the social functions of Christians. It was a time when Brahminical ideology and temple-centered economic activities were re-shaping the social life of the Keralites by constructing and re-constructing new castes out of various professional and artisan groups, particularly during the period from 9th to 13th centuries. All the intermediaries standing between the land-owner (brahmin) and the tiller (sudra or pulaya) were put into one or another caste in a way that would facilitate and ensure Brahminical hegemony.⁵⁹ In this process of social spacing the

commercially-oriented Christians were made to evolve as a trading caste, almost like the Vaisyas. Consequently the Christians were given a social function in the evolving world and in many places they were used for touching and purifying the oil and utensils to be used in the temples and palaces, but being 'polluted' by the touch of the artisans.⁶⁰ Concomitantly certain Christian families were specially invited offering them land and were made to settle down near the temples and palaces for the purpose of touching and purifying the oil (enna thottu kodukkan) and for purifying the vessels being 'polluted' by the touch or use of lower caste people.⁶¹ In the new developments following the establishment of brahminical hegemony and dissemination of notions of 'pollution' that would help the Brahmins to maintain their dominant position with Nairs subordinate to them, Christians were made to become an inevitable social ingredient in central Kerala who were in turn made to evolve as a bridging social group between the polluting artisan groups and the dominant castes.

The other side of the picture was that the Christians started borrowing several social customs and practices (like the ceremonies related to birth, marriage and death)⁶² of the dominant castes to present themselves as fitting well into the newly evolving socio-cultural order. The spice-producing St. Thomas Christians as well as the descendants of the foreign Christian merchants together seem to have imbibed a lot of elements from the neighbouring cultural space in this social process. One of the most important social practices that the indigenous Christians imbibed was the practice of untouchability. The Christians believed that by touching low castes they would remain polluted, which would deter them from interacting with the Nairs and Brahmins.⁶³ As this would ultimately affect their trading activities, the Christians were keen to observe untouchability rather meticulously in their dealings with artisan groups and lower castes. They also used to wear sacred thread (puunuul),⁶⁴ kudumi (tuft), but the only difference from that of the Brahmins was that the Christians used to insert a silver cross into their tuft(kudumi)⁶⁵. The practice of St. Thomas Christians wearing sacred thread was later quoted by Robert de Nobili for justifying his wearing of sacred thread as a part of his missionary method of inculturation experimented in Madurai in the seventeenth century⁶⁶. The Christians also keenly observed birth-related pollution as well as pula (perception of the family as being under pollution after the death

of a member) and resorted to pulakuli (the feast usually held on 10th day after funeral) and sradham (feast held one year after the funeral, when the souls were believed to come back).⁶⁷

Though some scholars like Placid Podippara argue that these customs entered the social life of St. Thomas Christians because of their Brahminical origins and that a considerable number of them were descendants of Brahmins converted by St. Thomas in the first century AD⁶⁸, it seems that the Christians of Kerala imbibed these social and cultural practices only during the period between 9th and 13th centuries, when caste practices and norms were being increasingly fabricated and disseminated under the hegemonic supervision of the Brahmins, who assigned different caste identities to the already existing artisans, social groups and communities. The wide variety of social customs and practices that the St. Thomas Christians imbibed from their cultural neighbourhood along with the ritual practices that they borrowed from West Asia eventually came to be collectively called Thomayude Margam or the Law of Thomas, which they did not want to get changed at any cost⁶⁹. The bitter and long-standing conflicts between the St. Thomas Christians and the Portuguese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was actually on the question of changing these cultural practices from the former⁷⁰. They used to follow the East Syrian Liturgy, which had originally taken shape in Seleucia-Ctesiphon and its ritual content varied immensely from the Latin liturgy introduced in India by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century⁷¹.

Church Architecture and Population

The earliest historical record that speaks of the existence of an architectural structure of church among the Christians of Kerala was the Tharisappally copper plate given to Mar Prodh and Mar Saphor in 849 AD by Ayyanadikal Thiruvadikal⁷², which refers to the church of Tharisapally being constructed in Quilon by Mar Saphor (Maruvan Saporiso), during the time between 823 and 849⁷³. Since the church of Tharisapally was constructed by Mar Saphor hailing from Persia, there is the high possibility that it must have been erected on the architectural theology of Persian Church. However Jornada says that by end of the sixteenth century almost all the churches of the St. Thomas Christians were constructed on the models of temples⁷⁴. It is evidently known that the tradition of temple architecture got

disseminated in Kerala during the period between 8th and 13th centuries AD. It is highly probable that since the same carpenters and masons who used to build temples were hired for constructing churches in Christian settlements, the Christian churches also seem to have got modeled on temple architectural format, as Jornada testifies. However, the identifying mark for the Christian churches was the huge granite cross being erected in front of them⁷⁵. Meanwhile intense theological meanings were also inscribed into the church-space, by structuring it in three levels and keeping the congregation on the lower space for participating in a liturgical celebration that runs progressively from intermediate space (bema) to apex space (madbeha), which was equated with the heavenly Jerusalem. The way the interior of the church-space was structured and the spatial articulation of East Syrian architectural theology into it made the Christian prayer house look different⁷⁶.

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All the churches of indigenous Christians, though they externally looked like temples, had a huge granite cross in front of them. The Cross of Quilon which Giovanni di Empoli saw in 1503⁷⁷ and the granite cross erected by Mar Thana (Jacob Abuna) and Mar Avu (Denha) in 1528 at Muttuchira⁷⁸ are only a few of this category, to which the crosses of Angamali and Arakuzha could also be added. These crosses used to have decorative basement with space for pouring oil and lighting lamp exactly in the same way as temple lamps were lighted during those days. Devotees used to light the oil lamps of the crosses (vilakkumadams) during the night⁷⁹, either to get their wishes fulfilled or to express their gratitude for the favours already received. These vilakkumadams also evolved as fire-preserving mechanisms particularly in the rural belts, from where the low caste people with less resource-potential to make fire or preserve fire daily could take fire for meeting their needs. Till recently the St. Thomas Christians, particularly in connection with annual church feasts, used to crawl on knees around this granite cross from the main entrance of the church either as a penitential service or as a part of the vow they had taken for the materialization of certain wishes.⁸⁰

The Portuguese had noticed that at least about 78 churches were already in existence in different parts of Kerala prior to their arrival⁸¹. However the distribution of this Christian community was not even: Quilon, Angamaly, Kaduthuruthy and Cranganore had the largest number of St. Thomas Christian population. Giovanni Empoli, who came to Quilon in 1503 estimates that there were more than 3000 St. Thomas Christians in Quilon alone, where they were called Nazareni⁸². Same is the number of Christians (3000) in Quilon according to the estimate given by the German artillerist, who accompanied Vasco da Gama in 1502/3⁸³. Tome Pires who wrote *Suma Oriental* estimates that the total number of St. Thomas Christians of Kerala varied between 60,000 and 75,000⁸⁴. In 1564⁸⁵ and in 1568⁸⁶ the total number of the St. Thomas Christians was estimated to be 1,00,000.

