THE MALABAR CHRISTIANS



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Rev. Dr. Placid Podipara C. M. I.

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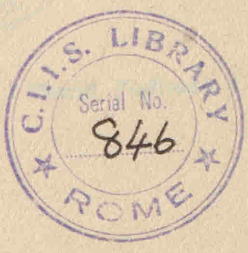
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THE MALABAR CHRISTIANS



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The Malabar Christians

(English)

By

Rev. Dr. Placid J. Podipara C. M. I.

Edited by

FR. HORMICE C. PERUMALIL C. M. I.

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THE EDITOR'S NOTE

Christianity in India is as old as christianity itself. It traces back its descent to the apostole, St. Thomas. The Syro-Malabar church has the unique distinction of being the most ancient christian community in India and all the Far East. But sceptics there are. They contend there are no historical evidences to prove the apostolate of St. Thomas in Kerala and his Martyrdom in Mylapore. However it would certainly be audacious and daring too much to deny even the nucleus of historicity to the stories narrated in the "ACTS OF JUDAS THOMAS", 'RAMBBAN PATTU (SONG)', 'MARGHAM KALI PATTU', 'VEERDIAN PATTU', 'PANHAM PATTU', and the LEGENDS that S. India abounds in.

There is here in Kerala a community of Syrian Christians who have ever been and still are known as MAR-THOMA CHRISTIANS. Families are here that claim their descent from the first converts of St. Thomas. Till a few decades back there were families that gloried in an unbroken line priests from the first ones consecrated by she Apostole. Here in Kerala the people point out to places which the Apostole visited, where he made his first converts, established crosses and places of worship. They point out too the places where he was martyred, and where his body was laid to rest; places where his foot-prints were miraculously impressed upon the unfeeling stones.

The traditions concerning St. Thomas' arrival and apostolate in Kerala are so strong, vivid and detailed that even the non-christian intelligentzia in India have

testified to their authenticity and historicity. Speaking to a mammoth crowd in New Delhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once declared: "St. Thomas the Apostole preached the Gospel in India in the first century itself and there have been christians in India right from the beginning of the first century. In this matter we have a tradition, a tradition *stronger than any history*." Mr. K. Padmanabha Menon, the reputed historian of Kerala, writes: "We have tried to bring to light to all the opinions and counter-opinions regarding the traditions which the Indians, especially the Malabar Christians affectionately maintain and believe in. Though opinion is divided among scholars, sharing the view of Dutch historians, we would like to express our conclusion that those traditions are not legends which can easily be ignored." Space does not allow us to quote the foreign historians who have testified to these traditions in un-equivocal terms.

St. Thomas Christians, the Living Monument and Authentic Testimony

More than all historical evidences and traditions, it is the St. Thomas Christian Community itself that stands out as the irrefutable argument and most convincing testimony to the fact of the Apostle's preaching in Kerala. There is only one community that recognizes St. Thomas as their Father, and they are the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar. No other christian community in the world claim to be the children of St. Thomas.

The present book 'Malabar Christians', though last in the Souvenir Series, is not the least. It is perhaps the most interesting of all. Written by Dr. Placid, the most

eminent historian of the Kerala Church, the articles cannot but catch the attention of all here and abroad. They explain in detail the particular traits of Malabar Christians. For the articles in this volume we are indebted to the courtesy of the *Eastern Churches Review* and the *Ostkirchliche Studien*.

F. Hormice C. Perumalil, C.M.I.
Prakasam Publications.

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I

THE INDIVIDUALITY OF THE MALABAR CHURCH

From its very beginning the Malabar Church has been at home in Malabar, the south west coast of India. It is a "Particular Church" with its own Hierarchy, Liturgy etc., and has, therefore, an Individuality distinct from that of all the other "Particular Churches."

In the past the Individuality of the Malabar Church existed in the form of autonomy and was genuinely Indo-Oriental with its peculiar characteristics. By the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century it was '*de jure*' suppressed and disfigured. After a long and strenuous fight it has been regained. Its importance is great especially if it could be brought to perfection and to its former beauty. Nevertheless it has yet to struggle for its existence and well-being. We will briefly treat these points below.

I

In the past the Individuality of the Malabar Church existed in the form of autonomy and was genuinely Indo-Oriental with its peculiar characteristics.

According to a well-attested tradition the Apostle St. Thomas is the founder of the Malabar Church. The Malabarians are, therefore, called "Thomas Christians". At a very early period the Malabar Church established contacts with the Church of Persia proper first, and then with that of Mesopotamia. It got down its bishops successively from these Churches from which it received its East Syriac Liturgy also. But it was neither an offshoot nor an integral part of these Churches. It gloried in its Apostolic origin and had its own customs and discipline based on the Malabar way of life. Keeping intact the East Syriac Liturgy which it received from the above-mentioned Churches, it enriched it by modifying and christianising the Hindu way of life familiar to the Malabarians. [1]

The chief ecclesiastical head of the Malabar Church was called *The Metropolitan and the Gate of all India* [2] "Gate" in the Orient stands for "sublime power". The jurisdiction of this Metropolitan extended to the whole of India. [3] Though he was sent by the East Syrian Patriarch of Mesopotamia, he enjoyed an autonomous status. This might be the reason why he was sometimes referred to as Patriarch. [4] The effective government, however, of the Malabar Church, as we know from tradition and from certain documents of the 16th and the 17th centuries, was in the hands of local Prelates

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1. Placid J Podipara, CMI, *The Thomas Christians*, LONDON-BOMBAY, 1970, Chapter 4.
2. Paulinus a S Bartholomaeo, OCD, *India Orientalis Christiana*, Roma, 1794 p. 88.
3. Jesuit Archives, Rome, *Goa*, 65, ff. 45, 43.
4. Schurhammer G, SJ, *The Malabar Church and Rome during the early Portuguese period and before*, Trichinopoly, 1934, p. 29.

known as Archdeacons. The title of the Archdeacon was *The Archdeacon of All India.*[5] The Church of "All India", therefore, gravitated towards Malabar. The Malabar Church carried on its activities under the guidance of the Archdeacons who were also the social and political leaders of the Malabarians. Leaving aside all other activities we will speak here a little about the activities of the Malabar church-assemblies.

The assembly of the adults and the priests ascribed to a parish administered the temporalities of the parish and looked after the christian life of the people. This assembly had the power even to excommunicate public delinquents. Matters of a serious nature were *dealt with in the joint assemblies of two or more* churches or parishes, while matters that pertained to the whole Church or Community were treated by the representatives of all the parishes. The Malabar Church thus presented the appearance of a *Christian Republic.*[6]

The Individuality of the Malabar Church as expressed in its autonomy mentioned above, the East Syriac Liturgy, the christianised Hindu customs etc. were all *The Law of Thomas* for the Malabarians. This *Law of Thomas* made the Malabar Church fully at home in the Indian soil from both the religious and cultural points of view. The peculiar characteristics of the Individuality of the Malabar Church was entirely Indo-Oriental.[7]

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5. Jesuit Archives; Rome 1. c , f. 43
6. Paolino di S. Bartolomeo, OCD., *Viaggio All'Indie Orientali,* Roma, 1796 p. 80. (Propaganda Archives, Rome, *Istoria della Missione del Malbar (Congr. Part. Vol. 109)*
7. "The prospects of Pluralism in Catholicism", *The Eastern Churches review,* England, Vol. II, No. 4, p. 412, 413.

II

It is to be regretted that by the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century the Individuality of the Malabar Church was '*de jure*' suppressed and disfigured. The Portuguese policy towards the Malabar Church was rasponsible for this.

The Portuguese began their commercial and missionary activities in Malabar in the 16th century. Goa, which was a Portuguese bishopric since 1534, became an archbishopric in 1558. Cochin in Malabar, erected in 1558 as a Portuguese bishopric, was Goa's suffragan see. Both were under the Padroado (Patronage) of the Portuguese crown.

In the eyes of the Portuguese *The Law of Thomas* of the Malabar Church and all that it comprised were heresy and superstition. Their policy was to make the Malabarians Latin in Rite and to put them under their Padroado Latin jurisdiction. Some of the East Syrian bishops who were in Malabar in the 16th century were treated by the Portuguese as Catholics and some others as heretics.[8] The Malabarians stood against the Latinisation of their Rite and even against their own children whom the Portuguese had ordained priests in the Latin Rite.[9] Even before Goa became an archdiocese the Portuguese contended that the bishop of Goa was the bishop of Malabar and of the whole of India.[10]

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8. Placid J. Podipara, CMI, op. cit., Chapter 6.
9. British Museum Add. MS 9853, *Relação da Serra*, 1604 f 90. Jesuit Archives, Rome, *Goa*, 65, f. 43 (Relação 1606). D'Souza f, SJ, *Oriente Conquistando a Jesu Cristo*, II, Bombay 1886, p. 71
10. Letter of Antonio do Perto, Nov., 20, 1557 cited by Beltrami G., La Chiesa Caldea nel secolo dell' Unione, Roma, 1933, p. 43.

The Metropolitan of the Malabar Church in the second half of the 16th century was Mar Abraham of Angamaly. It was at the instance of the Pope that the East Syrian Patriarch gave him the title of Angamaly. [11] He was also *The Gate of All India.* [12] and "the Superior of all the bishops and archbishops" [13] of his Rite. During his regime the Portuguese did all they could to realise their policy regarding the Malabarians. The enactments of the Councils of Goa of 1575 and 1585 regarding the Malabar Church were all made for this purpose. [14] Like his colleague Mar Joseph, Mar Abraham also was accused of heresy. By an Apostolic Brief dated Dec. 27, 1595, it was decided that the successor of Mar Abraham was to be nominated not by the East Syrian Patriarch, but by Rome directly. [15] Mar Abraham died in 1597. Relying chiefly on the aforesaid Brief and on another dated Jan. 21, 1597, both issued in the case of Mar Abraham. [16] Dom Menezes, the Portuguese Latin archbishop of Goa, entered Malabar, exercised jurisdi-

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11. The Decree of the Patriarch- Beltrami G., op. cit., pp. 95, 96.
12. Jesuit Archives, Rome, Goa, 65, f. 5.
13. The Decree of the Patriarch, l. c.
14. The important enactment was that Malabar was to be governed by bishops presented by the king of Portugal, or that Mar Abraham was to attend the Couucils of Goa. In the Council of 1585 the Latinsation of the Liturgy was decreed upon. See Beltrami, G. op. cit., p. 97, note 23; p. 111. The archbishop of Goa addressed Mar Abraham as his "bishop comprovincial"!! which he was not. (idid. p. 97. note 23)
15. See the Brief in Beltrami G., op. cit. pp. 248, 249.
16. See the second Brief in Beltrami G., op. cit. pp. 252, 253. According to the first Brief, among other things, a process was to be made against Mar Abraham, who, if found guilty was to be kept in custody, and a Vicar Apostolic appointed in his place. According to the seocond Brief a Vicar Apost. was to be appointed for Angamaly if Mar Abraham died before the nomination of his successor. We shall speak of these again.

ction in the Malabar Church and celebrated what in history is known as "the diocesan synod of Diamper"– everything for realizing the Portuguese policy mentioned above. But everything was *ultra vires*. [17] According to the acts of the synod of Diamper the Malabarians condemned their Patriarch as a heretic, promised they would accept as their bishop only him whom Rome directly nominated etc. But Roz, S. J. and Campori S. J who were present at the synod say that the synod was not in form, that there was no discussion there, that the assembled did not understand anything, that the assemblep put their signatures to the acts of the synod at the insistence of Roz S. J. that Menezes made additions to the acts after the synod was over; they prayed that the Pope might not approve such a synod. [18]

Before knowing anything of what Menezes had done in Malabar, Rome on Nov. 5, 1599, nominated Roz S. J. a Latin, as the successor of Mar Abraham of Angamaly. What is more surprising is that on Dec. 20, 1599, Anga-

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17. What Menezes could do by virtue of the Briefs after the death of Mar Abraham were: he could appoint a Vicar Apost. for Angamaly (2nd Brief); he could conduct process against those, *if any*, who were suspected of heresy (Ist rief); he could prevent from coming to Malabar any Prelate other than the one directly appointed by Rome. (Ist Brief). These certainly could not entitle him to do what he did. To justify himself he invoked his position as the Premate of the East. But he was Primate of the Latin Church of the East, not of Angamaly whose Prelate was the Metropolitan and the Gate of All India (of the Oriental Rite) Another title he relied on was the absence of a cathedral chapter in the vacant see of Angamaly. But cathedral chapters are a Latin institution!

18. Jesuit Archives, Rome, Goa. 15ff. 155, 156, 176-179, 182, 183, 196-200, 242, 243, 246. Through the acts of the synod the Portuguese made the whole world believe that Menezes converted the Malabarians from heresy and schism in or a little before the synod of Diamper. What a calumny!

maly, the Primatial see of the Malabarians, was reduced to a mere diocese and was made suffragan to the Portuguese Latin archdiocese of Goa. [19] Thus an autonomous Apostolic Church was put under a 16th century missionary Church, the autonomy of the former having been abolished.

