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Role
of
The Archdiocese of Verapoly
in
The Malabar Church

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INTRODUCTION

In the region of Malabar, comprising the State of Kerala — the smallest, but one of the most enlightened of the States of the federal Republic of India — there is a Catholic population of more than two millions. One section of them follows the Syrian rite, and its members are therefore known as Syrian Catholics or briefly “Syrians”, though they are all indigenous Christians. The other, also purely indigenous except a very small section of mixed descent, follows the Latin rite, and its members are for that reason called Latin Catholics or even merely “Latins”. Thus each of the two divisions of the Catholics of Malabar is known by the rite it follows — the Latins or the Syrians.

The Archdiocese of Verapoly is the Metropolitan See of the Dioceses of the Latin rite, of which there are seven, including the Archdiocese. It came into existence formally in 1886, when the Hierarchy of India was established by Pope Leo XIII by his Apostolic Letter, *Humanae salutis auctor*, dated 1st September of the same year. For more than 200 years which preceded that landmark — the greatest in the history of the ecclesiastical organisation of the Catholic Church in India — the Archdiocese functioned in its initial form as the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar, (briefly the Malabar Vicariate). The Vicariate was known also as the Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly, the two names being used interchangeably.

The Archdiocese derives its name from the place of its original headquarters, namely, Verapoly — an island situated at the confluence of the Alwaye river with the extensive and winding backwaters of Travancore and Cochin. During the last sixty years, however, the headquarters of the Archdiocese of Verapoly have been in Ernakulam, the heart and nerve-centre, so to say, of its numerous flock and the proper place where its headquarters ought to be, though for historical reasons it still bears its old name.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF VERAPOLY

Owing to its past history and the services it has rendered to the cause of the Church in Malabar, the Archdiocese of Verapoly occupies a position of unique importance.

SENIORITY OF STATUS

Among all the twelve Dioceses and four Archdioceses into which the whole Catholic community of Malabar, consisting of the Latins and the Syrians, is divided, the Archdiocese of Verapoly is the oldest. At the time of the establishment of the Hierarchy of India in 1886 by Leo XIII there was only one Archdiocese in the whole of India, Burmah, Ceylon, Tibet and the East Indies, namely, the Padroado Archdiocese of Goa. The rest of the ecclesiastical sees in these countries consisted of 23 vicariates apostolic and 4 prefectures apostolic (vide *The Madras Catholic Directory*, 1887). When from among these vicariates apostolic of that time seven were selected to be raised to archiepiscopal dignity in virtue of the Apostolic Letter, *Humanae salutis auctor*, Verapoly had the honour of being one of them — the only one Archdiocese in Malabar — and made the head of the Hierarchy of Malabar. The Archdiocese is thus one of the earliest of the existing Archdioceses in India, Burmah and Ceylon and the Indies, with the sole exception of the Archdiocese of Goa.

MOTHER OF MALABAR DIOCESES

It is well-known that the Archdiocese of Verapoly, either as such or in its earlier form as the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar, is directly or indirectly the progenitor of all the seven Archdioceses and Dioceses of the Syrian rite now known as the Syro-Malabar rite, as well as of all the six Dioceses of the Latin rite. Only the Archdiocese of Trivandrum, and Tiruvalla its suffragan, whose congregations constitute the small body who have re-joined the Catholic Church from among the Jacobites and follow the Syro-Malankara rite, do not stand in filial relationship with the Archdiocese of Verapoly.

THE DIOCESES OF THE SYRIAN RITE

Firstly, we shall deal with the Sees of the Syro-Malabar rite, since their origin is closer to the Archdiocese of Verapoly as such than of most of the Dioceses of the Latin rite.

For more than two centuries and a quarter, from the establishment of the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar in 1659 until the year 1887, the

Catholics of the Syrian rite were — partially till 1838 when their old See of Cranganore was suppressed and annexed to the Vicariate, and thereafter entirely — under the jurisdiction of that Vicariate. The congregation of the Vicariate was composed of both the Syrians and the Latins, the latter consisting largely of the descendants of St. Thomas Christians who adopted the Latin rite during the Portuguese regime in Malabar, as will be explained later. Thus the two branches of the Catholic Church in Malabar lived jointly for a very long time under the common jurisdiction of the Malabar Vicariate.

When with the establishment of the Hierarchy in India in 1886, as stated above, the Vicariate was transformed into the Archdiocese of Verapoly, the Syrian Catholics formed part and parcel of that Archdiocese. In 1887, however, they were separated from the Archdiocese, and placed in two Vicariates Apostolic of the Syrian rite, Trichur in the north, and Kottayam in the south. Those two Vicariates were subsequently reorganised into three — Ernakulam, Trichur and Changanacherry, in 1896, the last one being bifurcated in 1911 into Changanacherry and Kottayam, the latter consisting of the section called the "Southists". Thus by 1911 four Vicariates were formed with the territories and peoples belonging to the Archdiocese of Verapoly.

These four Vicariates were subsequently elevated into Dioceses, in 1923, with Ernakulam as the Metropolitan See. All of them therefore stand in filial relationship with Verapoly.

In 1953, a new Diocese of the Syro-Malabar rite was created — the Diocese of Tellicherry and made suffragan to Ernakulam. The Diocese of Changanacherry was raised to archdiocesan status in 1956 with a new Diocese, Palai, created out of its territories and made suffragan to the Archdiocese of Changanacherry. So also out of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam the new Diocese of Kothamangalam was formed as suffragan to the former.

From this brief survey it will be seen that the two present Archdioceses of the Syro-Malabar rite and all its five suffragan Dioceses have, directly or indirectly, originated from the Archdiocese of Verapoly.

THE DIOCESES OF THE LATIN RITE

As regards the six Dioceses of the Latin rite, they are all in various degrees connected in parental lineage with either the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar or the Archdiocese of Verapoly into which the Vicariate evolved.

Of these, the Diocese of Quilon has had a chequered history. In the year 1329 Pope John XXII constituted Quilon as an episcopal See

of the Latin rite — the first of its kind in the whole of the Indies. But its Bishop, the famous Dominican friar Jordan Catalani, did not reach the place to take charge of the Diocese. The See soon became defunct.

After several vicissitudes the territory of Quilon mission was merged into the Malabar (Verapoly) Vicariate in 1838. It was separated from that Vicariate and constituted into a distinct Vicariate Apostolic, suffragan to Verapoly, in 1845. This was finally confirmed by a Decree of Pope Pius IX, dated 15th March 1853. The See was raised to episcopal status when the Hierarchy was established in 1886.

Thus the Vicariate Apostolic of Quilon (now the resuscitated Diocese of Quilon) was reborn out of the Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly with which, therefore, it stands in semi-filial relationship, if one may so call it.

From the Diocese of Quilon there branched off first the Diocese of Kottar, now outside Kerala State, and then the Diocese of Trivandrum, both of which therefore can claim semi-filial relationship in the second degree with the Malabar Vicariate.

The Diocese of Vijayapuram was erected in 1930 by bifurcating the Archdiocese of Verapoly itself. The Archdiocese is, therefore, directly its progenitor.

The Diocese of Calicut was formed in 1923 by the bifurcation of the Diocese of Mangalore, which itself had been formed out of the Malabar Vicariate as a separate Vicariate in 1853 and raised to episcopal status in 1886. Thus Calicut also stands in filial relationship with the Malabar Vicariate and hence to the Archdiocese of Verapoly.

Of the remaining two Dioceses, namely Cochin and Alleppey — which together formed one Diocese (Cochin) till its recent bifurcation — the former has a long history behind it.

The Diocese of Cochin was originally created by Pope Paul IV in 1558, during the heyday of the Portuguese supremacy on the Malabar coast, and was a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Goa. After the conquest of Cochin by the Dutch, the Diocese came to have a precarious existence. The spiritual care of a large part of its flock was therefore entrusted to the Malabar Vicariate. In 1838, Pope Gregory XVI, by his Bull *Multa praeclare* annexed it to the Vicariate of Verapoly.

In 1886 with the establishment of the Hierarchy of India, the defunct Diocese was resuscitated by the Concordat concluded by Leo XIII with King Luis of Portugal. The resuscitated Diocese thus arose out of

the Vicariate of Verapoly and may therefore be said to have been re-born out of the latter.

In 1952 the Diocese was bifurcated into the Dioceses of Cochin and Alleppey.

In view of the fact that the original Diocese of Cochin had been merged into the Vicariate of Verapoly in 1838 by the Bull *Multa praeclare* of Gregory XVI, as mentioned above, and that by its resuscitation in 1886 the Diocese was reborn from that Vicariate, the present Dioceses of Cochin and Alleppey stand in semi-filial relationship, — the latter in the second degree — with the former Vicariate and therefore with the Archdiocese of Verapoly.

Beyond the limits of Malabar are the two Dioceses of Mangalore and Kottar (included in the State of Madras after the reorganisation of the Indian States in 1956). The Vicariate of Mangalore was formed from the Vicariate of Malabar in 1853 and made a Diocese in 1886. It therefore originated from the Malabar Vicariate. Kottar was formed by the bifurcation of the Diocese of Quilon, itself a progeny of the Malabar Vicariate. Both these are thus ancestrally connected with the Archdiocese of Verapoly, the transformed Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar.