Eco-Systems and Patron Saints

The Christian responses to the cultural challenges around them initiated a particular process in the distribution pattern of patron saints in the Christian settlements. The St. Thomas Christians used to venerate chiefly four saints viz., St. Mary, St. George, St. Prodh and Saphor and St. Thomas, till the Portuguese intervention by the end of the sixteenth century and their churches were erected in the name of one of these saints. In the first place was blessed virgin Mary, who was the patron saint for the churches located particularly in the low-lying paddy cultivation zones like Kuravilangadu⁸⁷, Arakuzha⁸⁸, Nediassala, Nakapuzha, Manarcadu, Enammavu etc⁸⁹. These churches had St. Mary as their patron saint, who was considered as the best spiritual refuge and asylum during the times of natural calamities and adverse weather that affected the course of agricultural operations. This spiritual symbol helped to wean the Christian settlers away from the different types of fertility cults and mother-goddess-worship practices prevalent among the indigenous people of the low lying paddy cultivating zones and to get them integrated with the Christian perception of fertility⁹⁰.

A relatively significant number of Christian settlements like those of Diamper⁹¹, Kothanalloor, Parur⁹² etc., located either at the junctional points of trade routes or in areas having considerable number of trading members, had Mar Prodh and Mar Sapor as their patron saints, who

were the prominent personalities linked with Tharisapally and Manigramam merchant guild associated with the trade of Quilon. This practice of assuming patron saints from trade-related background in places having commercial importance is suggestive of the fact that it operated as a mechanism that linked spiritual life with the economic order⁹³. Later Dom Alexis de Menezes tried to change the patron saints of these churches and rename them as All Saints' churches; however believers resented the move refusing to accept the change of their patron saints⁹⁴.

The Capadocean saint St. George, who was associated with the killing of a dragon, was the next important saint venerated in the Christian settlements that appeared either in the newly cleared forest areas or on the way to the newly created spice producing pockets infested with snakes like the settlements of Edappally⁹⁵, Aruvithara⁹⁶, Muthalakodam⁹⁷ etc. Christians, who moved to inland regions for clearing forest areas and for expansion of spice-cultivation began to take St. George as their patron in their combat against the snakes in the newly cleared forest areas. In the process of fight against the physical threats from the snakes, the spiritual symbol of St. George helped to wean the Christians from the practice of worshipping serpents (as their culturally different neighbors continued to do) to the practice of venerating the killer of snakes (the very saint himself). Eventually it turned out to be a cultural symbol that bolstered the ability of man to confront and kill the snakes, if possible, rather than to fall at their mercy by feeding them, a mentally and emotionally empowering process required at a time when cultivation activities were extended to larger areas prone to snake-attacks.⁹⁸

The fourth category of saint was St. Thomas, whose name was often given to the churches that were linked by oral tradition with the apostolic preaching of St. Thomas in Kerala like Malayattoor, Mylakombu, etc⁹⁹. Mud from these churches or from the church of St. Thomas of Mylapore, where the mortal remains of St. Thomas were believed to have been kept, was sprinkled on the mother and the child as a part of the initiating ritual for admitting a mother and child after delivery¹⁰⁰.

Thus the different types of Christian settlements of the period up to 1500 developed equally different concepts of patron saints corresponding to the eco-systems in which they were located. Though

apparently there was a uniform cultural homogeneity evolving among the Christians, the rhythm of celebrations and cultural pattern as well as spiritual details evolving around the concepts of each patron saint and the respective eco-system, made each Christian settlement develop separate from the other, which converted them into cultural micro-regions.

Food Culture and Dress Culture

The synthesis between indigenous Christians and the immigrant Christians on the one hand and between non-Christians and Christians on the other hand led to a fusion of foreign and Indian food habits and dress habits. The wide variety of food items of the

Nazarani Christians like neyyappam, kallappam, avalose podi, avalose unda, achappam, ottada, uzunnappam etc., form important constituent elements of India's food culture and they seem to have evolved with the movement of Christians into low-lying rice producing zones¹⁰¹, where rice and black-gram were used to make edibles similar to the ones they had in their homelands in West Asia. The use of rice flour, coconut milk or powder and adding of toddy for fermentation for preparing toffees gave a different taste to the confectionary tradition they developed in Kerala.

Several dress habits like the use of chatta with long sleeves, mundu with jnori, neriyathu (veil) extending from head up to the feet of the ladies are apparently West Asian in origin. While the womenfolk of this community were made to confine themselves to the conservative West Asian dress culture of chatta, mundu and veil, the men followed a liberal dressing pattern, which evolved as a result of their adaptation to local habits. Women used to cover their entire body with a long veil, which stretched from head to feet. Unlike women, men used to wear mundu around their loin¹⁰². The St. Thomas Christians used to grow their hair and beard till the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The hair was tied together with a string or hair locks as to form a kudumi, into which they used to insert a small cross of gold or silver as a visible sign to distinguish themselves from the Nairs, who also had the same type of dress as that of the St. Thomas Christians¹⁰³.

Format of Administration

The bishops coming from West Asia formed the spiritual heads of the Church, while actual head of the community was jathikkukarthaviyan

or Archdeacon¹⁰⁴. Archdeacon wielded a great amount of power because of being the administrative head of this Christian community, engaged in trade, agriculture and military activities. The native rulers of Kerala never wanted to antagonize the Archdeacon fearing alienation of the resourceful Christian community from them and when there were occasions of contestations of power like the one between the Archdeacon and Archbishop Alexis de Menezes, all the local rulers stood behind the Archdeacon, despite the invitation of immense amount of wrath from the Archbishop¹⁰⁵. The priests and the members of the community owed their loyalty principally to the Archdeacon, who was the administrative head and key decision-taking figure in the community, rather than to the foreign bishop from Babylon, who was often not fluent enough in local language. However, the Archdeacon's decisions were conditioned mostly by the pulse and views of the representative bodies of the community including palli yogams, whose membership then was restricted only to aristocratic families and landed gentry. There was little scope for a matter, which was vetoed by yogam, to get implemented at any level of church activities. However this arrangement infused into the church administrative system elements of democratic practice, making decisions to emerge from the grass-root levels. The local church as a body enjoyed the prerogative as to judge such key matters including the admission of people to priesthood, administration of sacraments etc. The relative uncertainty about the availability of bishops at different time periods for catering to the spiritual needs of the Christians and their equally temporary stay in Kerala with little knowledge in the language of the land, made the Archdeacon to emerge as the key figure in the general administrative system of the St. Thomas Christians and the yogams as powerful mechanisms at the grass root level. As the feudal European notion of episcopacy as a benefice for a noble obtained from the ruler was absent in Kerala, temporality was detached from Episcopal post, which, as per, Oriental tradition was meant to be an exclusively spiritual one. Thus the type of church administration that evolved among this community turned out to be immensely different from the ecclesiological perceptions of Europe¹⁰⁶.

The foregoing discussions show that the period between ninth and sixteenth centuries witnessed the increasing merging of the Christians into the socio-cultural processes of the region, causing them to develop the identity of a trading caste for themselves, although a considerable

number of them were engaged also in spice production and military jobs. The maritime trade that brought many Persian Christians to the shores of Kerala also emitted the required amount of energy and forces for the inland movement of the traditional St. Thomas Christians for the purpose of expanding spice-cultivation by way of commodity-demands. The Chera rulers and their feudatories promoted maritime trade by conferring privileges on the foreign merchants, both Christians and Jews, in their attempts to generate wealth for the purpose of strengthening their hands and for countering the southern attacks initially from the Pandyas and later from the Cholas. The foreign Christian merchants on their turn developed a network of trade linking the spice- production centres of the hinterland with the principal seaport, in which process the inland settlements of the spice-producing St. Thomas Christians were made to develop a quasi-market mechanism in the form of *angadis* around their churches. Through these circuits there was a constant process of mixing of foreign Christians and the spice-producing St. Thomas Christians, which besides ethnic mingling led to the indigenization of church architecture and regional adaptation of food and dress cultures.