The Malabarians when they came to know of the degradation of their Church, gave vent to their bitter feelings by saying:

> "What wrong have we done..? Was not our Church founded by an Apostle? Is it not the most ancient Church of India? This is the doing of the Archbishop of Goa....how can he be the Primate if our Church is more ancient than his? ..". [20]

The Padroado of the king of Portugal was extended over Angamaly on August 4, 1600.

Latinisation of the Rite and Liturgy (ie. of *The Law of Thomas*) followed. Latin laws were put into execution and the time-honoured powers of the Archdeacon were curtailed. Latinisation of the Liturgy was not a complete success. The Liturgy was highly mutilated and many of its items were replaced with Syriac translations of the Latin (Roman) Liturgy. [21]

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19. Beltrami G., op. cit., p. 133.
20. Letter of Roz SJ to Fr. Alvarez SJ. Dec. 1, 1601, The Examiner, Bombay, March 26, 1936. The synod of Diamper was concluded on June 24, 1599. Angamaly was made suffragan to Goa on Dec. 20, 1599. But the acts of the synod anticipate this as some other Portuguese documents! Roz. SJ, though a mere bishop styled himself "Metropolitan of India" and called his diocese "Eparchy of India". -*Un Manuscrit Oublie De La Liturgie Syro-Malabare Latinisee*, Ajuda 52-VIII- 4, article by. E. R. Hambye, SJ in Memorial Mgr. Gabriel Khouri-Sarkis (1868-1898),? Louvain, 1969, pp. 223-24.
21. Article of E. R. Hambye SJ just cited.

Owing to the repeated requests of the Malabarians and of bishop Roz S. J. the archiepiscopal dignity of Angamaly was restored in 1608 as if it was not suppressed. But its title and residence were transferred to Cranganore. Though Cranganore was not a suffragan to Goa, still it remained under the *Padroado*.[22]

Another development. In 1610 while Roz S. J. was the archbishop of Cranganore, the *Padroado* ecclesiastical territory in India was divided among the *Padroado* Prelates of (Goa), Cranganore, Cochin and Mylapore (erected in 1606). The Malabarians were, in consequence, divided between Craganore and Cochin which two sees had Latins also under them. This was the final blow aimed at the Individuality of the Malabar Church, viz, the Church of India and the All India jurisdiction of its chief Prelate.[23] The Latinised Rite and Liturgy of the Malabar Church disfigured what was left of its *de facto* Individuality.

III

The Malabarians keenly felt the loss of the Individuality of their Church. They did not keep quiet. They had their Liturgy which, though Latinised, was in Syriac; they had also their socio-ecclesiastical customs and usages. All this gave them a *de facto* Individuality distinct from that of the Latins. Holding fast to this they

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22. Gradually the archbishop of Goa began to nominate administrators to the see of Cranganore during its vacancy, just as he was doing in the case of his suffragan sees.

23. It is interesting to see that Britto SJ, the successor of Roz SJ, used to call himself "archbishop of India" – K:V. *Rangaswami Aiyangar Commemoration Volume*, p. 366 (The Travancore University Publications, Trivandrum, 1946.)

began their struggle for regaining the *de jure* Individuality of their Church under a Prelate of their own Rite. Long and strenuous was the struggle. In 1653 it burst out into a revolt against their Latin Prelate of Cranganore, Garçia S. J. The arrival of an Oriental Prelate and his deportation to Goa by the Portuguese was the immediate cause of the revolt. The Malabarians as a whole believed that the Prelate in question was sent to them by the Pope. [24] The revolt in the case of a minority ended in schism and in the acceptance of Jacobitism. [25]

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24. See the letter of Garçia SJ dated January 3, 1659, Propaganda Archives, Rome, *Scritture rif nelle Congr. Gener.* vol. 232 ff. 297sq. Even the leaders of the revolt who were in bad faith invoked the papal authority to deceive the masses (ibid.).

25. In course of time they adopted the West Syriac Liturgy. They have been divided and subdivided into several denominations. Those who have remained Jacobites, after several intestine quarrels are now under a Catholicos who is in communion with the foreign Jacobite Patriarch. They have thus reinstated in another way the autonomy the Malabar Church enjoyed under the East Syrian Patriarchs. Immediately after the revolt of 1653 they set up indigenous leaders as bishops. They did not think of reinstating the ancient Archdeaconship. This shows that the Archdeacon was the real leader of the ancient Malabar Church though there were foreign Prelates set over that Church. Now that those who revolted set up an indigenous leader they did not think of an indigenous Archdeacon since that leader took the place Archdeacon. Their leaders used the ancient title of The "All India", "Head of India" (Assemani J. S. *Bibliotheca Orientalis,* IV, 416). The Catholicos has now assumed this title as the Catholicos of India. The Jacobites now call themselves Orthodox. From the Jacobite Church was formed the Independent Church of Anjoor (c. 1772) a part of the Church Missionary Society (c. 1836 now they are part of the South Indian United Church. Again c. 1875 was formed from the Jacobites the Marthomite Church. In 1961 the Marthomite Church was divided into the Marhtomite and the St. Thomas Evangelical Churches.

The Catholic (Syro) Malankara Church a Particular Church- is composed mainly of those who have become Catholic since 1930 from the denomination mentioned above.

In consequence of the revolt the Latin Propaganda jurisdiction too was introduced into Malabar. The majority of the Malabarians who had remained faithful were thus divided between the Latin Propaganda and the Latin Padroado juridictions. The first propaganda prelate was asked by the S. Propaganda Congregation to suppress the Malabar Rite and to introduce the Latin Rite in its place. [26] The Propaganda Prelates were generally called Vicars Apostolic. From 1700 until 1887 they were all foreign Latin Carmelites. [27] There were periods when all the Malabarians were under the one or the other jurisdiction. There were also Latins under both. The territory under these jurisdictions was gradually narrowed down in extent, and the Church of India or the Indo-Malabar Church became definitely the Malabar Church. But only the central portion of Malabar was to be the territory of this Malabar Church which had yet to regian its *de jure* individuality.

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26. Propaganda Archives, Rome, Scritture rif. (origi.) Vol. 233, f. 29

27. Among the Vicar Ap. there was one Malabarian, Alexander Parampil (1663–1687). But he got no Malabarian successor. Though only a titular bishop he designated himself as "Metropolitan of All India" (Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo, OCD, *India Orient. Christ.* op. cit., p 263). Among the Padroado archbishops there was a Malabarian, Mar Joseph Cariattil (1782–1786). Though his Rite was changed into the Latin (Vati. Arch. *Acta Camarari S. Coll S. R. E. Cardi.* No. 39, f. 238) he was following his native Rite also. As his "successors" there were two Malabarians, Th. Paremmakal and George Sankurikal, who were administrators *sede vancante* (1786-1801). There was another administrator of Cranganore, Mathew, a Malabarian with the title of Archdeacon (1694-1701). He designated himself as "Gate of India" (P. Kurian, *The Orthodoxy of the St. Thomas Christians*, Trivandrum, 1908, p. 148. The book is in Malayalam). Duriug Matthew's administration the archbishop of Cranganore stayed away in Portugal.

All this goes to show how deep-rooted the idea of All India jurisdiction was in the mind of the Malabarians.

The Malabarians continued to fight as before for the attainment of their goal. Though they were the recipients of many good things at the hands of their Latin Superiors, still they suffered much from them Among their several complaints one was that their priests were cruelly treated by the Propaganda missionaries. At this the S Propaganda Congregation being "altamente commossa" (greatly moved), scolded the Vicar Apostolic and his missionaries ordering them to behave themselves a "amorevoli Padri, enon mai come autorevoli dominatori" (loving fathers and never as authoritative dominators). [28] Several factions also arose among the Malabarians. Those of 1715, 1799, 1861 and 1874 were led respectively by the bishops Gabriel, Pandari. Roccos and Mellus. Of these Pandari was Malabarian consecrated in Mesopotamia and others were Mesopotamians. A few who followed Mellus became "Nestorians" in 1908. [29]

During the crisis of 1874 the Malabarians sent up their complaints and requests directly to the Holy see. [30] The Propaganda Vicar Apost took stringent measures against those who led this movement. He expelled seven

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28. Propaganda Archives, Rome, Instruction, 1774. Scritture rif. nelle Congrega. Gen. a 1774, V. 839, ff. 220-225.

29. The Prelate of these "Nestorians" calls himself by the ancient title of "Metropolitan of India".
During the crises of 1861 and 1874 Malabarian religious priests were made Vicars General of the Propaganda Vicars Ap. but none of them was made an auxiliary though Rome would have liked it. These Malabarian religious priests belonged to the only Indigenous Religious Institute for men existing at that time. This Institute was started at Mannanam in 1831 and canonicaly erected in 1855. At present this Religious Congregation is denoted by C. M. I.

30. See some of these petitions in Mar Luis pareparampil *An Account of a very Important period of the history of the Catholic Syrians of Malabar* Puthenpally, 1920.

Malabarian religious from their religious Institute and even declared it a reserved sin to write to the Holy See. [31]

The Holy See made inquiries through two Visitors Apostolic. In 1877 the Propaganda Vicar Apostolic was given a (Latin) Coadjutor. The Coadjutor had the exclusive care of the Malabarians. The Vicar Apostolic had to delegate to him all his powers and he could not do anything in the case of the Malabarians except with the consent of the Coadjutor. [32] The Coadjutor was asked by the Holy See to take a Vicar General and four Concillors from among the Malabarians. But he did not do this. [33]

In 1886 the Padroado jurisdiction over the Malabarians was definitely suppressed. [34] In the following year there was made a ritual separation between the Malabarians and the Latins. The Malabarians were put under two Latin Propaganda Vicars Apostolic who were not Carmelites as their predecessors. These Vicars Apostolic were to have (and they had) Pontifically privileged Vicars General and Councillors from among the Malabarians.. [35]

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31. Propaganda Archives, Rome (now in the S. Or. Congr.) Scritture rif. Malabaresi, 1879-1899. f. 1431. One of the religious thus expelled was Luis Pareparampil who became one of the first Malabar Vicars Ap. (bishop). He is the Mar Luis cited above. The Religious Institute in question is the one mentioned in note 29.
32. Mar Luis Pareparampil, op. cit., p. 109 (documents).
33. Propaganda Archives, Rome (now in the S. Or. Congr..) Lettere e Decreti per gli affari orientali, Vol. XXII, 1889 f. 216.
34. It had been temporarily suppressed from 1838 unitil 1857 / 64 owing to troubles in Portugal.
35. One of the Vicars Ap. had two Vicars General since he had under him two communities of Malabarians known as Northists and Southists.

This arrangement was a *de jure*, though partial, acknowledgement of the Individuality of the Malabar Church, and it had been foreshadowed in the appointment of the Coadjutor mentioned above.

The Malabarians in no way slackened their efforts. In 1896 they were constituted into the three Propaganda Vicariates Apostolic of Trichur, Ernakulam, and Changanacherry, over which were placed Malabarian Prelates. To these three was added in 1911 the Vicariate Apostolic of Kottayam.[36] In 1917 from under the S. Propaganda Congregation the Malabarians came under the S. Oriental Congregation. The Malabar Hierarchy was restored in 1923 with Ernakulam as Metropolis and the other units as suffragan eparchies. The eparchy of Palai was set up in 1950 by a division of Changanacherry. In 1953 the eparchy of Tellicherry was erected for the Malabarian emigrants who were outside the then Malabar territory. The territory was again extended to the south, north and north-east in 1955. Changanacherry was raised as a Metropolis in 1956 with Kottayam and Palai as its suffragan sees. The suffragan sees of Ernakulam are Trichur, Tellicherry and Kothamangalam which last was erected in 1956 by a division of Ernakulam.[37] In addition there are now six mission Exarchates Apostolic in Central India, and they are Chanda (1962), Sagar (1968), Satna (1968) Ujjain (1968) Bijnor and Jagdalpur (1972).

Thus the Apostolic Individuality of the Malabar Church has finally been *de jure* regained. To regain this the

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36. This was for the Southists.
37. The present Metropolitan of Ernakulam is a Cardinal.

Malabarians had to suffer much; by no means small was the struggle they put up for centuries.

IV

The importance of the Apostolic Individuality of the Malabar Church is, no doubt, very great. It is a precious treasure to be jealously guarded. Not all Particular Churches nor any missionary Church can claim a direct Apostolic origin and distinct continuity as the Malabar Church. How many Churches wish they had such a status!!

A great many non-Christians in India think that Christianity is a Western religion that entered India in the wake of the European conquerors. So they think that it is high time that it quitted India. But the Apostolic Churh of Malabar is a proof that Christianity is not a Western religion and that Indian Christianity is as old as Christianity itself. Those who care to go deep into the matter will certainly congratulate the Malabarian on the great sacrifices they underwent in order to preserve the Apostolic Individuality of their Church as *de jure* distinct entity. If the Malabarians of old had yielded to the Portuguese pressure, India would have lost such a precious treasure.

The Malabarians of old were not led by obstinacy or blind sentiments when they reacted against the Portuguese policy saying: "Was not our Church founded by an Apostle? Is not our Church the most ancient in India?." (See above)

The Individuality of the Malabar Church and its importance could be enhanced by bringing the Malabar Church back to its former status and beauty.