From the brief survey made above, it will be seen that the Archdiocese of Verapoly, either in its own name or in the name of the former Vicariate of Malabar, is in the position of parent or ancestor of all the existing Archdioceses and Dioceses of Malabar, — Syrian and Latin — with the exception of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum of the Syro-Malankara rite (followed by the Jacobites reunited with the Catholic Church) and Tiruvalla, its only suffragan. Outside Kerala, two Dioceses also stand in this relation to the Archdiocese of Verapoly.

CHRISTIAN ANTIQUITY OF THE CONGREGATION

Besides the seniority of historical and ecclesiastical status enjoyed by the Archdiocese of Verapoly, as explained earlier, there are other factors that have enhanced its reputation as an important entity in the fabric of the Catholic Church in India, and more particularly in Malabar.

The Christian antiquity of its congregation is one of these factors. The Church in Malabar is proud of its ancient origin, believed to be from the Apostle St. Thomas. In that origin the congregation of the Archdiocese of Verapoly can legitimately claim to share, since that congregation consists, to a large extent, of the descendants of those St. Thomas Christians, who during the Portuguese rule in Malabar in the XVI and XVII centuries changed over from the Syrian to the Latin rite. Thus there had come into existence a strong body of ancient St. Thomas'

Christians following the Latin rite. In the course of the following centuries that body grew in numbers. It is a part of this body that to-day constitutes the predominant portion of the congregation of the Archdiocese of Verapoly, in the same manner, though perhaps in a lesser proportion, as in the present Dioceses of the Syrian rite.

Hence, if the present Dioceses of the Syrian rite are legitimately proud of the communities of ancient Christians existing in them, the Archdiocese of Verapoly can be proud of the same fact, as is also the case with the neighbouring Diocese of Cochin, wherein were the original centres of the ancient St. Thomas Christians who adopted Latin rite.

THE MALABAR CHURCH IN CRISIS

Lastly, it was the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar and its Carmelite missionary precursors that saved the Catholic Church in Malabar from the gravest crisis it had ever to face — namely, the revolt of the majority of the faithful in the year 1652, culminating in the famous oath of the “Coonen Cross” and the farcical “consecration” of an “archbishop” of their own. Eternal gratitude is thus due to the Vicariate for this great feat, but for which, perhaps, there would have been no Catholic Church in Malabar worth the name. The legacy of the credit of this glorious achievement has fallen upon the Archdiocese of Verapoly in virtue of its continuity from the Malabar Vicariate, and has invested the Archdiocese with a halo that is solely its own.

Thus the importance of the Archdiocese of Verapoly is unique. For more than two centuries, from the time of its inception in 1659 to the establishment of the Catholic Hierarchy of India in 1886, the Vicariate of Malabar or Verapoly presided over the destinies of the Catholic Church in Malabar. With all its faults and drawbacks, it prepared the way for the great developments of the future, by stabilising and strengthening the Christian community, chiefly by means of preparing successive generations of the clergy through its great seminary and extending the Kingdom of Christ into the remote and benighted corners of the country. From Verapoly arose the stream that watered and nourished the Church in Malabar for two centuries and broadened itself to the mighty river of Catholic life and vigour, which is seen to-day in this land of ancient Christianity.

II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Period of Rule by Bishops from Persia (IV to XVI century)

EARLY CENTURIES

To understand the origin of the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar, which was the original form of the Archdiocese of Verapoly, one has to look back into some of the aspects of the early history of the Malabar Church.

According to tradition and historical records based upon it, Christianity was introduced into Malabar and certain other parts of India by the Apostle St. Thomas, who is believed to have landed in Malabar about the year 52 A.D.

The history of the Malabar Church during the early centuries of the Christian era is practically unknown. It is, however, certain that it had very little contact with the Roman Church or with the countries of the West.

INTERCOURSE WITH PERSIA — EARLY PHASE

But during the period beginning from the fourth century, or perhaps even earlier, down to the fifteenth, it cultivated (through trade channels) intercourse with the Church in Persia. In Persia of that time, especially in Mesopotamia, the Church had been organised from the earliest centuries of the Christian era, and had patriarchs, bishops and clergy. "For many centuries" says a modern historian, "this most successful missionary church continued to spread through Persia, Tartary, Mongolia, China and India, developing on lines of its own, very little influenced by the rest of Christendom." The liturgy of the Persian Church was in the East Syriac language and is known in history as the Syro-Chaldaic liturgy and the rite as the Syro-Chaldaic rite.

Owing to their contact with the Persian Church the Malabar Christians obtained from Persia, though intermittently and at long intervals, prelates of Syrian rite to rule over them as bishops. But very little is known about them, though one or two names find mention like that of a bishop named Dudi or David from Persia, who sailed from Basrah in 295 A.D., and that of another bishop named John (325 A.D.), who at the Council of Nicaea is said to have borne the title of "Bishop of Great India and Persia" though according to the historian Gelzer this does not find mention in the records of the Council.*

* Cardinal Tisserant's *Eastern Christianity*, p. 7.

ADVENT OF THOMAS OF CANA

The first known instance of an oriental bishop and clergy coming to Malabar and ruling over the Malabar Christians was, again, according tradition, in the year 345 A.D., when a Christian merchant from Jerusalem, named Thomas of Cana, came into this country with several families from Jerusalem, Baghdad and Nineveh, and settled down here. It would appear that it was at the instance of the Bishop of Edessa in Mesopotamia, with which city the Malabar Christians had close relations ever since the time of St. Thomas, and of the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, also in Mesopotamia, that Thomas of Cana took this step, the Bishop of Edessa himself with a number of priests and deacons accompanying him and his followers.

It has to be noted that the new-comers coming with their own bishop and priests and deacons, must have brought with them the Syro-Chaldean liturgy and rite which they had been following in their homeland. The immigrants were rich and became highly influential in the country of their adoption. The St. Thomas Christians, having no bishops and priests of their own, must have easily adopted the form of worship brought by the new-comers. Whatever might have been the liturgy and rite which they had been following previously, there can be no doubt that with the advent of Thomas of Cana and his people the Syro-Chaldaic liturgy took firm root in the Malabar Church.

ORIGIN OF THE SYRO-CHALDAIC LITURGY OF THE MALABAR CHURCH

Incidentally it may be stated here that it is asserted by some writers of recent times that the Syro-Chaldaic liturgy of the St. Thomas Christians was given by St. Thomas himself. It is hard to believe such a fantastic theory, since it happens to be based upon unwarranted conjectures. St. Thomas, it is believed, instituted an order of priesthood and even a rudimentary episcopacy with members selected from the families of high caste Hindus (Nambudiri Brahmins) whom he had converted. It is highly improbable that he imposed upon them a liturgy in a language quite strange to them. It was never the custom with the Apostles to make the peoples whom they converted to use a foreign tongue by way of liturgy or otherwise. St. Peter, for example gave a Latin liturgy to the Christians of Rome. In Greece there arose the various forms of Greek liturgy, and in oriental countries liturgies in their regional languages. Moreover, earlier authorities held the view that St. Thomas gave a Dravidian liturgy to the Christians whom he converted.* If at all a Syrian liturgy had already been in use

* Vide, the *Madras Catholic Directory* of 1909, p. 166 and 1910, p. 294, and some previous issues. Information contained in it was supplied by the authorities of each diocese or vicariate.

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when Thomas of Cana came, it is reasonable to think that it must have found its way into Malabar from the Persian Church. If so, that circumstance must have greatly facilitated the introduction and propagation of their own liturgy and rite by the new-comers, even if they were not the first to introduce a Syrian liturgy into the country.

PERSIAN BISHOPS AFTER THOMAS OF CANA

The influx of Syrian prelates from Persia, with probably long breaks, continued down the centuries that followed. Historians have found it extremely difficult to piece together the historical fragments of this long and dark period into a connected history. But all evidence available on this matter points to the conclusion that the Malabar Church had its spiritual relationship solely with Persia, and, intermittently at least, it received its bishops and even priests from there. From the scanty records that are available, like, for example, the account of the traveller Cosmas Indicopleustes, who visited south-eastern Asia between 520 and 525, and certain other sources, it can be concluded that the Christians in Malabar had Persian bishops to rule over them. At the time of Catholicos Isoyabh II (628-644) bishops and priests were sent to India. By the eighth century there are clearer indications of this connection. Catholicos Timothy I (780-823) mentions that many Chaldean monks were crossing the sea towards India and China. The said Catholicos even gave to the Malabar Church a metropolitan thus making it independent of the see of Rewardashir, which was in schism with Seleucia-Chesiphon.

More Persian immigrants arrived, one group with a bishop named Thomas (795), and another some forty years later with Mar Sarisho (wrongly called Sapor) and Mar Peroz (also wrongly called Proth). Both the groups are believed to have settled mainly at Quilon. It is found that according to Catholicos Theodosius (853-858), the metropolitans living far away *as in India* were to send their letters of consent and communion with the Catholicate every six years.