The other part of the story was that the Brahmins, who constructed caste-categories out of the existing professional groups and social classes during the period between 9th and 13th centuries in their attempt to establish hegemonic position for themselves in the society, wanted to promote Christians as a trading caste and this was a part of their strategy to weaken the commerce of their religious rivals, the Jains and the Budhists. By creating a tradition in which Christians were attributed to have the “ability” to touch and purify the polluted oil and utensils of temples and palaces of central Kerala, they were made to become the part of the caste-based social process in which they were to play the role of a social group bridging the gulf between the artisan castes and the dominant castes. The Christians on their turn kept themselves acceptable before the Brahmins and the Nairs by meticulously maintaining caste regulations of untouchability and by adhering to all cultural practices of dominant castes like wearing of sacred thread (thread (*puunuul*), tuft (*kudumi*), observance of pollution by birth and death. However, they lived their religion with a world-view shaped by the geo-physical space in which they were distributed in different parts of Kerala and correspondingly they

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developed a certain type of religious geography in which different categories of patron saints were conceived and developed for the diverse eco-systems of their habitat. In this early process of adapting Christianity to Indian situation, even the core of administration moved away from a foreign bishop to a local community leader, whose power and strength was augmented by the reinforcements provided by the representative bodies of the wealthy elites at different levels. Thus, though the Christians formed only a feeble strand within the cultural fabric India during the period up to 1500, they operated as a leavening substratum in pockets of their interaction through the economic forces that they disseminated and through the identity that they stamped, besides the ideology they upheld.

Endnotes

1. The Syriac document *Anecdota Syriaca* states that three Syrian Missionaries (two of them probably Nestorian Persians Mar Sapor and Mar Peroz or Prodh) came to Kollam in 823 AD and got leave from the king Shakirabirbi to erect a church there. K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, vol. I, New Delhi, 1982, p.273. See also M.G.S.Narayana, *Cultural Symbiosis*, 1972, Calicut, pp.31-2. The word Kurakkeni Kollam was often used in Malayalam for Quilon so as to differentiate it from another early medieval port-town known as Pandarayani Kollam, which actually corresponds to present day Koyilandy.
2. For details Meera Abraham, *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of south India*, New Delhi, 1988.
3. George Fadlo Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, Princeton, 1951, pp. 61-62; 64; 70-74; Pius Malekandathil, *The Germans, the Portuguese and India*, Münster, 1999, p.4
4. In fact the decisive battle in which the Arabs defeated the Sassanid power took place at Nihavand in 641 AD. Though the emperor Yazdirgird III fled and continued resistance, a great part of Persia came under the Arabs with his death in 651 AD. Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol.I Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam 7th-11th Centuries, New Delhi, 1999, p.9. The period after the Arab occupation, there started migration of people (including Christians and Zoroastrians) in considerable numbers, who opposed Islam, to different parts of the Indian Ocean region. These Zoroastrians laid the foundation for the Parsi community in Konkan region. See also Pius Malekandathil, "St. Thomas Christians and the Indian Ocean: 52 AD to 1500AD" in *Ephrem's Theological Journal*, vol.5, No.2, October 2001, pp.193-4
5. This fact is evident from the Tharisapally copper plate. For details see T. A Gopinatha Rao, *Travancore Archaeological Series*, vol.II, Madras, 1916, pp.66-75
6. See T. A Gopinatha Rao, *Travancore Archaeological Series*, vol.II, p.68

7. Parakkol seems to have derived from Bhara-kol or the balance by which commodities and solid materials were weighed. The literal meaning must have been balance to weigh Bharam-units. Each bharam corresponds to twenty thulams or 200 kilograms. Probably it must have been the crude form of vellikol that existed till recently as a weighing mechanism in Kerala.
8. This also seems to be a device for measuring solid articles of trade like para, which was in use till recently. Probably it must have been used for bulk-measurements of rice and pepper. Commodity measured by one panchakandy must have been equivalent to five kandis, another type of weight prevalent in Kerala till recently. Or it could also refer to a type of weights generally spaced out into five(panchakandy as a device with pancha-khandas or five measuring segments
9. Kappan seems to have been a device to measure liquid items. It must have been the crude form of thudam device with a handle, with the help of which oil was measured till recently. The word kappan must have been derived from “thappu pathram”
10. T. A Gopinatha Rao, Travancore Archaeological Seiries, vol.II,p.68
11. Walter de Gray Birch (ed.), The Commentaries of the Great Afonso Dalboquerque: Second Viceroy of India, New York, 1875, p.15
12. As mentioned in the first plate of Tharisapally Copper plate. Four families of Ezhavas and eight Ezhakkaiyyar T. A Gopinatha Rao, Travancore Archaeological Series, vol.II, p.67
13. As mentioned in the second plate of Tharisapally Copper plate. T. A Gopinatha Rao, Travancore Archaeological Series, vol.II, p.68
14. As mentioned in the second plate of Tharisapally Copper plate. T. A Gopinatha Rao, Travancore Archaeological Series, vol.II, p.67
15. As mentioned in the first plate of Tharisapally Copper plate. T. A Gopinatha Rao, Travancore Archaeological Series, vol.II, p.68
16. Ibid., pp.63-7
17. Ibid., pp.68-71
18. Ibid., pp.67; 71
19. Ibid., pp. 68;71
20. M.G.S.Narayana, Perumals of Kerala,Calicut, 1996, p.155; For a discussion on the different types and cultural composition of Manigramam guild see Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple and the Early Medieval Agrarian System, Sukapuram, 1992, p.92; Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, Kerala Charithram, Sukapuram, 1991, pp.135-6
21. Ibid., pp. 68;71
22. Pius Malekandathil, “Christians and the Cultural Shaping of India in the First Millennium”, in Journal of St.Thomas Christians, vol.17, No.1, January-March, 2006, p.10
23. The evolving process of feudalization in the low-lying rice cultivating space is analyzed by Rajan Gurukkal. See Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple and the Early Medieval Agrarian System , Sukapuram, 1992.
24. A typical case of this nature for the later period is mentioned by MGS Narayanan in the instance of privileges given to Joseph Rabban by Bhaskara Ravi Varma 974