The Malabar Church has now two Metropolitans of equal status. A common head- a Major Archbishop, better a Patriarch-will juridically perfect the Hierarchy. This is a only a natural development of the autonomy the Church in question enjoyed in the past. The restoration of the ancient "All India Jurisdiction"-of course, only over the Malabarians dispersed all over Iudia-will also contribute towards the juridical perfection of the Individuality in question. The non Catholic Oriental Churches that directly or indirectly separated themselves from the Malabar Church exercise this jurisdiction over their subjects all over India and even beyond.

The timely restoration of the Rite with all that it conprises will not only add to the beauty of the Malabar Church but will also make it appear Oriental in all its externals. Let no non-Christian Indian suspect in it anything of colonialism which he would be glad not to find in the non-Catholic Oriental Churches of India.

V

The Individuality of the Malabar Church that has been regained after a tough fight has yet to struggle for its existence and well-being.

(1)

What is known as "the One Rite movement" threatens to wipe out the Individuality of the Malabar Church. There are those who, frightened by the evils of multi-jurisdiction in the same place, or fascinated by the idea of uniformity in worship, or instigated by some

other motives, advocate the adoption of one Rite for the whole of India or for Malabar.

One Rite, according to its advocates, will bring in one jurisdiction in one territory. But this will result in the complete extinction of the Individuality–the Apostolic Individuality–of the Malabar Church whose imporatance we have spoken of above. By the introduction of one Rite the Malabarians with no Rite or Hierarchy of their own will be distributed under several jurisdictions together with non-Malabarians. Without at least a Hierarchy of its own how could there be a Particular Church or its Individuality? The loss is immense as we have pointed out above. It is in the uncertain (if not vain) of eliminating the evils mentioned above that such a loss is to be sustained. But are not these evils the result of the lack of Christian charity, rather than of Rite or multi-jurisdiction? They could be controlled by christian charity from the practice of which no Christian can exempt himself or herself at any time or place even where there is multi-jurisdiction. Multi-jurisdiction, moreover, is not exercised over one and the same person.

Uniformity of worship is against the universality of the Catholic Church which is composed of various Particular Churches and which is realised in each Particutar Church.

The other motives for advocating one Rite are not given due publicity.

(2)

The question of attending to the needs of the Malabarian emigrants is a serious one. There are

hundreds of such emigrants in sevaral parts of India outside the Malabar ecclesiastical territory. They have the right and duty to foster and practise their Rite. According to Vatican II there should be priests and parishes and even eparchies if necessary, for such emigrants in their own Rite. [38] But in India those concerned are not disposed to implement to the full the decrees of Vactian II. They are totally against the extension of the Malabar ecclesiastical jurisdiction. But how can the Malabarians grow to their full stature without their own jurisdiction? Rite comprises not only the Liturgy, but also the history, genius, temperament etc. of the people, as Pius XII has expressed in the Encyclical on St. Cyril of Alexandria. [39] No Prelate of another Rite will be able to help the Malabarians develop these in full. Under the Latin Prelates the Malabarians were always a stagnant

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38. "...attention should everywhere be given to the preservation and gowth of the Particular Churches. For this purpose, parishes and a special hierarchy should be established for each where the spiritual good of the faithful so demand" *(Decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches*, 4). " where there are faithful of a different Rite, the diocesan bishop should provide for their spiritual needs either through priests or parishes of that Rite or through an episcopal vicar endowed with the necessary faculties. Wherever it is fitting, the latter should also have episcopal rank. Or, the Ordinary himself may perform the office of an Ordinary of different Rites. If, for certain reasons, these arrangements are not feasible in the eyes of the Apostolic See, then a proper hierarchy for the different Rites is to be established ("*Decree on the Pastoral Office of bishops,* 23 , 3)

    It goes without saying that "spiritual good" and "spiritual needs" are not to be restricted to the administration of Sacraments alone. The cultural, social, educational and the other needs aslo go along with spiritual needs.

39. "a lawful freedom must be allowed to each and every people of the Oriental Rite in all that depends on the history, genius and temperament of each single people" (Encyclical, Orientalium *Ecclesiae Decus,* AAS XXXVI (1944) pp, 137, 138).

community. Under their own Prelates they have made wonderful progress which has become a matter of emulation for the other communities. Troubles will set in only if jealousy takes the place of emulation.

Denial of the jurisdiction in question will cut off the emigrants from their mother Church and impede the natural expansion of the same Church by weakening its vigour. But the Malabar emigrants have not even their own priests now!

Priests and parishes precede jurisdiction, multi-jurisdiction in our case in the same territory, though the latter is not impossible to be had without the former. But multi-jurisdiction is not anything to be alarmed at. First of all such a jurisdiction is not exercised over one and the same person. Then it is something that is seen today everywhere in the world since it is the only means to safeguard the interests of Particular Churches under the present circumstances.

Multi-jurisdiction goes against the idea that there can be only one jurisdiction in one territory.

Now, the Church is "the People of God Worshipping"; it is not a territory like the State. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction should, therefore, be considered '*per se*' personal, not territorial. What is important is that its subjects should be earmarked as belonging to a Rite or Community. Territory enters into it when the persons over whom it is exercised are dispersed very extensively or are too numerous for one man to look after.

To insist on one jurisdiction in one territory is to insist on Canon 9 of Lateran IV. This Canon which caused much havoc to the Orientals even widening

schisms, has no force now. If it had had any force, catholic Orientals would not have had jurisdiction in Western Europe, in the Americas, in England, and in Australia, nor would Vatican II have decreed as it did (see above). Again, H. H. Pope Paul VI in the Apostolic Constitution of Aug. 15, 1967, dealing with the competency of the S. Oriental Congregation, has ruled that this Congregation takes care of the Orientals who are found in the Latin territories also by appointing Visitors and even by constituting their own hierarchy if their number and circumstances require this.[40] The creation and the extension of the present Malabar jurisdiction was a repealing of the Canon in question in the case of the Malabar Church.

In spite of what we have said above, Canon 9 of Lateran IV has appeared again in the form of Majority Rule which comes to this: In a given territory where there are more than one Rite, that Rite which has more adherents than the others should have its bishop and the others must be under this bishop. In other words the minority should be denied the right of being governed by its own bishop and should be impeded from developing itself to the full! There are places in India where the Malabar emigrants will never form the majority, and in course of time they will lose their identity if the present

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40. "...in the very Latin territories (the S. Congregation for the Oriental Churches) with diligent care watches over, also through Visitors, the not yet organised centres of the faithful of the Oriental Rites, and takes care of their spiritual needs, as far as possible, even by constituting hierarchies for them, if the number of the faithful and the circumstances require it" (Ap. Constitution, Regiminis Ecclesiae Universae- De Curia Romana - N. 44 15 / VIII / 1967).

policy is followed! The documents cited above do not speak of majority at all.

The non-Catholic Oriental Churches of Malabar exercise jurisdiction over their subjects all over India. Will they be denied this if they become catholic?

The documents we have adduced above are of the highest authority in the Catholic Church. Not to implement them would be to dishonour the Catholic Church and to estrange the non-Catholic Orientals from her.

Multi-jurisdiction does have its inconveniences and they were not unforeseen by the authors of the documents we have cited above. These inconveniences, as we said above, could be controlled to a great extent by friendly dialogue and charity. As a matter of fact, tension (sometimes silent) between Communities of different Rites under the same jurisdiction will be greater than that between two jurisdictions in the same territory. Multi-jurisdiction can ease the situation. [41] Let us remember that we are living in a period of ecumenism.

(3)

The mass exodus of the Malabarians into the Latin Rite as Priests and Religious will, in the long run, weaken

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41 It is an undeniable fact that in India there is a great tension among the different Communities of the same Rite that exist under the same jurisdiction. This is sometimes greater than that which is noticed between two jurisdictions in the same place The intensity of the tension is proportionate to the degree of development each Commnity has attained to. One would, therefore, simply think that it will be of advantage to all concerned if the Communities that are sufficiently developed are given their own bishops and jurisdiction in the same territory even though they be of the same Rite. This is not anything new to the Holy See.

the Individuality of the Malabar Church from within. According to the statistics of 1969 there are 645 diocesan priests, 703 major seminarians, 401 minor seminarians, 593 religious priests, 9345 scholastics, 547 religious brothers and 6197 religious sisters working in several parts of India in the Latin Rite. [42] Formerly these vocations had to change their Rite; now they retain their Rite juridically and follow the Latin Rite. But practically this makes no difference. The exodus continues steadily, not as something casual, but as a regular day-to-day phenomenon. Hence its danger.

Those who go out have no knowledge of the history, Liturgy etc. of their mother Church. They are all trained in the Latin Rite. No wonder they are puzzled, if not scandalized, at the Individuality of the Malabar Church which appears to them as an obstacle to evangelisation and catholicity. Naturally they influence their friends and relatives at home who are not a few. In this way a kind of anti-Malabar mentality is being created in many in Malabar itself. The "One Rite Movement" has an attraction for those of this mentality. Thus the mass exodus in question which is always on the increase, tends to weaken the Malabar Church from within, the more so since not a few of those who 'go out' work in Malabar itself in the Latin Rite.

Could not these vocations be utilised in the future for the growth of the Malabar Church in India? Why should the Latin Particular Church get enriched by impeding the growth of the Malabar Church, and this too through the children of the Malabar Church? The growth

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42. Orientalia Christiana Analecta, N 186, Roma, 1970, pp. 278-280.

of the Malabar Church through the work of her children is the growth of the catholic Church, and it is also natural. If the Latins are short of priests to look after those who are already catholics, the Malabarians should help them even by following the Latin Rite. But why should the Malabarians follow the Latin Rite to do mission work in their own father-land, and this among the non-Christians who have no Rite? If the Latin Missions have no personnel for evangelisation, they should, instead of latinising the Malabarians, entrust the mission to the Malabar Rite. This would be natural and catholic, especially in India which is an oriental country. This is also the way 'to help' what they call 'the surplus vocations'.

Cannot the Latin religious Institutes open Malabar houses and provinces and take up mission work outside the Malabar ecclesiastical territory? In this way they can be of profit to their religious Institute and to the Malabar Church. Biritualism that is practised by some in Malabar is no solution of the problem.

Those who accept and those who encourage tha vocations in question have no thought for the growth and well-being of the Malabar Church. In the name of Catholicity and Generosity they are in good faith working indirectly towards the weakening of the Malabar Church from within by impeding the exercise of its full rights.

Vatican II has made it clear that all the Rites are equal,[43] that everywhere (ubique terrarum) each Rite (Particular Church) should be preserved and allowed to

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43. Decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches, N. 3

grow, [44] and that each has the duty and obligation to do mission work under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff. [45] Has any Roman Pontiff said that the Orientals should follow the Latin Rite and do mission work? Should one Particular Church grow by impeding the growth of another Particular Church?

Those who recruit vocations have recourse to the dictum "It is not the Rite but it is the Faith that matters". Yes, let them, therefore, in proof of their *bona fides* sincerely endeavour that the vocations they recruit may become in the Malabar Rite what they are intended to be in the Latin Rite. Then there will not be what they call the problem of "surplus vocations". The well-being of the Particular Church of Malabar will not also be endangered by a too generous application of their dictum which could very well be retorted against them. [46] They cannot be ignorant that they are recruiting vocations that may even positively stand against the legitimate claims of the Malabar Church which is slumbering in self-complacency.

(4)

The Hierarchy, the Liturgy, the genius, the history, the temperament, the social customs, the special ecclesiastical usages etc. of the Malabarians constitute the Individuality of their Church. This Individuality must certainly present an appearance fully worthy of it in every aspect.

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44. Ibid, N. 4.
45. Ibid., N. 3.
46 For some what matters is the salvation of souls, and nothing else. Yes. Should we not take into consideration the quality of the souls that are to be saved?

But it is marred by the latinising tendency, especially of its clergy who, owing to their long Latin training, cannot understand certain things except in terms of the Latin. All the same they want by all means to be Malabarian and Oriental. We will cite a few instances.

The Holy See did much in the matter of restroring the Liturgy to its genuine form. But even this has been revised on the Latin model, even Latin elements having been introduced into it. This is exactly what the Portuguese did in spite of the Malabarians of old. True, all this is done by way of experiment. Nevertheless, what has been done reveals the mentality of its authors. In 1929 the Malabar Hierarchy submitted to the Holy See for approbation a Syriac translation of the Latin (Roman) Pontificals. H. H. Pope Pius XI, the same Pope who in 1923 had restored the Malabar Hierarchy, denied approbation saying: "Latinism ought not to be encouraged among the Orientals; half measures are neither generous nor fruitful." So saying he ordered that the ancient (East Syrian) Pontificals were to be given to the Malabarians. [47] The great theological and apologetic values of ancient Liturgies require that they should be preserved and developed in their genuine form. Each of the ancient Liturgies is, in its own way, a development of the primitive Apostolic Liturgy and they contain inestimable treasures of the christian traditions. "If they (the Orientals) have improperly fallen away from them because of circumstances of time or personage", Vatican II requires "that they should take pains to return to their ancestral ways." [48] There

47. *Ordo Persolvendi Ritus Pontificalis juxta usum Ecclesiae Syro Malabarensis,* Sacra Congregatio Orientalis, Roma, 1958, Prefatio.

48. Decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches, N. 6.

is no proof that the Malabar Church ever developed a Liturgy of its own. It adopted the ancient East Syriac Liturgy which it included in "The Law of Thomas." Hence the ancient Liturgy of the Malabar Church is the East Syriac one, and the Malabar Church has to practise it in its genuine form by returning "to the ancestral ways". It is less foreign to the Malabar than the Latin (Roman) Liturgy is, say, to Germany. Abbreviation, modernisation, adaptation, new compositions etc. are necessary, but all this must form one organic whole with the original in accordance with its genius. "The lawful rites and their (Orientals') established way of life" Vatican II orders "should not be altered except by way of an appropriate and organic development." [49] A new or a disfigured Liturgy does not become an ancient Church. Latinisation, moreover, is against ecumenism, especially in Malabar where Latinisation was the ultimate cause of all the schisms. [50]

Another thing that causes admiration is the dress of the Prelates. They dress like the Latin Prelates. It is not at all difficult to design an Indo-Oriental dress in conformity with the genius of the Rite.

The Latin juridical mentality has influenced not a little the observance of fasts and abstinences. The Oriental way will conserve the traditions with less difficulty of observance.

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49. Ibid.
50. The Jacobites and "the Nestorians" of Malabar who broke away from the Malabarians preserve their liturgical and other traditions scrupulously. The ancient Malabar Church with its Latin touches is a scandal to them. The Malabarians have to show them by word and deed that one can be a Catholic without being latinised.

We may also suggest that the Malabarian religious literature too should be orientated in conformity with the traditions of the Malabar Cnurch. The deep sense of Individuality extends to all these and more including church architecture, church music and so on. Even such little things as the way of making the sign of the Cross take on great importance when viewed against the background of the Individuality of a Church.

Let no one think that we are advocating sectarianism. In the unity of faith and charity, and with mutual cooperation with the other Particular Churches, each Particular Church has the duty and obligation to preserve and develop congenially its particular traits and traditions All of them will thus give a splendid and joint testimony to the beauty and universality of the Catholic Church which will be fully realised in each of them. [51]

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51. "It is the mind of the Catholic church that each individual Church or Rite retain its traditions whole and entire, while adjusting its way of life to the various needs of time and place." (Vatican II, Decree on the catholic Oriental churches, N. 2)

II

HINDU IN CULTURE, CHRISTIAN IN RELIGION, ORIENTAL IN WORSHIP

The Britishers left India, and India became a sovereign Republic in 1947. "Indianise the Indian Christians or Indian Christianity" is the loud cry one now hears in many a circle. But many seem to ignore *the Thomas Christians* of Malabar who claim to be as old in India as Christianity itself. They are Hindus or Indian in Culture, Christian in Religion and Syro-Oriental in Worship. The Syrian Rites they use for worship have made them known as Syrians also.

Till the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, the Thomas Christians had no regular contact with the West. All their relations were normally with the East Syrian Patriarch of Mesopotamia. The bishops sent out by these Patriarchs were practically content with the exercise of the power of Order alone. The effective administration was in the hands of local leaders or Archdeacons. This is how the Thomas Christians kept up their entity with an individuality of its own. This individuality was shaped by their cultural environmet based on the socio-political set-up of the country. Tne same was

true also of the non-Christian communities or castes of Malabar, each of which may be said to have had a culture of its own, conditioned by the rules of caste. Each of these particular cultures formed, as it were, a facet of the Hindu-Malabar culture. To a casual observer, therefore, the Thomas Christians would have appeared as one of the several Hindu castes whose number was a legion. But they were Hindus or quasi caste-shaped only in their culture i. e. in their socio-political formation and way of life. This culture, however, was christianised by their faith and rendered doubly Oriental by their Syro-Oriental mode of worship. They were, therefore, more than what the modern Indianisers would make their Christians look like.

In an article like the present one it is not possible to make an adequate description of the wonderful mingling of Hindu culture, Christian faith and Syro-Oriental mode of worship. We will, therefore, be content with a few points that may give a fairly good outline of this vast and complicated subject. It may be mentioned at the very outset that many of the pertinent usages have vanished with the flow of time and the change of circumstances. Nevertheless, the type they have moulded remains fundamentally the same in the Thomas Christians.

I

CULTURE

We may begin with the cultural aspect of the subject in the ancient socio-political set up of Malabar. This set-up was a quasi-feudal one composed of various

castes or social groups, each of which with its specific profession or professions contributed to the well-being of the body-politic of the country.

In the social scale the Thomas Christians stood next to the Brahmins [1] who were by birth priests of the non-Christian rulers. They kept several customs common to them and to the Brahmins alone. A new born babe e. g. was fed with powdered gold mixed in honey; on the eleventh month after its birth the baby was ceremoniously fed with boiled rice for the first time; mangoose teeth and panther toes fitted with gold coverings, were part of the children's ornaments; children going to school for the first time were made to write with their fingers the first letters of the alphabet on raw rice etc. Ceremonies connected with marriage such as ceremonial baths, use of sweets called *aini*, the bridal veil called *montrakodi*, the new couple not going to church for four days after the marriage etc. were mostly Brahmin in origin. Of the same origin were the special sweets called *kozhukotta*, *neyyapam*, the keeping of legal defilement for ten to eleven days from the death of some one in the family, the several feasts kept in memory of the dead etc. Christian symbolisms attached to them rendered them Christian in signification. It is remarkable that most of these have come down to the present day in certain localities.

The father was supreme in the family. Grown-up children would never sit in the presence of their fathers. In the house women had separate quarters. Men and

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1. Vincenzo Maria, *II Viaggio Alle Indie Orientali*, Roma, 1672, L. II, C. V.

women would not eat together; husbands and wives were not an exception in this. Wives would not speak of their husbands mentioning them by their names. Children considered it a sacred duty to help their aged parents. Grown up boys and girls never would go out together nor would talk together. All these features are even today noticeable in Thomas Christian families. In order to keep up their family tradition they would not make their daughters heirs to their properties. If a man had no male issue he would adopt a male related to him in the male line while the daughters would be married off with dowry. But today one that has no male issue makes one of his daughters his heir, and she remains in his house with her husband.

The men went out naked from their waist upwards except on solemn occasions when some would put on a loose ornamented chemis. They bore the lobes of the ears for ornaments to pass through. Except those who kept celebacy and those who had gone on a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore, all kept long hairs tied up in a bundle into which was inserted a small metal cross. In fact this cross distinguished them from their non-Christian brethern. Bridegrooms had the privilege to wear a flower of gold attached to the tuft of heir. [2] Women were very modest in their dress and comportment. Their dress consisted of a jacket that covered the hands and the body till the waist, while a long piece of cloth reaching down to the ankles was tied round the waist in a manner peculiar to them alone. When going to church or visiting priests they

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2. Idem, *Ibidem*. Sometimes gold crowns were substituted instead while the pectoral cross was indispensable.

would cover themselves with a big veil that left only their faces open.[3] Joseph Sebastiani remarks that they were more modest than the Portuguese ladies who were in Malabar in the 17th century.[4] They had several kinds of ornaments for the ears, arms, neck and feet; but no ornament for the nose. Nothing of all these has been fundamentally affected by the inroad of modern fashions in dress except that the use of saree has simplified matters. Till as recently as the beginning of this century, women in certain localities (e. g. in Kunnamkulam) while going out used to have big palm-leaf umbrellas to hide themselves from the gaze of the world. The Brahmin ladies still do like this.

Their food was frugal consisting of rice boiled in water and "curries" mostly vegetable. They rarely ate meat and always shunned beef. Alcoholic drinks were considered unbecoming their high social status.[5] During national feasts they would eat with their fingers squatting on long mattresses, their plates being plantain leaves folded into two which signified their privilege to use two leaves in imitation of the Brahmins. This is true even today.

Like the high caste people of the country the Thomas Christians would not touch nor go near those of the low castes. If they happened to touch or go near the latter they would purify themselves by a bath. This was a means to keep up their nobility and position in society. In the public roads those of the inferior castes

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3. Idem, *Ibidem.*
4. Joseph Sebastiani (Giuseppe a S. Maria) *Prima Spedizione alle Indie Orientali,* Roma, 1666, pp. 103, 104.
5. Vincenzo Maria, *Op. C. l. c.*

had to give way to them, and they had the right to kill any one who would deny them this mark of distinction.[6] For those of the high caste, the touch of a Thomas Christian was sufficient to purify articles considered defiled by the contact of low caste people. The kings and petit chieftains of Malabar not seldom invited the Thomas Christians to live near their residences in order to profit by this service of touching defiled articles.[7] The Thomas Christians had the rare privilege to sit before kings, to ride elepants etc.[8] All these are history now.

The Thomas Christians were protectors of several castes of artisans, while the cultivators of palms were their attendants[8a] There were *chavers* (called *amolci* or *amouchi* by European writers) or non-Christians who had vowed to court death in defence of the Thomas Christians and their churches. These people in order to get redressed any wrongs committed to their lords, would, in the midst of entreaties, begin shedding their own blood, and finally at the risk of their own lives would attack the offender even though the latter were the king himself.[9] The office of *chaver* was often hereditary. The *chavers* would obey the Thomas Christians in all matters except in that of conversion to Christianity.[10] To the

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6. Idem, *Ibidem.*
7. The present writer knows many old people who in their childhood rendered this service to their neighboures.
8. Vincenzo Maria, *Op. C. l. c.*
8a Idem, *Ibidem.*
9. Raulin, *Historia Ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Diamperitana Synodo,* Romae, 1745, p. 511-Syllabus. Vincenzo Maria, *Ibidem*: *chaver* in the language of the country means one who courts death.
10. Vincenzo Maria, *Ibidem.*

modern ears all these may sound romantic due to change in the social conditions.

The Thomas Christians were not very proficient in fine arts, but they engaged themselves in such professions as agriculture, commerce and military which were considered noble. Even today they are second to none in clearing up forests and cultivating paddy, cocoanut, rubber, tea, cardamom etc. John Marignoli. Papal Legate in China, who spent eighteen months in Quilon (1348) says that the Thomas Christians were the proprietors of pepper and were also masters of the public weighing office. [11] Males from their eighth to the twentieth year were taught the use of weapons which made of them adept soldiers. Nicholas Pimenta SJ., wrote at the close of the sixteenth century that the Thomas Christians could at any time place in array thirty thousand armed men. [12] Men always went out carrying arms which they left in the porch of the church while attending religious functions. [13]

As loyal subjects of the kings in whose territories they lived (and there were many kings in Malabar) they took up arms in times of war. The success in war of a king often depended on the number of his Thomas Christian subjects. This made the non-Christian kings build and endow churches with lands tax free. The Thomas Christians rendered their obedience to their kings directly and immediately with no regard for intermediary

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11. Mackenzie, G. T; *Christianity in Travancore,* Trivandrum, 1901, p. 9.
12. Nicola Pimenta SJ., *Letter, Dec. 21,* 1599, Archivum Romanum SJ., *Goa, II, 32,* f. 706v.
13. Vincenzo Maria, *Ibidem*

officers. [14] Many served the local kings as ministers and counsellors, and the families of several of these could be identified even today. Rulings of kings that went contrary to their privileges or religion were not obeyed. Nay, to vindicate their rights they would all join together in one body. [15] Paulinus says that in this respect they formed as it were a Christian Republic. [16] Non-Christian offenders had to make reparation by giving gold or silver offerings to the church or by being killed accordidg to the nature of the offence. [17]

All their civil cases were decided by the intervention of the Archdeacon; only in criminal cases they used to have recourse to the kings. [18] But in a certain locality in Cranganore they had the privilege of inflicting capital punishment also. [19] Everywhere the Archdeacon figured large. A document written in Portuguese before 1786 speaks of the Archdeacon thus: "The Archdeacon is the first among the seventy-two princes of Perumpatapil (i. e, king of Cochin); the said Archdeacon is, according to custom, the man to crown the king in order that the king may be recognised as king; the coronation consists in this that the Archdeacon puts a gold cross with a golden chain on the neck of the king, and he (the king) must wear this for five days before he is called king of Perumpatapil. [20]"

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14. Idem, *Ibidem.*
15. Idem, *Ibidem.*
16. Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo, *Viaggio Alle Indie Orientali,* Roma, 1796, p. 137.
17. Vincenzo Maria, *Ibidem.*
18. Idem, *Ibidem.*
19. Schurhammer SJ., *The Malabar Church and Rome* ... Trichy, 1934, p. 14.
20. *Noticias do Reigno do Malabar,* Bibl. Nacional, Fondo Geral, 536 (ff. 1-29).