For the rest of the period down to the end of the Middle Ages there are but scanty indications about the relations of the Malabar Church with Mesopotamia.

PERSIAN BISHOPS — LAST BATCH

In the 15th century, however, the relations appear to have been resumed. At that time there were no bishops in Kerala. Hence the St. Thomas Christians sent a deputation to Mesopotamia praying the Catholicos (Patriarch) Simon IV to send them some prelates. It may be noticed here that this Catholicos as well as his numerous successors

were all Nestorians (vide the list of Chaldean Patriarchs given by Cardinal Tisserant in his book *Eastern Christianity in India*). The request was granted and two Persian monks were chosen and consecrated bishops. They were Mar John and Mar Thomas. They arrived in Malabar in 1490 and began to minister to the Christians here. Noticing the need for prelates, Mar Thomas returned to Chaldea and brought to his Catholicos the offerings of the faithful as a symbol of their spiritual and temporal allegiance. The recently elected Catholicos, Mar Elias V (1502-1503), gladly received the good news and consecrated for India three new prelates, a metropolitan Mar Yahballaha and two new suffragans, Mar Denha and Mar Jacob. They safely reached the shores of Kerala with Mar Thomas. It is this hierarchy composed of a metropolitan and four suffragan bishops that the Portuguese found in Malabar at their first landing.

It is also seen that the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon selected the bishops for the Malabar Church from the monks of his own surroundings instead of creating an indigenous hierarchy.

Thus all the bishops whom the Malabar Church had since at least the fourth century, if not earlier, were prelates from Persia, sent either by the Metropolitan of Rewardashir in southern Persia, and from above the middle of the fifth century, by the Catholicos (Patriarch) of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia.

NESTORIAN HERESY IN PERSIA

It is necessary to note here that while the Malabar Church was receiving its bishops and even priests from the Persian Church the latter had been undergoing certain changes which were bound to react upon the beliefs, practices and customs of the Malabar Church, which became a mere satellite of the Persian Church.

At first the Persian Church was under the ancient Patriarchate of Antioch. But it renounced all subjection to Antioch and the so-called "Western" bishops at the Council of Seleucia held in 410. Thereafter the ecclesiastical superior of the whole Church was the Bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. After the Council of Ephesus in 431, in which Nestorius, the heretical Patriarch of Constantinople, was condemned, the Church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon refused to accept the condemnation and cut itself and Churches to the East of it off from the Catholic Church. In 498, the Catholicos assumed the title of the "Patriarch of the East" (later known also as the Patriarch of Babylon). Nestorianism was introduced as the official creed of the Chaldean Church with Seleucia-Ctesiphon as its Patriarchal see during the time of the Catholicate Patriarch, named Babai (497-502).

From the VI century onwards until 1551, when Simon VIII Sulaqa (1551-1555) became the Catholicate Patriarch and reunited with Rome, the whole line of these Patriarchs of Babylon, (as they are better known) with a few exceptions had been adherents of Nestorianism. It is obvious that bishops selected and consecrated by such Patriarchs, excepting those who had returned to Catholicism, could not but have been of Nestorian persuasion. From 1551 there were two rival lines of Patriarchs, one in communion with Rome and the other Nestorian. Prelates were sent to Malabar, sometimes by one and sometimes by the other. In any case, the five bishops who came to Malabar shortly before the advent of the Portuguese were all sent by Nestorian Patriarchs. As stated by the eminent authority Mr. G. T. Mackenzie in the *Travancore State Manual* (1906 edition, vol. II p. 158) who has ably examined the question, "these five bishops were sent by Patriarchs (Babylon) not in communion with Rome and as they reported to the Patriarch that these Syrian Christians were common in faith with them, it seems that these Syrian Christians were Nestorian in doctrine". The same fact can be verified by a reference to the list of the Chaldean Patriarchs given by no less an authority than His Em. Cardinal Tisserant in his famous book *Eastern Christianity in India*.

Thus there is every likelihood that Nestorian heresy had entered Malabar through its Persian Bishops and become embodied to some extent in the Syro-Chaldaic liturgy of the Malabar Church.

Therefore, there is nothing wrong in maintaining that the Malabar Church of the pre-Portuguese days was a Nestorian church. This view finds confirmation in the latest statement of high authority. In the News Bulletin No. 44, dated November 16, 1964, of the Official Press Release of the third Session of the present Ecumenical Council, it is stated as follows:—

"The churches of the Malabar family in India go back to the time of the Apostle, St. Thomas. The hierarchy was early established under the authority of the Catholicus of Babylon, who had erected dioceses throughout Central Asia, as also in Tibet and China. Because of the Nestorian Schism, the See of Babylon separated from Church unity after the Council of Ephesus in 430. The only Nestorian Church to survive until the 16th century was the Malabar Church."

Nevertheless, it must in fairness be stated that the generality of the people were not conscious of the existence of Nestorianism in their liturgy and worship. They were obviously too ill-educated to understand the difference. They simply followed the lead of their bishops and the clergy. To their minds the Patriarch of Babylon was the highest spiritual authority. They did not look beyond him. The question whether the Patriarch was Catholic or Nestorian did not matter to them. It was

beyond the scope of their ken. As Cardinal Tisserant has pointed out, they were not greatly concerned with the Christological disputes of bygone days. But, unconsciously at least they were following several of the heretical tenets of Nestorians.

2. The Portuguese Period

(1500 — 1663)

Phase I

The Clash of Rites

FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE PORTUGUESE AND THE ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS

With the arrival of the Portuguese in Kerala at the close of the fifteenth century, there opens a new epoch in the history of the Malabar Church. It covers the whole of the XVI and the major portion of the XVII century and brought about certain permanent results that are lasting to this day.

When the Portuguese first arrived near Calicut in 1498, and in subsequent years at Cranganore and Cochin, they found in Kerala a Christian community, who cordially welcomed them and was helpful to them in their commercial ventures. Though the indigenous Christians had a form of worship, different in language and contents from that of the newcomers, the fact that both belonged to the same Faith created a feeling of fraternity in them, and very cordial relations came to exist between them.

BEGINNING OF RIFT

But within a few years the friendship began to wane and ultimately to wither. When the Portuguese missionaries, who belonged to the renowned religious Orders of the West whose members were famous for their learning, intensity of faith, religious zeal and sanctity, began to get a closer acquaintance with the forms of worship followed by the Malabar Christians, they perceived that the Syro-Chaldaic liturgy and rite were infected with Nestorian heresy.

COMBAT AGAINST NESTORIAN HERESY IN MALABAR

It may be that the Portuguese in their religious enthusiasm exaggerated the existence of these errors. But it was easy for those learned missionaries to see that there were many things in the Syro-Chaldaic liturgy of the St. Thomas Christians that were patently and blatantly Nestorianic — a fact which was thoroughly corroborated by the findings made at the famous Synod of Diamper in 1599, to which reference will be made later. They therefore felt that the Syrian liturgy of the Malabar

Church was the channel through which the Nestorian heresy flowed into the land. In their eyes, the proper remedy was to supplant that liturgy with the Latin liturgy, i. e. the Roman liturgy followed in the West, and thus make the people adopt the Latin rite. The history of the Malabar Church during the hundred years and more which followed the advent of the Portuguese is the history of the strenuous efforts made by them to abolish the Syrian rite and substitute in its place the Latin rite, and of the reaction and opposition which this policy of Latinization evoked from most of the leaders of the Malabar Church.

It may be noted here that the policy adopted by the Portuguese missionaries was one which they were in duty bound to do. To propagate the true Faith, to promote, defend, and preserve it from all errors was their bounden duty. Hence when they saw the prevalence of heresy in the Malabar Church they had to see that the evil was eradicated. Therefore, to denounce, as some have done, that the attempts made by the Portuguese for this purpose were inspired by the motive of bringing the Malabar Church under the political control of Portugal and the "yoke" of the Pope. The first allegation is a palpable absurdity. The second, about which much ado has been made by some Protestant and other non-Catholic writers, is not a matter to be considered wrong, as, according to Catholic teaching, a true Church must be free from all heresy and must have accepted the authority of the Pope. In the Malabar Church of the pre-Portuguese days there was not only no clear idea about this but also the tendency was manifest by which the Papal supremacy was ignored and only the allegiance to the Patriarchate of Babylon was in practice accepted. Therefore, if the Portuguese strove to clear the Malabar Church of heresy and bring it under the authority of the Pope, they were doing but what was right and proper.

POLICY OF LATINIZATION

In order to do away with the Syro-Chaldean liturgy and rite followed by the St. Thomas Christians, the Portuguese missionaries, with the support of the civil authorities, embarked upon a vigorous policy of Latinizing the Malabar Church.

The channels through which this was effected were mainly three — spiritual ministration, recruitments of St. Thomas Christians to Portuguese military service, and educating Syrian Christian youths for priesthood according to the Latin rite, in the seminaries founded for the purpose.