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- AD. See M.G.S.Narayanan, "Further Studies on the Jewish Copper Plates of Cochin", *The Indian Historical Review*, vol.XXIX, p.69.
25. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1972, pp.31-3.
26. Pius Malekandathil, "Christians and the Cultural Shaping of India in the First Millennium", p.11
27. T. A Gopinatha Rao, *Travancore Archaeological Series*, vol.II, pp.68;71
28. The intensity of this conflict between the evolving Hindu religion and heterodox sects like Buddhism and Jainism, is very much evident in the Bhakti literature of this period. See R.Chambakalakshmi, "From Devotion and Dissent to Dominance: The Bhakti of the Tamil Alvars and Nayanars" in R. Chambakalakshmi and S. Gopalan(eds.), *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar*, 2001, p.143
29. For details of Koulam Mali mentioned in Genizza papers see S.D.Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, Princeton, 1972, pp. 64
30. The earliest Arab source is Suleiman's account of 841AD entitled *Salsalat-al-Taverika*. For other Arab sources on Kollam see George Fadlo Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, Princeton, 1951, pp.70-74
31. For details on Chinese references to Kollam, see Haraprasad Ray, "Historical Contacts Between Quilon and China", in Pius Malekandathil and Jamal Mohammed (ed.), *The Portuguese, Indian Ocean and European Bridgeheads: Festschrift in Honour of Prof.K.S.Mathew, Tellicherry/ Lisbon*, 2001, pp.386-8.
32. Pius Malekandathil, "Christians and the Cultural Shaping of India in the First Millennium", p.15
33. Suleiman's account titled *Salsalat-al-Taverika* was written around 841
34. George Fadlo Hourani,op.cit.,pp.61-74;Pius Malekandathil, *The Portuguese, the Germans and India*, p. 4
35. In return he was conferred with seventy-two privileges and prerogatives of aristocracy in about 1000 AD by the Chera ruler. For details see Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History* (Kottayam, 1970); M.G.S.Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala* (Trivandrum, 1972),p.82; Pius Malekandathil, "Winds of Change and Links of Continuities: A Study on the Merchant Groups of Kerala and the Channels of their Trade, 1000-1800", in *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol.50, No.2, 2007, p.263
36. M.N.Adler, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, London, 1907, pp.63-4
37. For details on Jewish traders in Quilon see S.D. Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, pp.62-64; S.D.Goitein, "Portrait of a Medieval India Trader: Three Letters from the Cairo Geniza", in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*,(1987), XLVIII, 457-460
38. For details on Chinese contacts with Quilon see W.W.Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fifteenth Century", *T'oung Pao*, vol. XV, Leiden, 1914", pp. 437-8. 38. Henry Yule and Henry Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol.III,Nendeln/Liechtenstein, 1967,pp. 63, 133-7, 141, 217
39. C.Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911.

40. For a detailed discussion on these angadis as markets see Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin and the Maritime Trade of India*, pp.50-80; For details on the churches having angadis see Pius Malekandathil(ed.), *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar, Kochi, 2003*(henceforth mentioned as Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*), pp.126-462
41. A.Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charitram (Malayalam)*, Kottayam, 1973,p.135. The grant made to these two Christian merchants was recorded in the form of a vattezhuthu inscription on a granite slab, 74 inches by 51 inches, lying at the foot of the open air cross in front of the Catholic church at Thazhekkadu near Irinjalakuda.
42. *Reisebericht des Franciscus Dalbuquerque vom 27.December 1503*, in B.Greiff, *Tagebuch des Lucas Rem aus den Jahren 1494-1541:Ein Beitrag zur Handelsgeschichte der Stadt Augsburg*, Augsburg, 1861,p.146. Genevieve Bouchon and Jean Aubin identify Korran with a native Christian guild. See Jean Aubin, "L'apprentissage de l'Inde .Cochin 1503-1504", in *Moyen Orient et Ocean Indien*, 1988; Genevieve Bouchon, "Calicut at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century", in *The Asian Seas 1500-1800:Local Societies, European Expansions and the Portuguese*, *Revista da Cultura*,vol.I, 1991,p.44
43. *Nationalbibliothek inWien*, Nr.6948; Christine von Rohr, *Neue Quellen zur zweiten Indienfahrt Vasco da Gamas*, Leipzig,1939,p.51
44. Raymundo Antonio Bulhão Pato, (ed.), *Cartas de Affonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*,tom.II, Lisboa, 1884, pp. 30; 258-259; 268
45. *Ibid.*,tom.VI, 114;398-399
46. For details on the origin of Indian Christians see Mathias.Mundadan, *Sixteenth Century Traditions of St.Thomas Christians*, Bangalore, 1970, pp.38-67 Joseph C. Panjikaran, "Christianity in Malabar with Special Reference to the St.Thomas Christians of the Syro- Malabar Rite", in *Orientalia*, vol.VI, 1926, pp.103-5; Jonas Thaliath, *The Synod of Diamper*, Rome, 1958; Fr.Bernard, *The History of the St.Thomas Christians*, Pala, 1916; Placid J.Podippara, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay, 1970
47. The dating of these Christian settlements and the founding of their churches is done on the basis of information from W. Hermann, *Die Kirche der Thomaschristen: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Orientalischen Kirchen*, Hütersloh, 1877,pp.673-769; Fr.Bernard, *The History of the St.Thomas Christians*, pp.296-327. The year of founding of these churches is taken from the respective diocesan directories, which is further cross-checked with the help of field-study, in which the statues, the church-bells, stone inscriptions, church-songs (pallipattu)etc. are used to verify their chronology. See also P.J.Thomas, *Malayala Sahithyavum Krithianikalum*, Kottayam, 1961, pp.63-4; Pius Malekandathil, "St.Thomas Christians and the Indian Ocean", pp.186,194-95, 198-99.
48. Henri Yule (ed.), *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol.III,Nendeln/Liechtenstein, 1967, pp.216-218, 248-257.
49. Antonio da Silva Rego (ed.), *Documentação para a Historia das Missões*, vol.II, pp.175-6. For example, see ANTT, *Cartas dos Vice-Reis da India*, doc.95. See also E.R.Hambye, "Medieval Christianity in India: The Eastern Church", in

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- Christianity in India, ed.by E.R.Hambye and H.C.Perumalil, Alleppey, 1972, p.34; Samuel Matteer, *The Land of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and its People*, New Delhi, 1991, pp.237-8
50. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo*, Coimbra, 1606. See particularly pages 132-133; 192-269
51. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, pp.116-118; 252-3
52. *Ibid.*, p.117
53. O.M.Varghese Olickal, *Vazhakulam:Oru Charithra Veekshanam*, Muvattupuzha, 1985, pp.15-16
54. Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, *Cartas de Dio a D.João de Castro*, fol. 93, Letter of Damião Vaz to Dom Alvares de Castro, dated 6-8-1547; Georg Schurhammer, *Die Zeitgenössischen Quellen zur Geschichte Portugiesisch-Asiens und seiner Nachbarländer zur Zeit des hl. Franz Xavier (1538-1552)*, Rom, 1962, No.3224, p.212.
55. See Historical Archives of Goa, *Livro das Monções*, No.8 (1601-2), fol.106. For details on the military expertise of these Christians see Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, pp.252-3
56. Josef Wick(ed.), *Documenta Indica*, vol.III, Rome, 1960, p.801
57. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, pp. 116-8; 129-35; 165-8
58. Pius Malekandathil, “Kothamangalam Roopathayude Charitra Paschatalavum Kraisthava Koottayamakalude Verukalum”, in *Anpinte Anpathandu (Kothamangalam Roopathayude Charitram, 1957-2007)*, edited by Pius Malekandathil, Kothamangalam, 2008, p.38
59. This coincided with the attempts of the Brahmins to create as much distance as possible between the actual tiller (pulaya) and the owner (brahmin)by constructing different types of intermediaries in the social ladder. In the process of gradation, the naduvazhi chief was kept at the top, followed by uralar(land owners and temple trustees), karalar (tenants and intermediary landholders), kudiayar(settled tenant cultivator) as well as adiyar (bonded service classes) on the lowest strata. For details see M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, “The Traditional Land system in Kerala: The Problem of Change and Perspective”, in Logan Centenary seminar on Land Reforms in Kerala, Kozhikode, 1981; M.G.S.Narayanan, *Social and Economic Conditions during the Kulasekhara Empire(800 AD. to 1124 AD)*, Unpublished Ph.D.thesis, University of Kerala, 1972
60. The common saying was “Paulose thottal athu sudhamayidum” . It will get purified if it is touched by a Christian(Paulose). See P.G.Rajendran, *Kshetra Vijnanakosam*, Kottayam, 2000
61. BNL, *Reservados Cod.No.536. Noticias do reino do Malabar anteriores a chegada dos Portugueses e ate ao sec.XVIII. Geografia, Clima, Etnais, Linguas, Costumes, Política, Religiões*, confronto entre Carmelitas, e Jesuitas e a Cristandade de São Tome, fol.6
62. For a details of these borrowed customs that existed till the Diamper synod of 1599 see Scaria Szacharia , *The Acts and decrees of the Synod of Diamper*, Edamattom, 1994.
63. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada*, p.258