The Thomas Christians had a king of their own who, according to some, was a Christian and according to others, a non-Christian that took special care to protect their privileges. [21] These privileges were many and are believed to have been granted by the anceint rulers of Malabar. Some of these privileges were inscribed on copper plates. A few such plates are kept today at Kottayam and Tiruvalla. These few plates certainly go back to dates before the 14th century. [22] Bards belonging to castes over whom the Thomas Christians once exercised protectorate, even today on solemn occasions recount in songs the privileges of the latter and are richly rewarded.

In the face of all that we have said above no non-Christian can say that Christianity is a denationalising force. Tradition says that the first Thomas Christians were mostly from high castes who contiuued to keep up their former socio-political status side by side with their non-Christian brethren. Christianity did not destrory, but did ennoble what good they had cultivated by themselves.

II

RELIGION

Let us now come to their religious faith and life.

1. The Thomas Christians have always hailed the Apostle St. Thomas as the one who converted their fore-

21. Gouvea, *Jornada of Archbishop Meneses of Goa,* Coimbra, 1606, fol. 5. D'Sousa, *Oriente Conquistado a Jesu Christo*, Bombay, 1886, II, 69.

22. Joseph, TK, *The Malabar Christians and their ancient Documents*, Trivandrum 1929; *The Malabar Christian Copper Plates*, Trivandrum, 1925.

fathers to Christianity. The liturgical and other books they had had from Mesopotamia contained Nestorian formulas. But as they did not know anything of the theological or controversial nature of these formulas, they were not in any way affected by the heretical aspect of such formulas which remained a dead letter in their books. Anything pointed out to them as erroneous they readily corrected, as the history of the sixteenth century bears witness to. [23] They willingly admitted the Portuguese priests and religious among them as soon as the latter came into touch with them in the 16th century, and there was regular *Communicatio in Sacris* on both the sides. In 1624 the then Archdeacon made this clear in his letter of Dec. 21. Says he: " ..Errors, perhaps, there might have been, but heresies, which have to be confirmed with pertinacity, no. And if this Church was infected with heresy [24] the Fathers of the Society and other Catholic religious would not have been admitted into it . [25]" On Jan. 4. 1570. a Jesuit Father wrote from Cochin saying "Commonly these Christians profess all the articles of the Nicaean Creed, and the equality of the Divine Persons and the two Natures in Christ and the one Person as the Archbishop and the Archdeacon admit. About the Pope, they consider him as the Vicar of Christ, Our Redeemer, on earth: (they consider) that the Patriarch is subject to the Pope from whom he receives his powers ..." [26] Fr. Roz SJ, though he calls the Thomas Christians Nestorians, admits at the

23. Cf. Tisserent, Card. E. *Eastern Christianity in India*, Calcutta, 1957, passim.
24. He means during the sixteenth century.
25. Archivum Romanum SJ., *Goa*, 18, f. 72.
26. Torre de Tombe, *Jesuitas Armario*, lib no. 28, f. 34-38.

same time (1586/87) that "they profess the Roman Catholic faith" though their books contained Nestorian doctrines He says further that they publicly preached the B- V. Mary as Mother of God and left out the names of Nestorius and his collegues while reciting the Divine Office. [27] An inscription *in relief* on a metal bell cast in 1584 for the Church of Kuravilangad calls the B. V. Mary "Mother of God" (âméh d'àlâhâ) [28] All these go to show that the Thomas Christians were not addicted to the Nestorian formulas and doctrine, and that they readily corrected them when those who communicated with them *in sacris* pointed out to them. One Ferdinand Paz writing in 1557 says that a bishop who was in Malabar was of the Nestorian race though he found nothing of that heresy among the Thomas Christians. [29] In the same year Melchior Carneira SJ for whom the Thomas Christians were Nestorians wrote that they confessed by all means the Church of Rome as the principal one. Some of them, says he, told him that if they did not keep all the commandments, it was because the former Popes had dispensed them. [30] We think it will be of interest to cite here what Nunes Barreto SJ wrote about them in 1561. Barreto wrote saying: "I cannot tell you, most dear brethren, how much I was consoled in the Lord by seeing and dealing with those Christians who, from the time of St. Thomas till today, as it is believed, are

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27. Roz, SJ., *De Erroribus Nestorianorum qui in hac India Orientali versantur, in Orientalia Christiana,* Romae, No. 40. pp. 15, 21, 32, 33.
28. The bell is still kept at Kuravilangad.
29. Silva Rego, *documentacao para a Historia dos Missoes dos Portugues do Oriente,* Lisbonne, 1951, VI, p. 247 sq
30. Wicki, SJ., *Documenta Indica,* Romae; 1954, III, p. 806.

kept in the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ; and without having had the preaching or the administration of Sacraments or the other means of Divine Providence conserved among us nay, living in the midst of infinite infidels, not only molested by the gentiles but also persecuted by the Moors and Jews who live among them, they have always kept up the veneration, the obedience and the faith in the most holy Cross and also the remembrance of the mysteries of the Catholic Faith It pleased me much to be in the midst of these Christians and to learn through questions and conversations that they understood the mysteries of our holy faith: and I found them firm in the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity and in that of the Incarnation as well as in that of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar - this is much for a people taught by bishops who come from Syria, who are not theologians and some of whom were of the heresy of Nestorius " As their errors Barreto enumerates the use of leavened bread (for Mass) to which they added an oil which they believed to have been consecrated by Our Lord, the marriage of clerics after priesthood, usury, certain special ceremonies and "other similar errors". He says that in the evening and in the morning they participated in the Divine Office recited by their priests in their liturgical language. [30a]

In this connection we have to mention that the Church of the Thomas Christians was neither an integral part nor an output of the Church of Mesopotamia, and that the relations of the former with the latter were for practical but not for doctrinal purposes.

30a Letter from Cochin, Dec. 31, 1561. Marriage of clerics after priesthood was an abuse and was also punishable.

We may add a few more remarks about their attitude towards Rome. They did not consider themselves an independent Church or a Church separate from Rome. They believed in Roman Primacy as hinted above, though they had no occasions to enter into relations with Rome. Their liturgical and other books brought down from Mesopotamia contained classical passages (not one or two, but numerous) that in most clear terms affirmed the Divinely instituted Primacy of St. Peter and his successors, the Roman Pontiffs, over all the other Patriarchs. [31] In fact whenever they got an occasion to do so, the Thomas Christians publicly acknowledged their belief in Roman Primacy. John Marignoli, Papal Legate in China. says (1348) that the Thomas Christians of Quilon gave him every month, for eighteen months, one hundred gold *fanams* (Malabar coin) "as perquisite of my office as Pope's Legate", and a thousand when he left. [32] By the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century, the sea-passage offered them a link with the West. They *at once* availed themselves of this opportunity *spontaneously* and *regularly* entering into relations with the Pope as his children and subjects. Their history of the 16th century bears this out. [33]

True, European travellers and the Portuguese have made the whole world believe that the Thomas Christians were Nestorian heretics and schismatics, and that the Portuguese archbishop of Goa, Dom. Meneses, converted

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31. Khayyath, G., *Syri Orientales seu Chaldaei Nestoriani et Romanorum Pontificum Primatus*, Romae, 1870.
32. Mackinzie, G. T., *Op. C. l c.*
33. Cf. Tisserent, Card. E., *Ibidem.* Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam*, Romae, 1902.

them to the Catholic Church in 1599 through his visitation of their churches and through the synod he celebrated at Diamper. Suffice it to say that the means employed by Dom. Meneses to make them obey him was to threaten them with excommunication *latae sententiae* from the very start and sometimes to administer Sacraments in their churches after having opened them by force! [34] Recent studies have brought to light that what we know of Dom. Meneses and his "synod" of Diamper as published by Gouvea for his European readers, [35] does not fully agree with what really took place in Malabar. [36] The East Syrian Patriarch whom Dom. Meneses prevailed upon the Thomas Christians to condemn as a public heretic and schismatic, was none other than Mar Denha Simon who was in explicit communion with the Pope being also honoured with the sacred Pallium.

2. One may say that the Thomas Christians as a whole were leading a fairly good Christian life according to their knowledge in the circumstances in which they were. They frequented churches and sacraments as far as it was possible to do so, exhibited a special devotion towards the Madonna and St. Thomas, venerated the Cross, made pilgrimages, fed the poor, scrupulously observed the fasts prescribed by their Rite etc. In the 16th century when the Portuguese *forced* them to begin

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34. Raulin, *Op. C.* ubi de Journey of Meneses and the convocation of the synod.

35. The book is called Jornada of Archbishop Meneses of Goa (cited above). This is the first and the most important work on which later historians have based their conclusions. Unfortunately the mistake is repeated today also=see v. g. the information about the Thomas Christians in *Konfessionskunde* on Konrad Algermissen, Paderborn, 1957. pp. 276, 277.

36. Tisserant, E. Card., *Op. C.*, ubi de Diamper.

Lent on Ash-wednesday only, and to eat fish and drink wine during Lent, they ran away from the Portuguese settlements. [37] Here we have a proof for the sincerity of their faith and practice. It is remarkable that the same Thomas Christians who shunned Portuguese interference in matters liturgical gladly welcomed the *Rosary* and some other Marian devotions.

Their life was church-centered as it is today also. Their priests were from respectable families and were generally married. The priests recited the Divine Office in choir, and their assembly governed the parish, headed by the senior most at whose direction the others performed the parochial functions by turn. They grew beard. At home their dress consisted of a chemis and a pair of loose trousers; while going out they would put on a long white (rarely black) dress and a cap, would also carry in their hand an ornamented stick. There were two classes of priests, ordinary and more retired; the latter never ate meat or drank wine and led an austere life. If a non-Christian killed a priest the Christians would not rest satisfied until they had killed him, and, if possible, also his king. [38] Students to priesthood were taught by senior priests. The assembly of parishioners presented the candidate for ordination. Priests were ordained for parishes, not for the diocese. They were maintained by the parish and by the generous offerings of the faithful. These offerings consisted of sweets, cloth and money given on the occasions of feasts and marriages.

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37. Roz, SJ., *Report for 1604*, British Museum, Add. MS 9853, f. 90. Unfortunately the "synod" of Diamper has given us a pessimistic picture of everything depicting exceptions as though they were rules.

38. Vincenzo Maria, *Op. C.* L. II, C. VI.

Paulinus mentions some three places where there were monasteries of men. [39] It is committed to memory that near a church at Angamaly there were small cells belonging to certain families, and that members of these families used from time to time to retire to those cells for prayer and solitude. Chastity was held in very high esteem even by the non-Christians.

The administration of local churches were carried on by an assembly consisting of the priests of the church and of adult laymen. This assembly decided cases and inflicted punishments which sometimes amounted to "excommunication". The excommunicated could not receive the sacraments of confession and communion, would not be given *pax* in the church, could not sit in the parish assembly, priests would not enter their houses nor would bless their marriages nor take part in the "agape" feasts celebrated in their houses. They would be reinstated only after they had performed the penances imposed on them by the assembly. Before being absolved they had to stand at the door of the church and ask pardon of the others. While absolving them the priest would slightly beat them with a bundle of sticks. In the assembly the priests, the ancients and the oeconomi played an important part. [40] Today also there are assemblies of parishioners; but they function for the administration of the temporalities only; their powers too are highly curtailed.

The *de facto* administration of the whole Church rested with the Archdeacons who were unmarried priests,

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39. Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo, *Op. C.* p. 80.
40. Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 137.

almost always from the same family. There was only one Archdeacon at one time, even when there were more than one bishop at the same time though the East Syrian Rite and Canon Law prescribed one archdeacon for one bishop.

The descriptions given above indicate that the Thomas Christians had evolved a Canon Law adapted to their surroundings. This Law was different from that of the Church of Mesopotamia even though Mesopotamian bishops were in Malabar.

Due to their estrangement from the centre of Christianity, due also to their life in the midst of non-Christians, the Thomas Christians had no regular instruction in Christian doctrine. Hence certain articles of faith were obscured and some superstitious practices had crept in among them. This may explain how some of them could assume trusteeship in non-Christian temples, how temples and churches could exchange their paraphernalia on festive occasions etc.

In the socio-polilical set up of the country the Thomas Christians formed a noble entity. The other enteties were each a caste. Change of caste was inimaginable for a caste man, for whome caste rules and religion were more or less the same. Such a mentalitity on the part of non-Christians helped the Thomas Christians to preserve their faith. But it had its disadvantages. The high caste people considered change of religion as loss of nobility, if not loss of caste itself. In the case of the Thomas Christians, on the other hand, loss of nobility resulted in mixing with low caste people. Caste feelings too were not absent from them. This was why they were not making conversions on any large scale. The converts of the Thomas Christians were few. Individual converts

were gradually absorbed into the social body of the Thomas Christians. Those converted in a mass from a certain caste would remain a separate social entity. Due to social reasons intermarriage between them and the Thomas Christians was nil or very rare, especially in the case of the well-to do Thomas Christians. The same has always been the situation in the case also of other converts not made by the Thomas Christians. Certainly caste feelings are at the bottom of this aloofness.