SPIRITUAL CHANNELS

Spiritual ministration, though it did not directly aim at the introduction and propagation of the Latin rite, achieved the same purpose in

an indirect manner. There was abundant scope for spiritual reform and regeneration among the St. Thomas Christians. Since they lived intermingled with Hindus and Muslims, the practices, customs, and even superstitions of those people had found their way into the midst of the Christian population. Most of the Christians were ignorant of many of the doctrines of the Catholic faith. The sacraments had fallen into disuse, or administered, if at all, in modes which made their dispensation invalid. Even the celebration of the Holy Mass was greatly defective, and according to an eminent historian, the practice obtained "of consecrating in the Mass the sacred Body and Blood of Christ in lumps of rice and palm wine".* Even otherwise there are modern scholars who question the validity of the Holy Mass performed during those times according to the Syro-Chaldaic liturgy. The sacrament of Confirmation was unknown. Confession seems to have been seldom — perhaps never — availed of. Many were known as Christians merely because of their ancestry and not because of their ever having been baptised.

In the sad situation which the Portuguese found all around them they felt that it was quite necessary to make vigorous efforts to save the Christian population from the terrible spiritual and moral degeneracy into which it had fallen.

Hence the Portuguese missionaries set themselves to the task of ministering to the St. Thomas Christians. Missions were preached, and baptisms and other sacraments administered, all according to the Latin rite, while in places like Cochin, Cranganore, Quilon etc., there arose stately churches, monasteries, convents and other magnificent edifices, which shone like beacons of the Latin rite amidst the surrounding populations.

RECRUITMENTS OF MILITARY PERSONNEL

The process of military recruitments was another indirect channel through which the Latin rite came to be propagated.

To carry on the incessant wars which the Portuguese had to wage along the coasts of south India and abroad, the Portuguese recruited in large numbers their military personnel from among the St. Thomas Christians, whose courage and valour they greatly admired. These warriors distinguished themselves in the Portuguese campaigns, notably in Goa and Cranganore. Several of them were placed in posts of trust and honour, both in the military ranks and in civil administration, and

* Vide *Historia serafica da Ordem de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal* by Soledade, quoted by G. T. Mackenzie in *The Travancore State Manual*, 1906 edition, vol. II, p. 159

rewarded with lands and high titles, such as Captains, Commandants, Lieutenants, etc. The lineal descendants of these high officers still exist in the vacinities of Cochin, and it is noteworthy that they are all of the Latin rite. These indigenous soldiers and their officers in Portuguese service easily fell in with religious forms of worship observed by their masters. Moreover, the Latin rite, with its cultural beauty and decent observances, must have appealed to them, as well as to many others, as more attractive than the rather crude rituals of the Syrian rite of those days.

RISE OF AN INDIGENOUS CLERGY OF THE LATIN RITE

More important than the methods mentioned above was the direct form of Latinization, namely the formation of a clergy of the Latin rite from the very ranks of the St. Thomas Christians.

For this purpose a seminary was opened at Cranganore in 1541 by the Franciscans. It soon received the children of the best Syro-Malabar families. St. Francis Xavier visited this seminary, and in three of his letters accorded high praise to this institution. He found in it as many as hundred youths who, he said, were drawn from "the highest nobility" of the St. Thomas Christians.

There was another seminary founded by the Jesuits in 1577 at Vaippicotta, a few miles south-west of Cranganore. There was also a collegem founded by Jesuits in Cochin. These institutions became the greatest strongholds of education of youths of St. Thomas Christians for priesthood of the Latin rite.

These great institutions, manned by able professors, trained an indigenous clergy in the Latin rite, who being of kith and kin with the St. Thomas Christians exerted a powerful influence to draw many of them into the Latin rite.

It is noteworthy that these Latin priests, educated in the seminaries above mentioned, worked both in Malabar and abroad. Several of them are shining examples of the indigenous clergy of the Latin rite reared up by the Portuguese eccleseastics. The names of a few of them are mentioned below.

Fr. Manuel De Gama, a Cochinite, was sent to Ceylon with another as missionary in 1605 (vide *Ethiopia Orientale*, Volume IV, page 142). Fr. Domingo Pico another Cochinite, officiated as Vicar-General in Ceylon for ten months in 1586 (vide *ibidem*, page 163). Perro (Peter Luiz), a Malabar priest worked along with the first batch of Jesuits among the Syrian Christians (vide *Oriente Conquistado*, Volume II, page 66). A relative of Archdeacon George of the St. Thomas Christians

was a Latin priest and he was, at the time of the Synod of Diamper in 1599, the Vicar of the Cathedral of the Bishop of Cochin (vide Gouvea's *Jornada*, page 50). Dom George D'Cruz, and Dom Joam D'Cruz, who were natives of Parur, Travancore, went to Rome, and, after being ordained priests there, returned to Malabar (vide *ibidem*, page 31).

The following clergymen of Malabar worked as missionaries in different parts of Asia and suffered martyrdom at the hands of the infidels (Vide page 203, 205 and 207 of *Mitras Lusitanas*, Volume III).

- (1) Fr. Jose de Madre de Deus,
a Cochinite of the Franciscan Order.
- (2) Fr. Manul D'Trindade, a Cochinite of the same Order.
- (3) Fr. Marco S. Catherina, a Cochinite of the same Order.
- (4) Fr. Amadeu de Nos Senbore, a Cochinite of the same Order.
- (5) Fr. J. de Amaral, a Cochinite of the same Order.
- (6) Fr. Francisco de Chagas, a Cochinite of the same Order.
- (7) Clerigo Fr. Hose, a Cochinite of the same Order.
- (8) Fr. Francisco Contreira,
a native of Cranganore of the same Order.
- (9) Fr. Gaspar S. Thome, a Cochinite of the Dominican Order.

ORIENTAL BISHOPS CHANGING OVER TO THE LATIN RITE

Due to the persuasion and pressure from the Portuguese ecclesiastics, even Oriental bishops of the Malabar Church began to adopt the Latin rite. One of them was the Bishop or Archbishop who ruled over Cranganore at the date of the arrival of the Portuguese. It is stated that he with all his congregation was taken over from their existing practices by the Franciscan friars. Another was Abuna Jacob, one of the bishops, who had come from Chaldea and were ruling the St. Thomas Christians when the Portuguese arrived. His letters attest to the unmistakable conclusion that he became not only quite friendly towards the Portuguese missionaries and heartily collaborated with them, but adopted the Latin rite. About this Bishop, St. Francis Xavier Wrote:— "He has laboured much among the Christians of St. Thomas and now in his old age he is very obedient to the customs of the Holy Mother the Church of Rome." From evidence like these the distinguished German scholar George Schurhammer has drawn the conclusion, as some before him had done, that Mar Jacob was not only inclined towards the Roman rite, "but even accepted it in his old age". And when a bishop has changed his rite, it shows that the tide of innovation was enormous, indeed.

EMERGENCE OF THE LATIN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS

Wherever the Portuguese established themselves the newly-formed communities of these ancient Catholics of the Latin rite also arose and thrived. The chief centres of these people were Cochin, Cranganore and Quilon. There can be no doubt that the Latin element within the community of St. Thomas Christians became a strong and permanent body by the close of the XVI century. It was a new religious and social edifice that arose within the ancient fabric of St. Thomas Christians, built of their own flesh and blood. The coping stone of this edifice was placed when, in 1557, the historic Diocese of Cochin was erected by Pope Paul IV. The St. Thomas Christians following the *Latin* rite thus became a consolidated and well-recognised body, a distinct entity in the ecclesiastical organisation of Malabar. Evidently it was with their collaboration, chiefly of their priests, that the Portuguese Archbishop Alexis de Menezes was able to push forward his vigorous policy and convoke that historic synod, as will be seen later.

The policy of the Portuguese to abolish the Syro-Chaldaic liturgy and rite soon began to evoke opposition from the Syrians. The oriental bishop of the time Mar Abuna Jacob favoured the Portuguese move and even adopted the Latin rite. But his successors were averse to it. Incessant disputes cropped up between the oriental bishops on the one hand and the Portuguese authorities on the other. Affairs were drifting towards an open schism. At this juncture there appeared on the scene the young and energetic Augustinian monk Alexis de Menezes who had become the Archbishop of Goa and Primate of all the East in 1594.

Alexis de Menezes reached Cochin on February, 1, 1599. Alexis de Menezes was a staunch opponent of the Syro-Chaldaic liturgy and rite followed by the Malabar Church. He was fully convinced of its heretical nature. According to him "schism and rebellion against the Holy See had struck deep roots" in Malabar. He was therefore determined to have the liturgy suppressed in favour of the Latin liturgy and make the St. Thomas Christians follow the Latin rite. He announced that he had come in person with the threefold object of reducing the Serra to the obedience of Rome, of freeing it from error and of reforming the morals of Clergy and Laity. With this object he made a long series of pastoral visits to the different centres of the St. Thomas Christians, where, he instructed the people in the doctrines of the Church and by his ministrations corrected evils and abuses, revived and administrated the holy sacraments. All this was done according to the Latin rite.