64. Leslie Brown, *The Indian Christians of St.Thomas*, p.177
65. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, p.251
66. Ines G.Zupanov, *Disputed Mission*, New Delhi, 2001, pp.58;93-8; D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, Bangalore, 1939, vol.I, pp.300-60
67. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, pp. 251,257; Leslie Brown, *The Indian Christians of St.Thomas*, Cambridge, 1982,pp. 205-6
68. Placid Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay, 1970
69. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, pp.57; 124; 212 -14
70. *Ibid.*, pp.212-4
71. Eugene Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, tran.by E.R.Hambye, Calcutta, 1957; Placid Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay, 1970 [©!]
72. For details see T. A Gopinatha Rao, *Travancore Archaeological Series*, vol.II, Madras, 1916,pp.66-75.
73. *Ibid*
74. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, pp.29; 244 [©!]
75. *Ibid.*, pp.244-5
76. Pius Malekandathil, “Common Heritage of the St.Thomas Christians”, in *Journal of St.Thomas Christians*, vol.19, No.3, July- September, 2008, pp.11-2
77. Giovanni di Empoli, “Viaggio fatto nell’India per Gionni da Empoli fattore su la nave del serenissimo re di Portugallo per conto de marchioni di Lisbona”, in G.B.Ramusio(ed.), *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi nel qual si contiene la descrizione dell’Africa, et del Paese del Prete Joanni, con varii Viaggi, dal Mar Rosso a Calicut, et in fin all’isole Molucche, dove nascono le Spetieri, et la Navigazione attorno il Mondo*, Venice, 1550,fol.57
78. *Kerala Society Papers* , vol.I, Trivandrum,, 1928, pp.253ff
79. Antonio Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, p.194
80. Pius Malekandathil, “Common Heritage of the St.Thomas Christians”, p.9
81. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, pp.120-497
82. Giovanni di Empoli, “Viaggio fatto nell’India per Gionni da Empoli fattore su la nave del serenissimo re di Portugallo per conto de marchioni di Lisbona”, in G.B.Ramusio(ed.), *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi nel qual si contiene la descrizione dell’Africa, et del Paese del Prete Joanni, con varii Viaggi, dal Mar Rosso a Calicut, et in fin all’isole Molucche, dove nascono le Spetieri, et la Navigazione attorno il Mondo*, Venice, 1550,fol.57; Pius Malekandathil, “The Portuguese and the St.Thomas Christians :1500-1570” , in *The Portuguese and the socio Cultural Changes in India, 1500-1800*, ed.by K.S.Mathew, Teotonio R de Souza and Pius Malekandathil, *Fundação Oriente*, Lisboa, 2001,p.128
83. See the report of the German artillerists given in Gernot Giertz, *Vasco da Gama, die Entdeckung des Seewegs nach Indien :ein Augenzugebericht 1497-1499*, Tübingen, 1980, p.188. For the detailed report of the same see Horst G.W.Nüsser, *Frühe Deutsche Entdecker: Asien in Berichten unbekannter deutscher Augenzeugen(1502-6)*, München, 1980, 126-40
84. Tome Pires, *A Suma Oriental de Tome Pires e o Livro de Francisco Rodrigues*, ed.by Armando Cortesão, Coimbra, 1978, p.180. In this connection the recent research works of the Portuguese scholars like João Teles e Cunha, João Paulo

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- Oliveira e Costa and Luis Filipe F.R. Thomaz deserve special mention because of the objective painstaking research.. See João Teles e Cunha “De Diamper a Mattancherry: Caminhos e Encruzilhadas da Igreja Malabar e Catolica na India: Os Primeiros Tempos(1599-1624)” in *Anais de Historia de Alem-Mar*, vol.V, 2004,pp.283-368; João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, “Os Portugueses e a Cristandade Siro-Malabar(1498-1530),in *Studia*, 52, Lisboa, 1994; Luis Filipe F.R.Thomaz, “ Were Saint Thomas Christians Looked upon as Heretics?”, in *The Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in India, 1500-1800*, ed.by K.S.Mathew, Teotonio R.de Souza and Pius Malekandathil, Fundação Oriente, Lisboa, 2001,pp.27-92
85. Josef Wicki(ed.), *Documenta Indica*, vol.VI, Roma, 1948, p.180
 86. *Ibid.*, vol.VII, p.475
 87. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes.*, p.50, note 65; p.436, note 89
 88. *Ibid.*, p. 432, note 83
 89. Paulinus of St.Bartholomew, *India Orientalis Christiana*, Roma, 1794, p.267; Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, pp. .50, note 65; 432, note 83; 436, note 89;443, note 104
 90. Pius Malekandathil, “Christians and the Cultural Shaping of India in the First Millennium”,pp.14-5
 91. 91. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, p. 302-3, note 1
 92. *Ibid.*, p.449, note 108
 93. Pius Malekandathil, “Christians and the Cultural Shaping of India in the First Millennium”,p.14
 94. Antonio Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, p.302.Later these churches were given the names of St.Protasius and St.Gervasius, whose names sound phonetically similar to those of Mar Prodh and Sapor.
 95. Antonio Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, p.425, note 75
 96. *Ibid.*, p.441
 97. *Ibid.*, p.433, note 86
 98. Pius Malekandathil, “Christians and the Cultural Shaping of India in the First Millennium”, p.14
 99. Paulinus of St.Bartholomew, *India Orientalis Christiana*, p.267
 100. Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, p.244
 101. Pius Malekandathil, “Christians and the Cultural Shaping of India in the First Millennium”,p.13
 102. For details on the dress culture of the Christians till the Diamper Synod, see Antonio de Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, pp. 249-259
 103. *Ibid.*, p.251
 104. Jacob Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India*, Kottayam, 1972
 105. Antonio Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, pp.162; 164-5;176;190;200-4;220-1
 106. Pius Malekandathil, “Common Heritage of the St.Thomas Christians”, pp.13-14

(Dr. Pius Malekandathil)

Communism and Catholicism

In its more general signification communism refers to any social system in which all property, or at least all productive property, is owned by the group, or community, instead of by individuals. Thus understood it comprises communistic anarchism, socialism, and communism in the strict sense. Communistic anarchism (as distinguished from the philosophic variety) would abolish not only private property, but political government. Socialism means the collective ownership and management not of all property, but only of the material agencies of production. Communism in the strict sense demands that both production-goods, such as land, railways, and factories, and consumption-goods, such as dwellings, furniture, food, and clothing, should be the property of the whole community. Previous to the middle of the nineteenth century the term was used in its more general sense, even by socialists. Marx and Engels called the celebrated document in which they gave to socialism its first “scientific” expression, the

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“Communist Manifesto”. They could scarcely do otherwise, since the word Socialism was used for the first time in the year 1833, in England. Before long, however, most of the followers of the new movement preferred to call their economic creed Socialism and themselves Socialists. Today no socialist who believes that individuals should be allowed to retain ownership of consumption-goods would class himself as a communist. Hence the word is at present pretty generally employed in the narrower sense. Its use to designate merely common ownership of capital is for the most part confined to the uninformed, and to those who seek to injure socialism by giving it a bad name.