The Thomas Christians are today carrying on conversion work on a very large scale. In their own ecclesiastical territory they convert non-Christians and aggregate them to their Rite under their ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In addition to this, more than three thousands of them—Priests, Brothers and Sisters—are now working in almost all the Latin missions of India and Pakistan. These, however, have had to change into or adopt the Latin Rite since the Thomas Christians have no outside mission in their own Rite. The caste barrier is gradually disappearing.

III

WORSHIP

Several things to be mentioned in this section could have been included in the preceding sections and *vice versa*.

Till the end of the 16th century the Thomas Christians were all using the genuine form of the East Syrian Rite. This Rite was originally the Rite of the Christians outside the limits of the Roman Empire. The Thomas Christians showed a special attachment to this Rite which they

also connected with St. Thomas in some way or another. This Rite, moreover, originated and developed in Mesopotamia and Persia which had had cultural and commercial relations with Malabar from very ancient times. The Thomas Christians had also a special liking for Syriac (Aramaic), their liturgical language, which even lay people learned so as to be able to recite their prayer in it. [41] It was, moreover, the commercial language in the East during the first centuries of the Christian era. Nunes Barreto says (1561) that they did not believe anything that was not presented to them in this language and that they had little faith in the Latin Language. [41a]

What is remarkable is that while using the East Syrian Rite for their worship, the Thomas Christians gave it a local colour. And this interests us here.

The churches were rectangular buildings divided into the sanctuary, choir, and nave. Externally they looked like non-Christian temples as is evidenced by a few pre-16th century buildings still in existence. The floor of the church used to be painted with cow dung. [42] Among the non-Christians the use of cowdung for painting the floor of temples and houses with, has a sacred signification since the cow is a sacred animal for them. For Christmas and Easter the floor of the church used to be strewn with the leaves of an aromatic plant called *edana*. This custom is still being kept up in some places. Men as today occupied the front part of the nave and women the hind part, there being separate doors for each. [43] The porch in front

41. Giamil, *Op C.*, Document, 22.
41a *l. c.*
42. Vincenzo Maria, *Ibidem*.
43. By an exception in the Churches of the Syro-Malankarians men now occupy the right and women the left side of the nave. This is an innovation of the 20th century.

of the church was served for keeping the arms of men during religious services. There used to be pictures of hunters, peacocks and mermen on the walls of churches.

The paraphernalia used for church processions were the same as those of non-Christian temples. Of these special mention must be made of a kind of umbrella *muthukuda* which in former times was a royal emblem. Even outside church processions the Thomas Christians had the privilege to use this umbrella. Church processions externally looked like processions in non-Christian temples. But in ordinary processions the priests carried small crosses in their hands; in extraordinary ones the Holy Bible used to be taken out and all would kiss it. All the churches had a copy of the Holy Bible adorned with gold or silver and precious stones. "It was not taken out" says Vicenzo Maria "for private use since they thought it improper to take out of the sanctuary the foundation of the faith." [44] The processions, as they do now, went round the open air cross erected in front of the church and then round the church, sometimes thrice. Now-a-days priests do not carry crosses nor the Holy Bible.

While participating in the "agape" feasts celebrated in churches the priests used to sit in the sanctuary and the laypeople in the nave. [45] The portions of absent priests and clerics were sent to their houses as it is done today also. The lay trustees of the church, the sacristan and the other employees also had their special shares.

As they do today, the people used to make offerings to churches in the shape of fowls, oxen, money

44. Vincenzo Maria, *Ibidem.*
45. Idem, *Ibidem.* Today among Catholics all eat outside the Church.

etc. Fowls and the like were put to auction and their price went to the treasury of the chruch. To those who offer money on feast days was given (as it is done now also) a little fried rice or a piece of cake which they consumed with great devotion. This remainds one of the non-Christian devotees who receive from their temples sacred ashes or edibles *(prasad)* that signify that the deity is pleased with their behaviour.

As in front of non-Christian temples, the churches had flag staffs; a flag hoisted on such a staff indicated that a feast was being celebrated. During certain feasts all were fed at the expense of the church. These things still continue.

Baptism and Confirmation were administered together according to the East Syrian Rite. Paternal grandfather's or grandmother's name was (and is) given respectively to the first male or female child. The second child likewise got the name of the maternal grandfather or grandmother. Christian names received modifications so as to suit Malabar tastes. Thus Jacob became Chacko, Chakkappan etc., Thomas, Thomi, Thomman etc., Anne, Annamma, Annakkutty etc. In all these no Mesopotamian touch could be discerned at all. Similar transformations of Hindu names are common among the non-Christians.

The Thomas Christians had the greatest respect towards the Most Holy Eucharist. Following the ancient custom, the schismatic priests among them even today do not speak to non-Christians some hours from before beginning the celebration of Mass. During the same hours they avoid, as far as possible, travelling on vehicles driven by non-Christians. Bread (as a rule leavened) freshly baked was brought to the priest on a fresh leaf just

before the Offertory [46]. The Eucharistic wine was prepared from dry grapes. Chalices used to be adorned with small bells suspended around the brim [47]. The behaviour of those who received Holy Communion was more or less the same as that of preists mentioned above as may be gathered from very old people.

We saw in the preceding section how public sinners were punished and absolved. Joseph the Indian, a Thomas Christian priest, who visited Portugal, Rome and Venice in the beginning of the 16th century, says that in Malabar there was the sacrament of penance and confession as among the Latins [48].

About Extreme Unction we do not possesss any pre-16th century information. Priests used to bless the sick, to read the Gospel over them and to attach to their bodies pieces of palm leaf or paper on which were written versicles from the Sacred Scripture. earth taken from the tomb of St. Thomas was mixed with water as drink for the sick. Marco Polo was a winteness to this in 1293 [49].

Young men used to be ordained priests before the age prescribed by Canon Law. Just after the initiation of a boy into the clerical state he used to be treated with sweets as the new couples used to be. A priest after his first Mass would be solemnly received into his house and he would then be loaded with ornaments of all sorts [50].

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46. Idem, *Ibidem.*
47. One such Chalice is still kept at Diamper.
48. Raulin, *Op* C. p. 386.
49. Cited by Meddlycott in *India and the Apostle St. Thomas,* London, 1905, pp. 84-87.
50. This custom was in vogue almost till the end of the last century.

Children used to be married before puberty. The parents chose the partners for their sons and daughters. The maternal uncles of the partners had a great part to play in this. Several social functions such as ceremonial bath, feeding the boy and girl with sweets before and after the marriage etc. had to be gone through. Instead of the wedding-ring prescribed in the East Syrian Rite the Thomas Christians had a small gold ornament *tali* which the boy tied to the neck of the girl.[50a] A cross of 21 minute beads distinguished the Christian *tali* from the Brahmin one. In imitation of the Brahmins the thread to suspend the *tali* on, was drawn out from the bridal veil *mantrakodi*. Married women (widows excepted) would never take off the *tali* from their necks. At their death it would either be buried with them, or deposited in the treasury of the church. Almost all these practices are observed today also. The ceremony of "shutting and opening of the bridal chamber" prescribed in the East Syrian Ritual seems to have been substituted by songs and the solemn bath of the bridegroom who came out of his appartment at the invitation of his mother-in-law. He would not come out until after she had promised to give him bronze vessels with a cow and calf. All these promises would be fulfilled after the birth of his first child [51]. After the marriage, the couple would be received in the house by the mother of the boy, and she would then hold in her

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50a The use of *tali* and a few other usages have been adopted by some other Christians os Malabar after the 16th century. For a long time these Christians and the Thomas Christians were under the same ecclesiastical jurisdiction aud not seldom Thomas Christian priests were ministering to them in their Churches.

51. This was common during the first decade of this century.

hand a lighted lamp and some grains of paddy immersed in water [52]. It was on marriage occassions that the Thomas Christians displayed their privileges and noble status more than on any other occasion. We leave out all such items here. Though they lived in the midst of non-Christians, divorce was unheard of among them.

The East Syrian Ritual was followed for the burial of the dead. The other things the same Ritual prescribes for the dead had assumed a different tract in Malabar. Till after the burial was over, no food would be prepared or eaten in the house of the dead. Certain classes of people who depended on the departed would bewail his death in songs for a certain number of days and they would be paid for this.

After the burial the priest would bless a tender cocoanut, drink a little of the water thereof and then give the same to be tasted by the near reletives of the deceased. All the subsquent feasts celebrated in memory of the dead were in name and nature Hindu, but Christanised by the prayer and blessings of priests. Those invited to these feasts would offer money in a plate and accept *pax* from the priest. The money was utilised in suffrage for the dead, or for the maintenance of priests. In certain of these feasts vegetable food alone was permitted. Almost all these practices have substantially come down to the present day, thanks to the conservative spirit of the Thomas Christians.

All the fasts and abstinences prescribed by the East Syrian Rite were scrupulously being observed by the

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52. This still survives in one from or another.

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Thomas Christians. They began their fasts with a bath, and the touch of non-Christians was considered a hindrance to fasting [53]. In addition to the fasts prescribed by the East Syrian Rite they fasted seven days before the 8th of September in honour of the B. V. Mary. This was (and is) a fast special to women. Those who kept this fast would remain in Church till midday, and while going out would eat of the edibles the others left for them at the door of the church. It has to be mentioned that in some places even non-Christian women still take part in this fast and come to the premises of the church to pray and make their offerings.

The Holy Week was observed in a special way by keeping vigils and giving alms lavishly. On Holy Thursday after (or before) supper the father of the family would break and dtstribute among the members of the family unleavend bread with a sweet drink. On Good Friday the floor of the house would be left unswept, and all, even children had to taste a little bitter water. Many of these practices are scrupulously being kept up even today.

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We have given above a short description of the Thomas Christians. The Portuguese were scandalised at most of their customs and practices including their Rite which was different from the Latin Rite. As a result of astute civil-ecclesiastical policy enhanced by misguided zeal and ignorance of things Oriental, the Portuguese succeeded to bring the Thomas Christians under their jurisdiction at the close of the 16th century. Latinisation

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53. Raulin, *Op, C.*, Sessio VIII of the Synod of Diamper

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Bangalore-29

of the East Syrian Rite, curtailing of the power of the Archdeacon, imposition of Latin Canon Law and an effort to suppress all Christianised Hindu customs were inevitable, since the Portuguese could not understand anything that was not Latin, everything else for them being heresy or schism or superstition. The result was the revolt of 1653 which in the case of many Thomas Christians ended in schism and the importation of Jacobitism [54]. Those who remained faithful were (and are) called *Pazhayakuttukar* i. e. the old party, and the schismatics were (and are) termed *Puthankuttukar* i. e. the new Party.

The *Pazhayakuttukar* had to struggle hard for about three centuries to obtain bishops of their own Rite. Ecclesiastically they are now known as *Syro-Malabarians* and are constituted into two archdioceses and five dioceses numbering more than a million. Their latinised East Syrian Rite is gradually being restored to its genuine form, thanks to the stand taken by Holy See. The promulgation by the Holy See of Oriental Laws will rectify the canonical anomalies introduced among them through Latin influence In their efforts to obtain bishops of

54. The revolt of 1653 was *not* against Rome, but was against the Portuguese Jesuits and the Jesuit bishop. Hence it was not a schism in the beginning. The leaders of the revolt, inspite of their misdeeds, made the people believe that they were with Rome The few who understood the situtation asked the pope and got down Italian Carmelites to save the situtation. Then many (*less than half* of the community) followed a Jacobite (Monophysite) bishop, denied the Roman Primacy and thus became schismatics. Till then, even the leaders who thus followed the Jacobite bishop were openly saying that they were with Rome. The majority, therefore, of the Thomas Christians (*Pazhayakuttukar* or the present Syro-Malabarians) did not become schismatics as a result of the revolt of 1653. But European writers have said the contrary! And in one way or another the mistake is being repeated. see v. g. *konfessionskunde* cited above.

their own Rite they had to witness deplorable schisms one of which (that namely of 1874) is still perpetuated in a handfull of families that have become Nestorian. [55] These have adopted the ancient East Syrian Rite.

The *Puthankuttukar* in course of time adopted the West Syrian Rite from foreign Jacobites. From them arose what are known as the *Anjur* and *Marthomite* Churches while a few of them embraced Protestantism. The rest till recently were divided into two parties, the one acknowledging, and other denying, the authority of the foreign Jacobite Patriarch. In all they number about a million. Those who from 1930 on-wards became Catholics from among the *Puthankuttukar* retain the West Syrian Rite, are known as *Syro-Malankarians*, are constituted into an archdiocese and a diocese, and number a hundred thousand. These have their beginning with Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos who became Catholic in 1930.

Though in Faith and Rite they differ among themselves, still, all the Thomas Christians are substantially the same in their ancient Indo-Oriental mind and outlook. This mentality in the *Pazhayakuttukar* has not been seriously affected by the present form of their Rite since this Rite exists in Syriac, a language not undertood by them now. If a contrary attitude is noticeable among clergy since the beginning of the present century, it is to be attributed mainly to the training they are getting. This, however, may prove harmful to the Catholic Cause they should always have at heart. It is their

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55. These schisms, too, were caused by leaders who in the beginning made the people believe that they were with Rome.

duty now more than ever before to show their non-Christian brethren that an Indo-Orietal expression, too, is not incompatible with genuine Christianity and that such an expression has always been India's from the very beginning of Christianity. This indeed is a noble and a pressing mission which at present no others could discharge as best as they could. They could also develop a specifically Indo-Oriental approach to theology by the aid of the S. Scripture, of the Oriental (especially Syrian) liturgies and of the Oriental Patristic tradition baptizing also the great philosophic thoughts of India. In this latter case they can take pride as any of their neighbours that Sankara, probably the greatest philosopher of India, was a son of Malabar.