Menezes met with strenuous opposition from a large number of the St. Thomas Christians under the leadership of their Archdeacon George,

who made great efforts to impede the progress of the work of the Archbishop. The latter in his turn insisted upon the Archdeacon returning to the ways of orthodoxy by submission to the authority of the Pope. The situation grew highly explosive, the Archdeacon even collecting an army against the Archbishop. By his stern stand the Archbishop, however, succeeded, though temporarily, in bringing the Archdeacon to submission. It is said that by kindness and tranquillity Menezes "Turned the Storm into the most calm tranquillity". He Then convoked a great Synod to meet at Diamper, a hamlet few miles to the east of the present city of Ernakulam.

THE SYNOD OF DIAMPER

The Synod of Diamper, is one of the most important landmarks in the history of the Malabar Church. It lasted for six days, 20th to 26th of June, 1599. It was preceded by vigorous opposition and strong protests from the cassanars (Syrian priests) and their followers. Preceding the Synod, Archbishop Menezes ordained as priests 38 young St. Thomas Christians in the teeth of opposition from Archdeacon George and his cassanars. In an atmosphere tense with expectations of the coming clash between opposing parties and rival views on the burning question concerning the age-long liturgy and rite followed by the St. Thomas Christians, the Synod at last met with all solemnities of the Catholic Church performed in the Latin rite, on the twentieth of June 1599.

A total of 153 priests, (Latin and Syrian) and 660 laymen participated in it. The Synod settled most of the crucial problems relating to the Syro-Chaldaic liturgy. Though that liturgy was not abolished as the Archbishop had previously desired and planned, yet it was expurgated of all Nestorian tenets and even of anything that smacked of that heresy. Many books and manuscripts were condemned and burnt, chiefly under the supervision of the Portuguese Jesuit scholar Fr. Roz. Looking at the expurgations that were effected under the authority of the Synod and even after making allowance for some exaggerated notions entertained in this connection by the Latin ecclesiastics there can be no doubt whatsoever that Nestorianism existed in the Syro-Chaldean liturgy and the customs and practices based upon it.

The Synod of Diamper and, along with it, Alexis de Menezes has come for much obloquy at the hands of some Syrian Christian writers of Malabar. They have generally followed the perverted accounts given by some Protestant historians who have attempted to blacken the proceedings of the Synod and the motives of its sponsor. The controversy has of late been revived. Such writers are eager to show that the Syro-Chaldean liturgy of the pre-Diamper days was free from any sort of heresy

and that the Synod was merely a device to bring the Malabar Church under the authority of Rome. To the motive thus attributed no Catholic can take exception. As to the contention that the Syro-Chaldean liturgy was something preserved in its pristine purity, it cannot stand the test of historical criticism.

The liturgical settlement made by the Synod of Diamper was evidently a compromise. Though the Syro-Chaldean liturgy was allowed to be retained, it was much altered and made to approximate itself with the Latin liturgy in several important respects. "The liturgical presecrption of the synod, are numerous, but all of them bear witness to a tendency towards Latinization", says Tisserant. The Holy Mass, in particular, underwent great changes and was re-modelled on the lines of the Latin Mass. It is this form of the Mass that has ever since been followed in the churches of the Syro-Malabar rite, which is the old Syro-Chaldean rite, as modified by the Synod of Diamper.

But perhaps more important than all this is the fact that the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff as the one and the only head of the Catholic Church was clearly enunciated, and was accepted by the whole body of the Synod, including several hundreds of the St. Thomas Christians and their leader the Archdeacon George. All connections with the Patriarchate of Babylon were renounced by a solemn oath taken by each of them individually. Each swore to recognise and receive only prelates sent by the Pope as bishops or other authorities of the Malabar Church. Thus the age-long tie with the Eastern Patriarchates (Catholicates) was snapped.

The Portugese, though they did not succeed in replacing the Syro-Chaldean with the Latin liturgy, achieved their main objects, namely, the extirpation of the Nestorian heresy and the bringing of the St. Thomas Christians under the authority of the Pope, thereby making them the true children of the Catholic Church and redeeming them so to say, from the wilderness they had been wandering for ages.

The Synod appeared to have restored peace between the St. Thomas Christians and the Portuguese. But the situation was pregnant with potentialities of an impending storm. So far the forcible personality of Alexis de Menezes had triumphed. But as soon as he had left the scene and returned to Goa new quarrels began to disturb the peaceful atmosphere, which the Synod of Diamper had seemingly created,

The Portuguese Period — Phase II

Strife and Revolt

LATIN BISHOPS FOR THE SYRIANS

Though the Synod of Diamper restored peace and harmony between the warring parties, there arose, within a few years, new grounds for quarrels between them.

The settlement arrived at in the Synod contained elements leading to future discord. The line of the Chaldean bishops, who had ruled over the St. Thomas Christians, was discontinued. Their ancient see of Angamali, then vacant, was reduced to the position of a mere diocese and was made suffragan to the Archdiocese of Goa. Though it was again raised to the archdiocesan status, it was very soon suppressed and converted into the Archdiocese of Cranganore, that town being one of the strongholds of Portuguese power. More than this, a European (Portuguese) prelate was appointed as its bishop thus bringing into existence a wide gulf between the rite of the bishop and the rite of the flock; besides, there was also the element of racial difference, over which the latter soon grew sensitive.

Though at first the St. Thomas Christians acquiesced in the arrangements made by Archbishop *Menezes*, they gradually became discontented, chiefly because of the harsh treatment often meted out to them by their Jesuit Archbishops, particularly Francis Garzia (1641-1659). They naturally began to long for a prelate of their own rite to rule over them as in the days of old, and to be free from, what they felt to be, the hated thralldom to the Portuguese prelates. While thus the atmosphere was seething with discontent, there occurred an event which made the gathering storm burst in 1653.

REVOLT OF 1653

In 1652, there arrived in India a monk from the East, named Athallah, who professed to have been sent by the Pope as the Patriarch of the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar, but in reality sent by the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, at the request of Archdiacon George for an oriental bishop for his people.

The new-comer called himself Ignatius and assumed the fantastic and unwarranted title of "Patriarch of all India and of the Chinas". On his way to Malabar he was arrested at Mylapore by the Portuguese authorities and brought to Cochin *en route* to Goa. From Mylapore Athallah had managed to address a letter in Syriac (a Latin translation of which is found in the archives of the Propaganda) to Archdeacon George in which he told the latter of his appointment by the Pope as Patriarch

of the St. Thomas Christians and requested him to send some armed men to fetch him. The news of the presence of the supposed patriarch of theirs in Cochin spread like wild fire among the St. Thomas Christians and great excitement prevailed.

THE OATH AT THE "COONEN CROSS"*

The events that occurred at this critical juncture are described by the eminent scholar and authority, Cardinal Tisserant, in these words:-

"they (the St. Thomas Christians) gathered in large numbers at the gates of the city, and demanded *en masse* that either the prisoner be liberated, or at least that they be given a chance to speak to him and examine his claims. Instead of making a diplomatic excuse the authorities rushed the supposed patriarch to Goa by night. In order to prevent any attack on the town, they spread the less palatable story that the unfortunate prelate had been accidentally drowned.

The Christians were naturally furious. They were completely taken aback by this obvious deception. Almost at once they gathered in front of the church of Mattancherry, tied a long rope to the famous Coonen Cross and swore that they would never be under the Paulists i. e. the Jesuits, and that in future they would never obey Archbishop Garzia. Then the archdeacon, Thomas de Campo, produced a real or supposed letter from Athallah authorizing the Syro-Malabar communities to choose a bishop for themselves. The malcontents assembled at Alangad on 22 May 1653, and twelve priests imposed hands on the archdeacon and proclaimed him metropolitan as Mar Thomas I. During the ceremony the false letter of investiture was laid on his head. Henceforward, Mar Thomas performed pontifical functions, ordained clerics and gave dispensations in marriage impediments, etc. The secession spread practically over the whole of the Malabar Church. In the meantime, Athallah was condemned as a heretic by the Inquisition of Goa and died at the stake in 1654".^o

It may be noted here that though Card. Tisserant mentions Athallah as having been burnt at stake by the Inquisition in Goa, the fate of the pretender is considered uncertain. There are differences of opinion among scholars on this point. According to the records of the Inquisition of Goa, Athallah was sent to Portugal and thence to Rome. According to another authority, Eustache, he died at Paris on his way to Lisbon. At any rate, he was not drowned by the Portuguese, though some writers in Malabar still repeat that myth.

* "Coonen" meaning "bent". It appears that due to the tugging of the rope tied to the Cross to give facility to all for partaking in the taking of the oath, the Cross became bent down. Hence the name "Coonen Cross" by which name it is known even to-day.

^o Eastern Christianity in India by Tisserant, p. 79 & 80.

The pretention of Athallah was subsequently exposed by Pope Alexander VII, in his Brief, *Gratum Nobis*, dated January 20, 1660, addressed to the St. Thomas Christians. *Inter alia* the Brief states:-

"And we have caused this to be made known to you, Our sons, that a certain man named Ignatius Caltrimensis, Ahatalla or Adeodatus, a schismatic, calling himself a Patriarch, who is said to have been arrested in Mailapur, was sent there neither by Innocent X of happy memory nor by any other Roman Pontiff Our Predecessor; but under the pretext of an untrue Apostolic legation he attempted to deceive your simplicity, by which he might involve you in errors in which he himself was miserably involved".