Communism in the strict sense is also distinguished from socialism by the fact that it usually connotes a greater degree of common life. In the words of the Rev. W.D.P. Bliss, “socialism puts its emphasis on common *production* and *distribution*; communism, on *life* in common” (“Handbook of Socialism”, p.12). Communism aims, therefore, at a greater measure of equality than socialism. It would obtain more uniformity in the matter of marriage, education, food, clothing, dwellings, and the general life of the community. Hence the various attempts that have been made by small groups of persons living a common life to establish common ownership of industry and common enjoyment of its products, have generally been described as experiments in communism. In fact socialism, in its proper sense of ownership and operation of capital-instruments by the entire democratic State, has never been tried anywhere. This calls to mind the further distinction that communism, even as a present-day ideal, implies the organization of industry and life by small federated communities, rather than by a centralized State. William Morris thus distinguishes them, and hopes that socialism will finally develop into communism (“Modern Socialism”, edited by R.C.K. Ensor, p. 88). Combining all these notes into a formal definition, we might say that complete communism means the common ownership of both industry and its products by small federated communities, living a common life.

History

The earliest operation of the communistic principle of which we have any record, took place in Crete about 1300 B.C. All the citizens were educated by the State in a uniform way, and all ate at the public tables. According to tradition, it was this experiment that moved

Lycurgus to set up his celebrated regime in Sparta. Under his rule, Plutarch informs us, there was a common system of education, gymnastics, and military training for all the youth of both sexes. Public meals and public sleeping apartments were provided for all the citizens. The land was redistributed so that all had equal shares. Although marriage existed, it was modified by a certain degree of promiscuity in the interest of race-culture. The principles of equality and common life were also enforced in many other matters. As Plutarch says, “no man was at liberty to live as he pleased, the city being like one great camp where all had their stated allowance”. In several other respects, however, the regime of Lycurgus fell short of normal communism: though the land was equally distributed it was privately owned; the political system was not a democracy but a limited monarchy, and later an oligarchy; and the privileges of citizenship and equality were not enjoyed by the entire population. The Helots, who performed all the disagreeable work, were slaves in the worst sense of that term. Indeed, the purpose of the whole organization was military and political rather than economic and social. As Lycurgus was inspired by the Cretan experiment, so Plato was impressed by the achievement of Lycurgus. His “Republic” describes an ideal commonwealth in which there was to be community of property, meals, and even of women. The State was to control education, marriage, births, the occupation of the citizens, and the distribution and enjoyment of goods. It would enforce perfect equality of conditions and careers for all citizens and for both sexes. Plato’s motive in outlining this imaginary social order was individual welfare, not State aggrandizement. He wanted to call the attention of the world to a State which was unique in that it was not composed of two classes constantly at war with each other, the rich and the poor. But his model commonwealth was to have slaves.

The communistic principle governed for a time the lives of the first Christians of Jerusalem. In the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we learn that none of the brethren called anything that he possessed his own; that those who had houses and lands sold them and laid the price at the feet of the Apostles, who distributed “to everyone according as he had need”. Inasmuch as they made no distinction between citizens and slaves, these primitive Christians were in advance of the communism of Plato. Their communism was,

moreover, entirely voluntary and spontaneous. The words of St. Peter to Ananias prove that individual Christians were quite free to retain their private property. Finally, the arrangement did not long continue, nor was it adopted by any of the other Christian bodies outside of Jerusalem. Hence the assertion that Christianity was in the beginning communistic is a gross exaggeration. And the claim that certain Fathers of the Church, notably Ambrose, Augustine, Basil, Chrysostom, and Jerome, condemned all private property and advocated communism, is likewise unwarranted. Most of the religious, that is, ascetic and monastic orders and communities which have existed, both within and without the Christian fold, exhibit some of the features of communism. The Buddhist monks in India, the Essenes in Judea, and the Therapeutæ in Egypt, all excluded private ownership and led a common life. The religious communities of the Catholic Church have always practised common ownership of goods, both productive (whenever they possessed these) and non-productive. Their communism differs, however, from that of the economic communists in that its primary object is not and never has been social reform or a more just distribution of goods. The spiritual improvement of the individual member and the better fulfilment of their charitable mission, such as instructing the young or caring for the sick and infirm, are the ends that they have chiefly sought. These communities insist, moreover, that their mode of life is adapted only to the few. For these reasons we find them always apart from the world, making no attempt to bring in any considerable portion of those without, and observing celibacy. One important feature of economic communism is wanting to nearly all religious communities, namely, common ownership and management of the material agents of production from which they derive their sustenance. In this respect they are more akin to wage-earning bodies than to communistic organizations.

During the Middle Ages communism was held, and in various degrees practised, by several heretical sects. In this they professed to imitate the example of the primitive Christians. Their communism was, therefore, like that of the monastic orders, religious rather than economic. On the other hand, the motive of the religious orders was Christ's counsel to seek perfection. Chief among the communistic heretical sects were: the Catharists, the Apostolics, the Brothers and

Sisters of the Free Spirit, the Hussites, the Moravians, and the Anabaptists. None of them presents facts of any great importance to the student of communism. The next notable event in the history of communism is the appearance of St. Thomas More's "Utopia" (1516). The purpose of this romantic account of an ideal commonwealth was economic, not military or religious. The withdrawal of large tracts of land from cultivation to be used for sheep-raising, the curtailment of the tenant's rights to the common, and the rise in rents had already begun to produce that insecurity, poverty, and pauperism which later on became so distressing in England, and which still constitute a most perplexing problem. By way of contrast to these conditions, More drew his ideal picture of the State of Utopia. In his conception of industrial conditions, needs, and tendencies, More was ages ahead of his time. "I can have", he says, "no other notion of all the other governments that I see or know than that they are a conspiracy of the rich, who on pretence of managing the public only pursue their private ends, and devise all the ways and arts they can find out: first, that they may without danger preserve all that they have so ill acquired, and then that they may engage the poor to toil and labour for them at as low rates as possible, and oppress them as much as they please." This reads more like an outburst from some radical reformer of the twentieth century than the testimony of a state chancellor of the early sixteenth. In "Utopia" all goods are held and enjoyed in common, and all meals are taken at the public tables. But there is no community of wives. The disagreeable work is done by slaves, but the slaves are all convicted criminals. Concerning both the family and the dignity and rights of the individual, "Utopia" is, therefore, on higher ground than the "Republic". There are several other descriptions of ideal States which owe their inspiration to "Utopia". The most important are: "Oceana" (1656) by James Harrington; "The City of the Sun" (1625) by Thomas Campanella; and Francis Bacon's "New Atlantis" (1629). None of them has been nearly so widely read nor so influential as their prototype. Campanella, who was a Dominican monk, represents the authorities of "The City of the Sun" as compelling the best-developed women to mate with the best-developed men, in order that the children may be as perfect as possible. Children are to be trained by the State not by the parents, for they "are bred for the preservation of the species and not for individual pleasure".