III

THE THOMAS-CHRISTIANS AND 'ADAPTATION'

THESE DAYS WE hear much about 'adaptation' and Christianity in India. The Indian Christians, it is said, must adapt themselves to their surroundings so that they may appear as real Indians, thinking, living, and praying in conformity with the cultural heritage of India. The elements of truth found in Hindu thought and the Hindu way of life and mode of worship should be made the vehicles of Indian Christian thought and of the Indian Christian way of life and mode of worship or liturgy.[1] In this way an Indian Christian theology should be built up on the basis of Hindu philosophical thought, as Scholasticism was on that of Aristotelianism; Hindu practices, both profane and religious, should as far as possible be given a Christian sense and adopted by Indian Christians in their way of life and mode of worship.

Three elements are here presented for our consideration:

(1) An Indian theology which expresses, explains, co-ordinates, illustrates, and defends Chris-

1. No one speaks of adapting Islamic thought, its way of life or mode of worship, though the Muslims are also Indians.

tian dogmas by means of Indian philosophical categories;

(2) an Indian way of life, permeated with Christian ideas, in food, dress, customs, etc.;

(3) a mode of worship (liturgy) which is both Indian and Christian.

Have the Thomas-Christians, who form the oldest Christian community in India, contributed anything under these three headings? [2]

First, the Thomas-Christians have not contributed anything towards the formulation of an Indian Christian theology. They have, however, contributed very much in terms of way of life and mode of worship. If in way of life 'adaptation' or christianization has been complete, in the mode of worship adaptation has been only partial. We shall deal with these two separately, and then give the reasons why adaptation in the mode of worship has been only partial.

Way of Life

The Thomas-Christians had no need to adapt their way of life to the Hindu way; they had only to christianize their way of life, since they were converts from Hinduism. This christianization they have achieved to an admirable degree. Their daily life closely resembled that of their Hindu brethren. [3] We shall adduce a few

2. The Thomas-Christians had their home and habitat in Malabar (Kerala), on the south-west coast of India. They hail the Apostle St Thomas as the founder of their Church. From Malabar they are now spreading out to the other parts of India, though Malabar remains their home.

3. Here and below the past tense is often used because some changes have been introduced or some practices given up, since the end of the 16th century, and more especially since the 19th century.

isolated instances to illustrate this. A new-born child was smeared with powdered gold, honey, or ghee mixed with a substance called *vayampu*. The first confinement took place in the house of the girl's parents. Messengers belonging to the low castes dependent on the Thomas Christians were sent to the *boy husband's* house to announce the birth of the child. The Christian names imposed on the children in baptism were cast in Indo-Malabar moulds. The food given to infants at fixed stages of their life was the same as that given to Hindu infants at the corresponding stages. Children's ornaments were similar to those of Brahmin children, for example, leopard-claws or mongooseteeth set in gold; often these were made Christian by the addition of a cross. The children's teachers were not uncommonly Hindus. Like Hindu boys, Thomas-Christian boys learned *fencing* and underwent the same military training. Not only in the arrangement of marriages but also in the songs, the visit of the barber, the ceremonial baths, the giving of sweets, etc., in connexion with marriage, the Thomas-Christians followed the high-caste Hindu customs, only christianizing them whenever it was necessary to do so. The girl paid the dowry to the boy and not the other way round, as in some low castes. The sweets given to the couples in the church were called *aini*, a speciality (like some other sweets) common to them and the Brahmins. Thomas-Christian men dressed like Hindu men and also wore ear-rings, while a metal cross on their tufts of hair distinguished them as Christians. Their womenfolk were very modestly dressed more so than even the most modest of Hindu ladies; yet their dress was not foreign. They had a special dress with a fan-like appendage at the back, and wore a jacket

or half-sari; when going to church or visiting priests they covered their head and body with a big veil. They did not use such ornaments as were used by low-caste women. They did not eat with men, and were separated from them in the churches.

The Thomas-Christians rarely ate meat. In the *siting* and architecture of their houses, with wells and cowsheds attached, they followed Hindu practices. In almost every respect they lived an almost caste-bound life, so much so that they avoided the touch of low-caste persons, who were not allowed to come near their houses Their touch, however, was considered by high-caste Hindus as sufficient io purify objects regarded as 'defiled' by the touch of low-caste persons. Thomas-Christians would eat, as hosts or guests, only with those of their own social status, social equality being based on ethnic identity. With this close relationship they made converts from among the Hindus, though not on any large scale. They had under their protection seventeen or eighteen Hindu castes who defended their patrons' rights even by courting death. This shows how intimately the Thomas-Christians and their religion were connected with the country. Their Christianity did not in any way make them appear foreigners or enemies of the country, nor were they suspected as a 'denationalizing' force. They even took up arms in defence of their kings who were Hindus, and these kings honoured them by preserving the privileges which they had obtained from a very ancient ruler of Malabar. The Archdeacon, their ecclesiastical head, was also their leader *(jiathikkukarthavian)* in matters social and political. They obeyed their kings with no consideration for the intermediary officers, and they had a king to defend their rights.

In a word, in their way of life the Thomas-Chrisians could not be distinguished from their Hindu brethren except in a few respects which were specifiically Christian. They were an integral part of the body politic of the country. The Portuguese and the western prelates who ruled over them had little success in making them give up their Indian way of life which they had christianized to such an extent. Few Christians anywhere can ever have been so much at home among a non-Christian majority as the Thomas-Christians were among their Hindu brethren; we shall see below further examples of this apropos of worship and liturgy.

Political changes, English education, and frequent contact with the West have introduced certain changes in the customs mentioned above. But these changes are, to a great extent, common to the Hindus also. Patriots and lovers of tradition think it better that Thomas-Christians should give up these western trappings, though they are only superficial. Thus they could easily give up eating and drinking in the European style on solemn occasions, could give up the idea that western culture is in all respects superior to their own, could drop the western forms of names both inside and outside religious institutions. etc. In addition, they could restore many customs that have been abandoned only in this century. This is not to be done blindly, of course, but in accordance with modern needs and circumstances. It is a sudden break with the past that has taken place. The gap can be filled up by blending the past with the present, the present being made a natural extension of the past; the really outmoded past needs to be given up. In case of real need, foreign elements can and

should be adopted; but they should be assimilated to, not merely combined with, the existing structure.

Mode of Worship (Liturgy)

Under worship or the liturgy we include the sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments and 'sacramentals' such as the Divine Office, funeral services, the consecration of churches, altars, oils, etc., church processions, festal solemnities, pilgrimages, *agapae*, etc.

The sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments (except matrimony and the anointing of the sick), the 'sacramentals' such as the Divine Office, consecration of churches, altars, certain oils, etc., were all performed inside the church. Funeral services ended in the church, the cemetery being the churchyard. The other 'sacramentals' were performed either inside or outside the church according to their nature. All acts of worship had a congregational character (except auricular confession), the faithful taking part actively in them by singing and responding.

The prayers and formulas for all these acts of worship were those of the East Syrian Church of Mespotamia and Persia, and they were in Syriac, the north-eastern dialect of Aramaic, the language spoken by our Lord. These prayers and formulas were kept intact in their original Syriac. But the contexts in which they were used were all Indianized or Malabarized, with new Indo-Malabar christianized rites added to them as 'sacramentals'. A few instances of this adaptation are given below.

The churches in which the most important acts of worship were performed looked externally like Hindu temples except for the crosses on the roof and in the open air. The paraphernalia used in the churches, such as the

umbrellas, musical instruments, etc., were the same as those used in the Hindu temples. Like the latter, the churches had flagstaffs. A flag hoisted on the flagstaff was the sign that a feast was in celebration. The Christians retained this custom. Church properties were administered by an assembly *(yogam)* consisting of the adult males attached to the church. This system was similar to that in the Hindu temples. The bread for the Mass was brought to the celebrant on a fresh leaf, preferably a lotus-leaf.

We have already spoken of the transformation of names given in baptism. The first male and female children respectively were given the names of the paternal grandfather and grandmother; the second pair, those of the maternal grandfather and grandmother. Young men initiated in the clerical state used to be regaled with sweets; the first Mass used to be celebrated with all solemnities; the new priest used to be received in his parental home during the night surrounded by lighted torches, used alike in churches and Hindu temples.

Some of the social customs observed in marriage celebrations have already been mentioned. There was no wedding-ring; instead there was a small ornament called *thali* which the boy tied to the girl's neck. The wife has to wear it always during the lifetime of her husband; at her death it is buried with her, or is deposited in the treasury of the church. The thread to suspend the *thali* on for the first time is drawn out of the bridal veil, called the *mantrakodi* All these are Brahmin customs. The Christian *thali* is distinguished from the Brahmin one by a cross of twenty-one beads. The rite of shutting and opening the bridal chamber (a liturgical ceremony in the

East Syrian rite) was performed with popular songs, and the boy's mother-in-law had to play the central part. She would invite the boy to come out of the chamber for his bath; from inside he with his friends would offer resistance until she promised to give him bronze vessels and a cow with a calf. Here the ritual prayers of the East Syrian liturgy were substituted for the local Hindu practices and the traditional local songs.

The sick were blessed by priests with the recitation of appropriate prayers. They were given water to drink in which was mixed some earth taken from the tomb of the Apostle St. Thomas. Paper and palm leaf sections with verses from Holy Scripture written on them used to be attached to the bodies of the sick. In services for the dead, all the ritual or liturgical prayers were East Syrian; all other elements were Indo-Malabarese. No food was cooked or eaten in the house of the deceased until the burial was over, when the priest and the relatives of the deceased refreshed themselve, with the water of a tender coconut. The burial was followed by a vegetarian feast presided over by the priests and ordinary cummin was distributed to the participants. The relatives of the deceased observed the period of *pula* (defilement) like the Hindus, which was followed by a ceremonial bath, services in the church and a vegetarian feast, after which cummin was again distributed to the participants. *There* followed feasts known as the Seventeenth, the Twenty-eighth, the Fortieth, and the *sradha (chatham)* or anniversary; the later was kept annually by children in honour of their deceased parents. The food and sweets used at these feasts – with the exception of meat for the anniversary feast in some places – were those traditional among high-caste Hsndus.

Church processions, festal solemities, pilgrimages, *agapae*, all looked like their counterparts among the Hlndus. Fasts were observed with extreme care. They were begun with a bath, and the touch of low-caste people was considered a hindrance to fasting. The faithful made offerings in the churches, and on feast-days received a little fried rice or a piece of cake as a sign, so to say, that God was pleased with their offering. There are similar practices in the Hindu temples.

Adaptation in the mode of worship or liturgy, as these examples show, was partial; liturgical prayers and formulas were kept intact just as they were received from abroad with no change in their original language, while the externals were adapted to the Indian style; several local rites were also christianized as 'sacramentals'.

Why only partial Adaptation?

Why was the Thomas-Christians' adaptation in worship and liturgy only partial? The answer is that they had not developed a liturgy of their own, based on Holy Scripture and the tradition of the Church. They did not, therefore, consider the liturgy they had received from abroad to be foreign, and they held fast to it with great respect and veneration. This attitude was not without good foundation. A liturgy is a patristic synthesis of Holy Scripture and Tradition, and as such is a vehicle for expressing the faith of the Church. Moreover, it is based on the substance of the sacrifice of the Mass and the sacraments which Christ himself instituted and delivered to the apostles. Liturgies, as we know them, grew up and developed only in the

important Christian centres. Because of all this the Church considers the ancient litergies as priceless treasures. The Churches that had no Fathers nor important ecclesiastical writers did not develop their own liturgies, but received them from the other Churches that had developed them. The content and purpose of a liturgy were such that those who received it from elsewhere did not consider it as foreign. The Thomas-Christians, who had not developed a liturgy of their own received the East Syrian liturgy, which was known to them and nearer to them than all the others. They thus considered it too sacred to be changed or tampered with. Even the most fervent 'adaptationists' of today have the same respect for the texts of the ancient liturgies. (We speak here only of those who know what the ancient liturgies are). Besides the general sacredness attached to all the ancient liturgies, the East Syrian liturgy had another sacredness. It is Semetic in origin and is directly linked with the longuage and diction of the source of Christian revelation. It is clothed in a classical dialect of the Aramaic language in which Christ gave his revelation. In this connection it is also important that Aramaic was the commercial language in the east till the rise of Islam, and that it was the vehicle of the Jewish influence in Malabar. The cultural, commercial, and ecclesiastical relations of the Thomas-Christians with those who used the liturgy and the language in question seem to have induced the Indian converts to learn the language of that liturgy rather than put it into their own vernacular.