The revolt rapidly spread. It is said that out of some two hundred thousand Syrians, only four hundred remained loyal to the Jesuit Archbishop. The oath of the "Coonen Cross" marked the end of the unity of the Malabar Church. The Church was rent in twain. The cleavage has lasted to this day.

However, it has to be noted that the disintegration that took place in the Malabar Church was like the process which a seed undergoes for a new plant to sprout. That new plant was to be the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar, erected by Pope Alexander VII in order to solve the tangled problem of the Malabar schism. To the events connected with this historic step, we shall now turn.

The Portuguese Period — Phase III

The Establishment of the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar

THE MISSION OF CONCILIATION

When in 1655 Rome learnt about the unhappy situation in Malabar, it decided to act promptly, but in a conciliatory manner. There was no threat of excommunication or the imposition of other canonical penalties on the dissidents. On the other hand, Pope Alexander VII decided to send a mission of reconciliation consisting of three Italian fathers of the Order of the Discalced Carmelites with Fr. Hyacinth of St. Vincent as Apostolic Commissary. Of this band Fr. Joseph of St. Mary, better known as Sebastiani, was the most prominent member. Sebastiani and his associates arrived in Malabar in 1657 by different routes, Sebastiani reaching first. The work of bringing back the dissidents from their schism to the right path was zealously taken up by Sebastiani, who, by dint of persuasion, tact and good will, was able to win over a large number of them, although none would agree to submit to the authority of Archbishop Garzia. Tisserant has described the situation as follows:-

"At the end of the year 1657, the Christians of Kuravalangad, Kaduturutti, Muttuchira and Muttam, in the south, and those of Parur, Angamale, Kanjur, etc., in the north, had rallied round Fr. Joseph in large

majorities. Meetings continued for several months more, during which time the invalidity of the 'consecration' conferred on the archdeacon and hence of all his faked episcopal actions was discussed. Thomas de Campo, though in all probability personally convinced of his bogus consecration, stubbornly refused to resign, and used every means in his power to defend himself. Still, in spite of the many divisive forces among the Christians, Fr. Joseph of St. Mary continued to win over to his side many priests and communities. In one respect only, however, did he fail completely, viz. nobody was willing under any condition to submit to the jurisdiction of the archbishop". *

Sebastiani thus strove arduously to bring back the dissidents. In spite of the stubbornness of the archdeacon Thomas de Campo (the fake Archbishop), the Carmelites were able before the close of the year (1657) to persuade forty-four churches to submit, though the reconciled Christians stood out for some bishop other than Garzia, their disowned Archbishop.

ERECTION OF THE VICARIATE APOSTOLIC

Early in 1658 Sebastiani returned to Rome to submit his report. On learning the extent of success which the Carmelites had met with, Pope Alexander VII decided that Sebastiani should go back to Malabar as a bishop of the St. Thomas Christians with the title of "Vicar Apostolic and Administrator of the Archbishopric of Cranganore". He was consecrated as the Titular Bishop of Hierapolis on December 15, 1659.

The situation is succinctly described in two significant passages in the *Madras Catholic Directory*, (which was the official Directory for the whole of India, Burmah, Ceylon and the East Indies) of 1887, which read as follows:-

"The Malabar Vicariate was erected on the 3rd December 1659 and embraced all the Churches of the Latin, Syriac and Syro-Chaldaic rites

Again,

"Pope Alexander VII having appointed the Discalced Carmelites to continue the work of the Jesuits, Missionaries of that order (Carmelite) entered Malabar (1660) and one of them the Venerable Dr. Sebastian, having been consecrated Bishop, *Vicar Apostolic* of that Mission (Italics ours) had the consolation of re-uniting under his obedience, the greater part of those churches which had adhered to heresy" (pages 138 & 139).

BISHOP SEBASTIANI: THE FIRST VICAR APOSTOLIC OF MALABAR

Bishop Sebastiani arrived at Cochin on May 14, 1661, and in spite of the opposition of the Portuguese authorities, who would not recognise him since he was not a "padroado" bishop took possession of the archiepiscopal palace that fortunately lay outside the city.

* *Ibidem*, p. 81.

The work of winning back the dissidents was resumed by the new Vicar Apostolic. His efforts met with considerable success. In about twenty months eighty-four churches gave up their allegiance to archdeacon Thomas and returned to obedience to Rome and only thirty-two remained under the recalcitrant archdeacon, who carried on negotiations with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch which subsequently resulted in the establishment of Jacobitism in Malabar and the formation of the community of Jacobite St. Thomas Christians.

Thus in the fabric of the Malabar Church a new ecclesiastical entity came into being — the new Vicariate which came to be known as the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar or briefly the Malabar Vicariate. Joseph Sebastiani was its first Vicar Apostolic — a fact recognised in all authoritative records and publications (see, for instance, the various issues of the *Madras Catholic Directory* and the *Catholic Directory of India*, and the list on page 188 of Cardinal Tisserant's book *The Eastern Christianity*). In his book, *The Syrian Church of Malabar* (p. 48). Rev. Fr. Placid of the Syrian Carmelite Congregation has stated: "In 1659 the Apostolic Commissary Joseph Sebastiani was consecrated titular Bishop of Hierapolis and Vicar Apostolic of Malabar."

Therefore, to deny that Sebastiani was the *first* Vicar Apostolic of Malabar, as some have recently done, would be contrary to historical facts. Such tendencies, noticeable even in some official Catholic publications*, is highly regrettable and derogatory.

III

THE PERIOD OF THE CARMELITES

THE DUTCH CONQUEST — 1663

The work of Sebastiani was cut short by the conquest of Cranganore in 1662 and of Cochin in 1663 by the Dutch. All foreign missionaries including the Carmelites were expelled from the Dutch territories and Sebastiani himself was ordered to quit the country, which he shortly did.

ALEXANDER DE CAMPO — THE FIRST INDIAN VICAR APOSTOLIC

But before his departure Sebastiani, in virtue of two extra-ordinary powers that had been conferred upon him by Rome, wisely made arrangements for the endurance of the work he and his associates had accomplished. Sebastiani, therefore, consecrated as his successor the Indian Syrian priest named Parambil Chandy, better known as Alexander de Campo, making him the Vicar Apostolic of Malabar, the *second* in the long line of the Vicars Apostolic of Malabar.

* See, for example, the *Catholic Directory of India*, 1962, and some previous issues.

Parambil Chandy, *alias* Alexander de Campo, was thus the first Indian priest to be made bishop. His regime was quite successful and he was able to bring back more dissidents to unity with the Catholic Church. His role lasted for fourteen years from 1663 to 1677.

It is seen that Alexander de Campo, though he had been consecrated only as the titular Bishop of Megara by Sebastiani, he assumed the title of "Kol Hendo", meaning "the Metropolitan of the whole India". It is clear that this title was unwarranted. Alexander de Campo was not entitled to claim any jurisdiction in territories outside Malabar, especially as the Archbishop of Goa was the Primate of India at the time. So his signing himself "Kol Hendo" seems to have been unauthorised. It may be noted that assuming fantastic titles with or without reason was often the practice of oriental ecclesiastics. Perhaps, Alexander de Campo followed this practice. The "significance" attached to it by some is therefore baseless.

RESUMPTION OF THE CARMELITE REGIME

In course of time some of the Carmelite fathers whom the Dutch had compelled to quit, quietly returned and worked among the Syrian Christians under Bishop Alexander de Campo. The Dutch tolerated their presence, especially since, one of the Carmelites, Fr. Matheus of St. Joseph, the Apostolic Commissary whom Sebastiani had left in Malabar, became very friendly with the Dutch Governor Van Rhee de as both of them were interested in the science of Botany.

The Carmelites seem to have done much good work by their ministrations, for, they were held esteemed by those in high authority. This is evidenced by the fact that they were allowed to build a church at Chathiath, practically a part of Ernakulam in 1673, and Bishop Alexander de Campo even went to the extent of exempting it from his jurisdiction. In this very same year the church and seminary of Verapoly also were built, the church on a site freely granted by the Rajah of Cochin.

On the demise of Alexander de Campo in 1687 and of his two immediate successors, one a prelate of Portuguese extraction and the other an Indian from outside Malabar, the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar came again under the administration of the Carmelites in the year 1770, and continued to be so till its elevation to the Archepiscopal See of Verapoly in 1886, as mentioned above. The Carmelites administered the Archdiocese till 1934, when it was Indianised to which reference will be made later.

RIVALRY OF THE SYRIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF CRANGANORE

During the period of its continued existence the Vicariate of Malabar had to contend against various difficulties. Foremost among these was the anachronous existence of the old Syrian Archdiocese of Cranganore, ruled by the Portuguese prelates.