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The comprehensive criticism of, and revolt against social institutions carried on by French writers in the eighteenth century naturally included theories for the reconstruction of the economic order. Gabriel de Mably (*Doutes proposés aux philosophes économiques*, 1768) who seems to have borrowed partly from Plato and partly from Rousseau, declared that community of goods would secure equality of condition and the highest welfare of the race; but he shrank from advocating this as a practical remedy for the ills of his own time. Morelly (*Code de la nature*, 1755) agreed with Rousseau that all social evils were due to institutions, and urged the ownership and management of all property and industry by the State. Both de Mably and Morelly were apostate priests. Morelly's views were adopted by one of the French Revolutionists, F. N. Babeuf, who was the first modern to take practical steps toward the formation of a communistic society. His plans included compulsory labour on the part of all, and public distribution of the product according to individual needs. To convert his theories into reality, he founded the "Society of Equals" (1796) and projected an armed insurrection; but the conspirators were soon betrayed and their leader guillotined (1797). Count Henri de Saint-Simon, whose theories received their final shape in his "Nouveau Christianisme" (1825), did not demand common ownership of all property. Hence he is looked upon as the first socialist rather than as a communist. He was the first to emphasize the division of modern society into employers and workingmen, and the first to advocate a reconstruction of the industrial and political order on the basis of labour and in the particular interest of the working classes. According to his view, the State should become the director of industry, assigning tasks in proportion to capacity and rewards in proportion to work. He is also a socialist rather than a communist in his desire that reforms should be brought about by the central Government, instead of by local authority or voluntary associations. Charles Fourier (*Traité de l'association domestique-agricole*, 1822) did not even ask for the abolition of all capital. Yet he was more of a communist than Saint-Simon because his plans were to be carried out by the local communities, to which he gave the name of "phalanxes", and because the members were to live a common life. All would dwell in one large building called the "phalansterie". Tasks were to be assigned with some regard to the preferences of the individual, but there were to be frequent changes of occupation.

Every worker would get a minimum wage adequate to a comfortable livelihood. The surplus product would be divided among labour, capital, and talent, but in such a way that those doing the most disagreeable work would obtain the highest compensation. Marriage would be terminable by the parties themselves. An attempt to establish a phalanx at Versailles in 1832 resulted in complete failure.

Etienne Cabet drew up a communistic programme in his "Voyage en Icarie" (1840), which was modelled upon the work of Sir Thomas More. He would abolish private property and private education, but not marriage nor the family life. Goods were to be produced and distributed by the community as a whole, and there was to be complete equality among all its members. In 1848 he emigrated with a band of his disciples to America, and established the community of Icaria in Texas. In 1849 they moved to the abandoned Mormon settlement of Nauvoo, Illinois. Here the community prospered for several years, until the usual solvent appeared in the shape of internal dissension. In 1856 the small minority that sided with Cabet settled at Cheltenham, near St. Louis, while the greater number moved to Southern Iowa, where they established a new community to which they gave the old name of Icaria. The latter settlement flourished until 1878, when there began a final series of disruptions, secessions, and migrations. The last band of Icarians was dissolved in 1895. At that time the community numbered only twenty-one members; in Nauvoo there were five hundred. Icaria has been called "the most typical experiment ever made in democratic communism" and "more wonderful than any other similar colony, in that it endured so long without any dogmatic basis". The Icarians practised no religion. In his "Organisation du travail" (1840) Louis Blanc demanded that the State establish national workshops, with a view to ultimate State ownership and management of all production. After the Revolution of 1848 the French Government did introduce several national workshops, but it made no honest effort to conduct them according to the ideas of M. Blanc. They were all unsuccessful and short-lived. Like Saint-Simon, Louis Blanc was a socialist rather than a communist in his theories of social reorganization, property, and individual freedom. From his time forward all the important theories and movements concerning the reorganization of society, in the other countries of Europe as well as in France, fall properly under the head of socialism. The remainder of

the history of communism describes events that occurred in the United States. In his "American Communities" William A. Hinds enumerates some thirty-five different associations in which communistic principles were either partially or wholly put into operation.

Generalizations drawn from communistic experiments

The history of communistic societies suggests some interesting and important generalizations.

First

All but three of the American communities, namely those founded by Robert Owen, the Icarians, and the Fourieristic experiments, and absolutely all that enjoyed any measure of success, were organized primarily for religious ends under strong religious influences, and were maintained on a basis of definite religious convictions and practices. Many of their founders were looked upon as prophets. The religious bond seems to have been the one force capable of holding them together at critical moments of their history. Mr. Hinds, who is himself a firm believer in communism, admits that there must be unity of belief either for or against religion. The importance of the spiritual and ascetic elements is further shown by the fact that nearly all the more successful communities either enjoined, or at least preferred, celibacy. If communism needs the ascetic element to this extent it is evidently unsuited for general adoption.

Second

It would seem that where religion and asceticism are not among the primary ends, community of wives as well as of property easily suggests itself to communists as a normal and logical feature of their system. Even Campanella declared that "all private property is acquired and improved for the reason that each one of us by himself has his own home and wife and children". Speaking of the decline of the Oneida Community, Mr. Hinds says: "The first step out of communism was taken when 'mine and thine' were applied to husband and wife; then followed naturally an exclusive interest in children; then the desire to accumulate individual property for their present and future use." The founder of this community was of opinion that if the ordinary principles of marriage are maintained, communistic associations will present greater temptations to unlawful love than ordinary society.

Communism therefore seems to face the Scylla of celibacy and the Charybdis of promiscuity.

Third

All the American communities except those founded by Owen, were composed of picked and select souls who were filled with enthusiasm and willing to make great sacrifices for their ideal. Owen admitted recruits indiscriminately, but keenly regretted it afterwards; for he recognized it as one of the chief causes of premature failure. Moreover, the other communities separated themselves from and discouraged contact with the outside world. Most of the deserters were members who had violated this injunction, and become enamoured of worldly ways.

Fourth

The success attained by the American communities was in a very large measure due to exceptionally able, enthusiastic, and magnetic leaders. As soon as these were removed from leadership their communities almost invariably began to decline rapidly. This fact and the facts mentioned in the last paragraph add weight to the conclusions drawn from the first two, namely that communism is utterly unsuited to the majority.

Fifth

It is possible for small groups of choice spirits, especially when actuated by motives of religion and asceticism, to maintain for more than a century a communistic organization in contentment and prosperity. The proportion of laziness is smaller and the problem of getting work done simpler than is commonly assumed. And the habit of common life does seem to root out a considerable amount of human selfishness.