Again, the Thomas - Christians could not easily form the idea of Indianizing the services of the Syrian liturgy, especially those that were performed inside the

church, as most of them were. The acts of worship performed inside Hindu temples by Hindu priests are not congregational, as are the acts of worship performed inside the Christian churches. The prayers and actions of the Hindu priest are not seen or responded to by the 'congregation'. Hence the Thomas-Christians, who were converts from Hinduism, had nothing of the Hindu in them to put into the liturgy, the greater part of which was performed congregationally inside the church. But as regards the externals they had everything of the Hindu, and, as we have seen, they completely christianized every such item, even creating 'sacramentals' out of them.

In addition, the sacredness of the liturgy as coming down from Christ and the Apostles in the languae of Christ must have excluded, *a priori*, all kinds of vernacularization. The Hindu lays great stress on the words of the prayers which his priest utters in the temple. He never thinks of rendering them into the common vernacular. Adaptation therefore, or rather christianization, is seen mostly in the externals of warship, especially in such aspects of the sacraments and 'sacramentals' as had a social or popular aspect.

The phenomenon in question cauld be noticed also in those who, exasperated by the latinizations imposed on them by the Portuguese, left the Catholic Church and adopted another Syriac liturgy, the West Syrian, which is yet another 'patristic synthesis'. Since the laity among them had lost all acquaintance with the Syriac language they put parts of this liturgy into the vernacular, though with reluctance and under Anglican influence. But they did not change or tamper with the texts of the liturgy by

way of adaptation or Ind:anization. The externals, of which we spoke above, they kept and continue to keep, just as the Thomas-Christians do who follow the East Syrian liturgy.

What these latter have to do is to delatinize both the texts and the externals of their liturgy, and to vernacularize it, unless they are to learn Syriac, which is impossible now. Vernacularization is going on, yet the more important process is delatinization. This has been achieved to some extent (though with relnctance). In every effort it is vital to see that the traditions are not lost.

The loud clamour for 'Indianization' would give the impression that there has not been in India an Indianized Christianity or a christianized Hindu way of thought, life, and worship. This is not true in the case of the Thomas-Christians, who form the most ancient Christianity in India, except as regards an Indian theology. In other respects they are perhaps more Indianized than the most fervent of Indianizers would like to see realized in Indian Christianity.

IV

ONE RITE FOR INDIA?

THERE IS A strong movement in Kerala and in other parts of India, with support in Europe and America, in favour of a single 'rite' for all Indian Catholics. The laymen and priests who are active in promoting this movement in Kerala have brought to the notice of the ecclesiastical authorities their view that the presence of more than one 'rite' is the chief cause of dissension among Catholics there. In asking for 'one rite' they mean a new one calculated to express the life and worship of Indian Catholics in terms of Indian culture.

Rite and liturgy

Those who speak of a 'rite' in this controversy very often understand it in the sense of a liturgy. But liturgy is only one of the elements in a rite. Pope Pius XII in his encyclical on St. Cyril of Alexandria, said of the oriental rites that they comprise: 'the special patrimony. . handed down by our forefathers', such as 'the holy liturgy, . . . the hierarchical orders . . ., other elements of Christian life . . . all that depends on the history, genius, and temperament . . . of each single people.' [1] Vatican II

1. *Acta Aposlolicae Sedis* 36 (Rome 1944), pp. 136-7

seems to endorse this, since the decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* speaks of 'particular Churches or rites' as having their own 'liturgy, church discipline, spiritual heritage'. The Latin Church is included among 'particular Churches of this kind, in the east and the west'.[2] The universal Church is composed of several particular Churches or rites. In India there are three: the Malabar, the Latin and the Malankara. Of these the Latin is not an 'autonomous' particular Church or rite as the other two are; it is part the Latin particular Church found in India and elsewhere. Some of these particular Churches, such as the Greek, the Romanian, and the Ukrainian have the same Byzantine liturgy; but that does not make them one particular Church or rite. It is not a liturgy that makes a Church or rite particular or distinct; and so a unification of liturgies will not by itself unify two rites into one. Two or more liturgies within a rite may seem an anomaly; but we are not concerned with this since the advocates of one rite are certainly against it.

One single rite for India may mean (1) one single 'autonomous' Indian Church or rite with a single liturgy, or (2) one liturgy for the three 'autonomous' particular Churches or rites of India. To realize the former, all three will have to be fused into one, or any two of them into the third. The latter could be realized by the adoption of a single liturgy by each of the three Churches or rites. In all these cases one liturgy is envisaged, and one that is to be formed on the basis of an Indian culture. If such a particular Church or rite

2. 2-3, *Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. M. Abbott (London and Dublin 1966), p. 374

with a single liturgy came to be, the ideal, according to the general conception, would be to have one ecclesiastical jurisdiction in one and the same territory. At present the contrary is the case in Kerala and in some places outside Kerala where the rites coexist together.

Is one rite the remedy for dissension?

The advocates of one rite claim (not without exaggeration) that the chief if not the only cause of dissensions among the Catholics of Kerala is the plurality of rites. If this were really true, a single rite would do a great deal at least to cure these dissensions. But the Catholics of Kerala are divided among themselves not only on the basis of rites, but chiefly because they belong to different communities. The Northists and Southists have been using the same Malabar liturgy and living under one and the same ecclesiastical jurisdiction for more than twelve centuries. Nevertheless dissensions between them were not mitigated until separate bishops were given to each within the same territory. Again, for more than four centuries the two strong communities in the diocese of Cochin, known as the seven hundred and the five hundred, followed the same Latin rite and were under the same Latin ecclesiastical jurisdiction; but they could not get on peacefully together, and now each has as it were its own bishop (of Cochin and of Alleppey), each bishop exercising jurisdiction not only in his own territory, but also over churches of his own community in the territory of the other. There are other communities in Kerala under the same Latin jurisdiction and of the same rite, who do not get on peacefully together. These undeniable facts show that among the communities of Kerala, unity of rite and jurisdiction could not

establish peace and concord. If so, would one rite serve the far more numerous communities of India?

One rite is not the remedy, for the plurality of rites is not the cause of the malady. The dissensions in question are not precisely between faithful of the oriental and the Latin rites. They are fundamentally between communities which may be of the same or of different rites. This truth seems to have been drowned in the propaganda for a single rite. Communities in Kerala are constituted on the basis of caste. Such elements as history, occupation and social custom enter into the constitution of these communities, each of which as a rule is endogamous and has a kind of culture of its own. These community traits are good in themselves, but if they are not kept within bounds, unhealthy rivalries and dissensions break out. The blame for these is often attributed to the difference in rites, which in some cases indeed enhances the difficulties of the situation.

As in Kerala communities are constituted on the basis of caste, in Europe and elsewhere they are formed on the basis of language and race, of tribal and national differences. It is but natural that any community conscious of its identity will endeavour to preserve and to promote its own wellbeing. In this endeavour, mingled with jealousy, each community often trespasses beyond any legitimate bounds. The resulting rivalries and dissensions become more acute in places where different communities live together, whether they are of the same rite and jurisdiction or of different rites. Ultimately, it is not the rites, nor any of the other elements that divide the faithful into different communities, but 'the old Adam' that is responsible for the evils that are often perpetrated

under the camouflage of rites. What St Poul says of law and sin we may apply to communities and dissensions:

> 'Sin found its opportunity in the commandment, seduced me, and through the commandment killed me. Therefore the law is in itself holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. Are we to say then that this good thing was the death of me? By no means. It was sin that killed me, and thereby sin exposed its true character: it used a good thing to bring about my death, and so, through the commandment, sin became more sinful than ever.' (Rm 7: 11–13)

Rite is drawn in as a pretext where the communities are of different rites. As a matter of fact quarrels between communities of the same rite are often more acute. Since the communities in question are accustomed to their own liturgies, a new common liturgy will deteriorate in its new setting. There will be a danger that each community will tamper with it to suit its own cultural traits and tastes, precisely because the new common rite is Indian and based on Indian culture. If one single particular Church or rite takes shape, what will be the result? It is extremely difficult to wipe out the historical, temperamental, and other characteristics that constitute particular rites. These characteristics enter into the constitution of other caste-shaped communities, for instance the Northists and the Southists, and the seven hundred and the five hundred in Cochin. These are test cases, where liturgy was not a problem; but liturgy will create difficulties for an Indian rite because of the multiple nature of Indian culture. Mutual comprehension and Christian charity seem to be the only practical and realistic remedy for the evils in question, which are

not to be exaggerated, as is often done by propagandists. Pastoral co-operation and union among bishops and priests can do much to check the feverish activities of putting up rival churches and institutions in pretended zeal for the conversion of non-Christians. If this cannot be done among Catholics in this age of dialogue, there is not much meaning in speaking of ecumenism, or of dialogue between Catholics and non-Catholics or non-Christians. This remedy may be hard to apply, but it is easier of application than the remedy of a single rite, as its fruits will be more abundant and more natural.

His Holiness Pope Paul VI, preaching at the Syro-Malankara *qurbana* on 4 December 1964, said among much else:

> 'The plurality of the three traditions is a living witness to catholicity of the Church of Christ....In recognizing this truth we acknowledge the obligations it places upon us. The first of these is that we acknowledge the necessity for a deep, fraternal co-operation among those who share different liturgical traditions....Perhaps in the past the idea of legitimate plurality joined with mutual co-operation may have been obscured at times. But today there must be a new dedication to this idea....There is another obligation...to remain faithful to your traditions, at the same time as you strive to adapt yourselves to the needs of the present age. Fidelity to your tradition will help to maintain many ties with what is good and genuine in the past....In a spirit of fidelity and charity . . . you can contribute greatly to the building up of unity among Christians who live and work together side by side. This must be joined with a living adaptation to the needs of your people.'[3]

3. *Osservatore Romano*, 4 Dec. 1964.

The pope's words are realistic and practical. He is positively in favour of the plurality of liturgical traditions which, he insists, should be faithfully followed. Mutual co-operation in the spirit of charity among the ecclesiastical heads and their followers is the real key to the spread of the kingdom of Christ. We omit other ecclesiastical documents that speak in the same strain.

New and ancient liturgies

The one-rite movent lays great stress on a new liturgy to be formed on the basis of Indian culture. But what is this culture, Muslim or Hindu or a synthesis of both? Many of those who speak of an Indian rite seem to have in mind only Hindu culture, but the Muslims of India are Indians. Hindu culture is not homogeneous. If in the north it is predominantly Aryan, in the south it is Dravidian. Hindu society is divided into an infinite number of castes and subcastes, each of which is an enclosed community with a culture of its own. Food, clothing, accents of the same language differ from caste to caste, and, as a rule, there is no intermarriage or social intercoure between one caste and another. It is true that these caste barriers are being pulled down; but the types that they have founded and formed remain fundamentally unaltered. The sacred books and ancient philosophical works of the high castes, in which their culture is embodied, have been kept away from others, who have only recently had access to them. The knowledge that they have so lately gained cannot replace their own cultures. Such knowledge can only be combined with, or at the most assimilated to, the cultures that they already possess. The philosophical and theological systems in the possession of the higher castes contradict one another. One is moni-

stic and denies a personal God distinct from the universe; another is dualist, but denies creation; a third is materialistic, and there are more of them. What is common to all the castes includes belief in the transmigration of souls. In the literature of the higher castes there are really sublime theological and ascetical thoughts that appeal to Christians. Many things in Hinduism, such as fasting, penitential exercises, and sanctification, have the semblance of their Christian counter-parts, but their inner meaning and bearing are far from being Christian. All these multiple contradictory elements will have to be co-ordinated and Christianized to make them the basis of an Indian liturgy. As I have said before, Muslim culture cannot be passed over. A synthesis of Muslim and Hindu cultures will not be acceptable to either.

None of the ancient liturgies used in the Church had a mushroom growth. They grew with the Church in a gradual process of development. Each had its own growth to perfection according to a definite pattern. The unchanging elements, the substance of the eucharistic sacrifice and of the sacraments, were instituted and given to the apostles by Christ himself Around these elements liturgies began to grow in important Christian centres. It took centuries for each of them to attain to its own structural perfection. Each has still to grow with the Church, but always within its own structural form or spirit. Some churches accepted liturgies developed in other Christian centres, and adapted them in externals to their own tastes, without, however, impairing their inner content, structure, and spirit. The ancient liturgies are each a sacred tradition of inestimable human, historical. and religious value. Each is a treasure from which the Church draws out things old and new. The axiom, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, has a special appli-

cation to them, for they are the expression of the faith contained in Scripture and Tradition as set forth for us by the Fathers of the Church.

Certainly we may speak of formulating a new liturgy with the unchangeable elements instituted by Christ, set into the cultural elements of a given country. But this is not at all easy, if the cultural elements concerned are diverse and mutually exclusive. Even if all these difficulties could be overcome, the new liturgy would still lack the benefits of ecclesistical tradition and historical continuity that express the life, thought, and prayer of the Church, as it has passed through the various periods of its history in the various regions of the world. [4]

4 The same has to be said if the movement for one rite aims at putting together the traditional elements of several liturgies into one, for each embodies a distinct, uniform traditional theology or theological tradition.



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