In spite of the defection of most of its flock by the oath at the "Coonen Cross" in 1653, the Archdiocese of Cranganore dragged on its precarious existence till 1838, when at last it was suppressed by Clement XVI by the Bull *Multa praeclare*. During the long period of its haphazard existence prelates were appointed, off and on, Archbishops. There were long breaks, lasting sometimes for decades. During all this time the Malabar Vicariate had to minister to the spiritual needs of the Syrian Christian population, which was the task assigned to it by Holy See at its very inception. On occasions when the Archdiocese woke up from its slumber by the appointment of an Archbishop for it, and if the prelate actually came and took charge — which was often not the case — the situation caused embarrassment to the authorities of the Malabar Vicariate, hampered their work and evoked protests from the Syrian congregation, who intensely disliked to be under a Jesuit prelate. They were all for the retention of the Carmelite regime, owing to which they pointed out, there were (in 1704) 71 churches in complete union in schism — a creditable record for the Vicariate and particularly for its Carmelite missionaries.

DIOCESE OF COCHIN PLACED UNDER THE MALABAR VICARIATE

Some what similar was the situation in the Diocese of Cochin too, where the Dutch would not tolerate the presence of a Portuguese bishop. As a result of this and because of the Dutch opposition to any Jesuit Portuguese prelate being the Bishop of Cochin or the Archbishop of Cranganore, Clement XI, by a decree, dated March 13, 1709, extended the Jurisdiction of the Malabar Vicariate over the Diocese of Cochin and the Cranganore.

Owing to the Dutch conquest, the Carmelites of the Vicariate had already been in charge of the congregation of Cochin Diocese which was composed of Latin Catholics. With the formal extension of its jurisdiction now over Cochin and as well as over Cranganore the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar came to comprise of two sections, the Syrian Catholics and the Latin Catholics the *Syrians* and the *Latins*, as they were called to distinguish one from the other.

But the extension of jurisdiction did not end the rivalry of the Archdiocese of Cranganore against the Malabar Vicariate. Bishops were nominated by Portugal to the See of Cranganore, though, again, at long

intervals. The Rivalries between the Propaganda Vicariates and the Padroado dioceses became keen. Therefore, in 1838, Pope Gregory XVI by his Bull *Multa praeclare* ordered *inter alia* the annexation of the Sees of Cranganore and Cochin

“For what reason the regions comprising the Dioceses of Cranganore and Cochin have not as yet been entrusted to any Vicar-Apostolic, for that very reason We ordain that those regions shall be included in the Vicariate-Apostolic of Malabar, the seat of which is at Verapoly and that the jurisdiction and all Ecclesiastical authority over them shall be vested in Our Venerable Brother, Francis Xavier, Bishop of Amathus and Vicar-Apostolic of Verapoly and his successors”.

Thus by about the middle of the XIX century the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar came to embrace the whole of Kerala. Its northern limits extended even to South Canara including Mangalore. The Malabar Vicariate thus became so extensive that the aged Archbishop Pescotto is said to have exclaimed ‘From Cape Comorin to Canara and from the source of the sea to the mountain gates!’ It held sway over the whole of this region with its Vicar Apostolic as the only Bishop in this extensive area, jointly ruling over the Syrians and the Latins.

BIRTH OF NEW VICARIATES

The very extensiveness of the Malabar Vicariate must have proved a disadvantage to its efficient working. In 1845, therefore, the unwieldy Vicariate was divided into three working units, Quilon, Mangalore and Verapoly, the last retaining the maternal status. The division at first provisional was made absolute in 1853.

By this change, however, the Malabar Vicariate, though reduced, received more compact form. The mission of Quilon having been separated from it, the large body of the descendants of converts of the Portuguese days inhabiting the southern regions of Travancore were also detached from the old Vicariate. The latter therefore came to consist mostly of the descendants of ancient St. Thomas Christians, one branch following the Latin rite and the other the Syrian rite, both having stemmed from the same stock believed to be of Apostolic origin. They lived intermingled and bore close social affinity with one another, some families even having collateral branches of different rites. The units of the respective rites had not been stereotyped by Canon Law or other rules and regulations as of now, and the lines of difference remained indistinct and indistinguishable.

EXISTENCE OF ANCIENT CHURCHES IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF VERAPOLY

Owing to these circumstances there was not much distinction between the Latin and the Syrian Churches. These passed from one side to

the other, according to exigencies and practical needs. As a result of this, it happened that several churches which once belonged to the Syrian rite, became ultimately Latin churches and *vice versa*. In several churches, like those of Verapoly and Mattancherry (Cochin), and the present Syrian Cathedral at Ernakulam, the congregations were mixed, i. e. both Syrian and Latin. With the lapse of time the distinction became more marked, and many churches became exclusively Syrian and others Latin.

In consequence of this, several of the most important churches of the Malabar Vicariate and of the units into which it had been split up were formerly churches that had been mentioned by historians of the time as belonging to *St. Thomas Christians*. This is clearly seen from *Historia Synodi Diamper of Raulin* published in 1745, *Zendavesta* of the famous Indologist Anquetil du Perron, who visited Malabar in 1758, *India Orientalis Christiana* of Paulinus, published in 1794, the *Dutch Records*, translated by Galletti, not to speak of *The History of the Malabar Church* by Fr. Bernard T. O. C. D. This is therefore a feature of the Malabar Vicariate that continues to exist in the Archdiocese of Verapoly and the other Dioceses of the Latin rite.

CARMELITE REGIME — A REVIEW

The epoch of the Malabar Vicariate lasted for more than two centuries and a quarter — from 1659 to 1886. During this long period with a break of about thirty-five years, i. e. the period of the Alexander de Campo and his two immediate successors, the European Carmelites ruled over it. For the larger part of this period, it was practically coterminous with the whole of Kerala — the earlier Dioceses of Cochin and Cranganore having become either defunct or were out of effective operation. Almost all the seventeen Carmelite prelates who were the Vicars Apostolic were very eminent personages with erudition, piety and virtues, characteristic of the great Order to which they belonged. There is no doubt that the Carmelites fulfilled their mission in the vineyard of the Lord truly and faithfully, directly concentrating their attention upon the spiritual welfare of the people and the extension of the Kingdom of Christ by conversions from other religions.

The missionaries were helped by the indigenous clergy, whom they reared up chiefly in the great seminary which they founded for training youths for priesthood from among the community of Latin Christians formed out of the St. Thomas Christians, as previously explained. Subsequently youths from among the Syrians also were admitted into this institution which in due course developed into an Apostolic seminary, located not far from the Carmelite headquarters at the then famous Verapoly.

In the cultural field the Carmelites have placed the people of Malabar under great obligation. "In the 18th century the Roman Catholic section of the Syrian Christians were governed by the Carmelite prelates of Verapoly and several European missionaries among them had contributed much to the cultivation of Sanskrit and Malayalam literature, though they too did not encourage their flock to drink deep of literary works, either in English, Sanskrit or Malayalam, fearing that it would lure them into Protestant heresy or Hindu paganism".* Among the Carmelite scholars, the names of Fr. Matheus, Fr. Paulinus and Archbishop Pescetto (1831-1844) deserve special mention.

The Carmelites adopted the policy of spreading primary as well as secondary education — for Christians and non-Christians alike. For this, great credit is due to Archbishop Bernardine, who was the Vicar Apostolic from 1853 to 1868. He issued a circular letter enjoining on all parish priests to open one or more schools in every parish according to local requirements. The policy initiated by him was steadily followed by his successors.

Another great service rendered to the Catholic Church by the Carmelites was the establishment and development of the indigenous regional religious congregation, which came to be called the Third Order of Carmelites. It was originally started by Bishop Stabilini in 1831, and subsequently reorganised by Archbishop Bernardine in 1855. Eleven years afterwards in 1866, a separate monastery of the Third Order of the Carmelites was started "for the good of those Christians", says Bishop Marcellinus, "who embraced the Latin rite in times long past".

A similar congregation for women was started in 1866 during the regime of Archbishop Pescetto. It was the outcome of the munificence and piety of a widow named Elizabeth and her daughter, belonging to an ancient Christian family of the Latin rite. The widow was the founder of the Order, the first of its kind in Malabar. Her daughter and sister and a Syrian associate were its first members.

Subsequent developments and current experience have shown how these two organisations have proved to be like the mustard seed of the parable. All these ventures were the joint efforts of the Syrians and the Latins with ancient heritage of Christianity. But soon the two streams began to flow more and more apart, to the detriment of both and to the interests of the Holy Church.

The Carmelites had to contend against many difficulties. At the initial stage there was the hostility of the Dutch, to which reference has

* Vide *The Syrian Church of Malabar — Its Cultural Contributions* by K. E. Job.

already been made. There was the incessant rivalry connected with Portugal's right of Patronage (Padroado). This rivalry manifested itself in the continued existence of the Syrian Archdiocese of Cranganore. It found its culmination in what is known as the Indo-Lusitarum schism, which broke out in 1842, as a protest on the part of the "padroadists" against the annexation of the Padroado Dioceses to the neighbouring Vicariates Apostolic by the Brief *Multa praeclare* of 1838. Besides this there were the schisms of Rokos and Mellus, of 1861 and 1874 respectively. The so-called "national aspirations" of the Syrians, who now and then began to yearn for a prelate of their own rite from abroad to rule over them, provided good opportunities to schismatic adventures. The political calamities created by the invasion of Tippu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore in 1789, the attacks from non-Catholics especially from the Protestant press and various other difficulties hampered the work of the Vicariate. All these were withstood and overcome by the Vicars Apostolic until the time was ripe for the great change that took place in 1886.