Finally

The complete equality sought by communism is a well-meant but mistaken interpretation of the great moral truths, that, as persons and in the sight of God, all human beings are equal; and that all have essentially the same needs and the same ultimate destiny. In so far as they are embodied in the principle of common ownership, these truths have found varied expressions in various countries and

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civilizations. Many economic historians maintain that common ownership was everywhere the earliest form of land tenure. It still prevails after a fashion in the country districts of Russia. Within the last half-century, the sphere of common or public ownership has been greatly extended throughout almost all of the Western world, and it is certain to receive still wider expansion in the future. Nevertheless, the verdict of experience, the nature of man, and the attitude of the Church, all assure us that complete communism will never be adopted by any considerable section of any people. While the Church sanctions the principle of voluntary communism for the few who have a vocation to the religious life, she condemns universal, compulsory, or legally enforced communism, inasmuch as she maintains the natural right of every individual to possess private property. She has reprobated communism more specifically in the Encyclical "Rerum Novarum" of Pope Leo XIII. For the theories condemned in that document under the name of socialism certainly include communism as described in these pages.

The Vimochana Samaram (or “Liberation Struggle”)

The Vimochana Samaram (or “liberation struggle”) was a movement in 1959 in the Indian State of Kerala by the combined forces of the Catholic Church, the Nair Service Society, and the Indian Union Muslim League. The movement was against the policies that were being enacted by the Communist government under the Chief Minister E.M.S. Namboodiripad.

There were two main bill being proposed by the Kerala Communist administration.

The Education bill

The Education bill was actually the immediate cause of the Vimochana Samaram. The bill was proposed by the then-Education Minister Joseph Mundassery. Mundassery was known for being a literary critic and professor at St. Thomas College in Trichur, Kerala. As a professor, Mundassery observed the corruption prevalent in colleges during that era. Most of the educational institutions were administered by the Christian churches, however, they received government funding. Corrupt acts included teachers receiving very

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low wage and non-Christian students being disadvantaged when applying for admission. Joseph Mundassery wanted to reverse this trend and universalize education for all resident in Kerala by introducing the Education bill. This bill introduced regulations to working conditions, a removal of student “quotas” favoring Christian students, and allowing teachers to receive fair salary directly from the government. However, the Catholic Church and other Christian clergyman portrayed this policy as an attack on religious and minority freedom when in reality, this bill was meant only to halt corruption in educational institutions. That didn’t stop the bishops from sending pastoral letters to the churches in their dioceses which portrayed Mundassery and the Communist government as “godless” and a threat to their religion. In reality, the pastoral letters were nothing more than propaganda at best! In fact, the Catholic Church invented the word propaganda!

Agrarian Reform bill

In pre-independence Kerala up to the 1950’s, a sort of feudal system dominated the economic platform. There were two classes: the *Jenmi* (or landlords), who were mostly Brahmin (priest), Nair (aristocrats and warriors), and Syrian Christians; and the *Kudikidappukar*, the agricultural laborers who were basically low-caste slaves. The Agrarian Reform Bill address the rampant socioeconomic imbalance prevalent in Kerala at the time. This bill shifted land ownership from the *jenmi* to the *kudikidappukkar* laborers who worked on the land. Obviously upper-caste Hindus and Syrian Christians didn’t appreciate the fact that the proposed bill was infringing on their rights to drive slaves for their own personal profit. Therefore, they fought back through the Vimochana Samaran.

Kerala Crisis (1957-1959): First Litmus Test of Indian Democracy

The political crisis that unfolded in Kerala exactly a decade after independence was probably (one of the) first true litmus test for the Indian democracy- a test that the country certainly did not pass. It was a political clash involving violence, ideologies, populism, religion and ethnicities in which no actor was blameless, a political theatre that has been repeated innumerable times since. It is also a personal story, one of leaders - all of whom with the best of intentions – struggling with forces bigger than themselves.

In 1957, the Communist Party of India won Kerala's assembly elections by a slim majority, forming the first communist state government in the country. At the height of Cold War (five years to Cuban Missile Crisis), this generated tremendous interest from around the world as one of the first democratically-elected communist governments. There were concerns within India as well including New Delhi.

However, Jawaharlal Nehru, having just returned as Prime Minister in the second national elections, had no qualms. While he saw Indian communists as out of step with contemporary India, he was willing to give the new democratically-elected state government a chance. He was further reassured by the communist party's promise to act within the constitutional bounds.

The CPI Chief Minister became EMS Namboodiripad, a highly intelligent and dedicated leader, author of several books including a definitive history of Kerala and well-known for his commitment to the communist cause.

The trouble began with an education bill introduced by EMS soon after assuming his post. The bill pushed for better wages and working conditions for the teachers in private schools and colleges. The Catholic Church in the state, which ran many such educational institutions, saw the bill as an encroachment of their power. So did the Nair community, which had charitable schools of its own. For the church, especially, schools played a crucial role in their religious agenda.

The local Congress party members, who had just lost the election to the communists, saw this as an opportunity. They galvanized the aggrieved parties into state-wide agitations which were termed as the "Liberation Struggle". To further complicate the matters, leadership of this struggle was taken up by a Nair leader named Mannath Padmanabha Pillai. Pillai was crucial to the movement because of his unimpeachable reputation for honesty, which gave him a political aura similar (although much less in degree) to that of Mahatma Gandhi. The agitators now had a "saint" leading them, a fact that brought support from all corners of the state.

The state was plagued by agitations, strikes and protests. While the protesters employed mob violence and rioting, the government resorted to lathi charge and firing. Around 150,000 protesters were jailed and there were some 248 lathi-charges and many protesters were killed.

Mannath Pillai

Nehru, too, bemoaned the violence. In principle, he had had little objection to the education bill. Publicly, he maintained neutrality, refusing to intervene. Privately, he admonished EMS for his government's excesses and tried to rein in Congress party workers. But he failed to change minds on either side. Communists saw this as a conspiracy by the Congress (something that is still maintained in the communist folklore). Local Congress workers, on the other hand, were encouraged by sympathies of other national leaders including Indira Gandhi.

However, parallel to this crisis, Nehru was also undergoing a personal transformation. Until recently, Nehru had seen some merit in the economic theories of communism. He was certainly not known to harbour the bitter antagonism against communism that many democrats of his time had. But recent developments in China and Soviet Union had left him disappointed, pushing him to change his views and political philosophy to a great extent. Consequence was a growing dislike for communism, and especially as it was practiced in India.

Crisis reached its peak in Kerala when police accidentally killed a pregnant fisherwoman, whose death came to symbolize the movement. Under pressure from within the party and without, Nehru finally relented. EMS Government was dismissed and President Rule imposed on the state in July 1959. In the consequent elections, Congress campaigned with posters of the killed pregnant fisherwoman, handily winning the majority.

EMS Government had been one of the first usurpers of Congress's established political predominance. And the resultant events belied India's democratic values. For the first time a democratically elected state government with a clear majority had been dismissed using Emergency Powers. The blame for the crisis goes to everyone and no one. It was a clash of ideologies that had an ugly end. Long-term, it fueled the paranoia among communists even further. And it tarnished Nehru's reputation as an honest broker. But worst of all, it gave a handy trick to the future politicians. While in 1947-1959 period, President Rule had been used only 5 times, in 1975-1979 it will be used 21 times and in 1980-1987 18 times.

(adapted from the writings
of Sandeep Bhardwaj)