IV

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HIERARCHY

The year 1886 witnessed the most momentous change in the history of the ecclesiastical organisation of the Catholic Church in India — namely, the establishment of the Catholic Hierarchy of India, Burmah and Ceylon.

As a prelude to this historic step, the Holy Father concluded a new Concordat with the King of Portugal on the 6th of January 1866, which served "to settle many points usefully and with mutual satisfaction". According to this Concordat the right of Patronage of the Portuguese Kings was "defined in an equitable manner". The Archbishopric of Goa was raised to the dignity of a Patriarchate *ad honorem* and its suffragan Dioceses marked out and other rights defined. The responsibilities of the Portuguese Kings were laid down as follows:—

"Further it is agreed that the rulers of Portugal shall assign to each of the above named Dioceses, a State allowance for the support of Canons, Clergy and Seminarists; that they will join the Bishops in their endeavours to provide schools for children, homes for orphans and other pious undertakings which may appear to be helpful to the well-being of Christians or adapted to removing the superstitions of the gentiles."

On the 1st of September of that year, Pope Leo XIII of immortal memory issued his famous Apostolic Letter *Humanis Salutis Auctor*. In it he declared:—

"Trusting, as we have reason to do, that a calm and lasting concord of minds will ensue among the Christian peoples of India, we are of

opinion that the time is now ripe for the perfect organization of the Catholic Church in the whole of the Peninsula this side of the Ganges, that those nations drawing nigh into the prepared mountain of the House of the Lord may perceive the benefits of a stable and well ordered rule. "

In the course of enumerating the various ecclesiastical units and missions of India the Pope referred to Malabar or Verapoly Vicariate in the following terms:-

"Next come along the Canarese and Malabar Coast, besides the Archdiocese of Goa, three Vicariates between the Ghauts and the western sea, namely, Mangalore separated in 1853 from that of the Verapoly or Malabar Vicariate by the Province of Canara to the river Ponani. Verapoly from the river to the boundaries of the diocese of Cochin lately restored by us, and Quilon from the boundaries of the same diocese situated to the north stretching to Cape Comorin, except the parishes assigned to the diocese of Cochin. "

After declaring that all the Vicariates Apostolic of India and the island of Ceylon were raised to the status of Dioceses, the Pope Declared:-

"We elevate the following, namely the Church of Agra, Bombay, Verapoly, Calcutta, Madras, Pondicherry and Colombo to the honour of Archiepiscopal dignity. "

Thus on the 1st of September 1886, the Malabar Vicariate was transformed into the Archdiocese of Verapoly, the only Archdiocese for the whole of Kerala.

The last Vicar Apostolic of Malabar at the time, the Most Rev. Leonard Mellano, till then the titular Archbishop of Nicomedia, became a real Archbishop the first Archbishop of Verapoly.

The epoch of the historic Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar ended and the epoch of the Archdiocese of Verapoly began.

V

THE ARCHDIOCESE

THE SEPARATION OF THE SYRIANS

Though the Archdiocese was thus formed, there was no change as regards its administration. The Carmelite regime continued.

But the very next year an important change was effected. Already since October 1877, the congregation of the Verapoly Vicariate had been divided into two—the Latins continuing under the Vicar Apostolic Archbishop Mellano, and the Syrians placed in the charge of his co-adjutor Marcellianus, who was specially appointed for the purpose and consecrated as the Titular Bishop of Parsium.

Now in 1887, by the Brief *Quod jam pridem*, the churches of the Syrian rite in the whole Malabar were separated from those of the Latin rite, and reconstituted into two Vicariates Apostolic consisting exclusively of Catholics of the Syrian rite.

Thus the Archdiocese of Verapoly assumed its present form — a Latin Archdiocese with a congregation consisting mainly of the descendants of ancient St. Thomas Christians, who during the Portuguese regime, gave up their Syro-Chaldaic liturgy and rite and adopted the Latin liturgy and rite, as stated before.

ERNAKULAM BECOMES THE ARCHDIOCESAN HEADQUARTERS

In 1904, there occurred a great change. During the year, Archbishop Bernard Arguinzonis, with the sanction of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide transferred the headquarters of the Archdiocese from the island of Verapoly to the city of Ernakulam, at that time the capital of the former State of Cochin (part of Malabar)

Due to the changes that had taken place during the preceding two centuries, it had long been felt that the island of Verapoly was no more a suitable place for the Archdiocesan headquarters. "It was becoming increasingly clear", says a statement recently issued by seven of the most prominent laymen of the Archdiocese "that efficacious spiritual ministry and effective administration of the Archdiocese were practically impossible from Verapoly."

On the other hand, the city of Ernakulam appeared most fitted for the purpose. It had become the chief centre of the Archdiocesan congregation. A large portion of it lived in and around Ernakulam. Numerous churches of theirs were situated in this region, consisting of the city and areas adjacent to it. In 1901, for example, i. e. three years before the Archdiocesan headquarters were transferred to Ernakulam, the population of the Syrian rite inhabiting the city and the adjoining places was insignificantly small — about 300 in the city, with a single church, while the Latin Catholics numbered 3605, with two churches. In the adjacent areas within a radius of ten kilometres from the centre of the city, the Latin Catholics numbered nearly 24,581 with twelve populous churches, while the Syrian Catholic population consisted of 3605 souls with only four churches.

"For these and other reasons", says the above-mentioned statement, "everything pointed to Ernakulam as the most suitable — and the only suitable — place for the headquarters of the Archdiocese".

No doubt, since the year 1896, the Syrian Vicar Apostolic of Ernakulam had been residing there. But his flock was far away. There were only a small number of them in Ernakulam as already shown. Hence the

presence of the Syrian Vicar Apostolic in this city, nor the location of the headquarters of the Syrian Vicariate at Ernakulam — a Vicariate with a wrong name, as is the case also with the present Archdiocese of Ernakulam — was no reason to deter Archbishop Bernard from transferring his Archdiocesan headquarters to this city. In fact, if he had not done so, it would have been a serious dereliction of duty on his part.

ERNAKULAM THE STRONGHOLD OF THE ARCHDIOCESAN CONGREGATION

It may be of interest to note in this connection that the comparative position of the two communities at Ernakulam continued to be the same even to the present day.

In 1923, when the Syrian Vicariate, Ernakulam, was raised to archiepiscopal status, there were in Ernakulam and its adjoining areas (within a radius of ten kilometres from the centre of the city) 5 churches of the Syrian rite with 3,629 parishioners, while the Latins had 15 churches with 41,856 parishioners.

According to the present position (1964) the Latins are having 25 churches with a Catholic population of 91,017, while the Syrians are having 7 churches with a Catholic population of 21,261.

It is also seen that 49 per cent of the congregation of the Verapoly Archdiocese now lives in this area, Ernakulam alone having 40,437 Latin Catholics, while the Syrian population is below 9 per cent of the total congregation of the Ernakulam Archdiocese, Ernakulam itself having only 12,498 Syrian Catholics.*

On the strength of these statistics the statement mentioned above points out that "in the city of Ernakulam and its suburbs the number of the faithful of the Latin rite belonging to the Archdiocese of Verapoly is about four and a half times greater than that of the faithful of the Syrian rite".

Hence the inevitable conclusion is that Ernakulam should have been the headquarters of the Archdiocese of Verapoly only, and its name should have been borne by that Archdiocese. The present arrangement is incongruous.

* These figures have been compiled from the respective issues of the *Catholic Directory of India*, formerly the *Madras Catholic Directory* and from the *Directory of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam*, 1964.

VI

THE NEW AGE

MOVEMENT FOR INDIANISATION

After the Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly had been transformed into Archdiocese in 1886, the Carmelite administration continued for some four decades more, during which three Archbishops ruled over the Archdiocese, including the last Vicar Apostolic Archbishop Mellano, who became the first Archbishop of Verapoly. His two successors were Archbishops Bernard Arguinzonis of Jesus and Angel Mary Pereze-Cecilia.

In the meanwhile, while the Archdiocese was proceeding along the static path created by the long and conservative Carmelite rule, the Syrians under their own prelates were, making rapid strides of progress. Since 1896 they had been distributed in three Vicariates Apostolic, Changanacherry — Ernakulam and Trichur — under their own indigenous prelates, who were not only anxious for the salvation of souls, but also for the social uplift of their flocks and for bringing them abreast of the time, in the various avenues of religious as well as secular life.

In the tide of progress that was advancing, the Latin Catholic found that they were lagging behind several of the other communities of Malabar. They therefore, after a long slumber, as it were, began to awake to the need of having their own prelates over them, who would be mindful of their spiritual welfare as well as of their worldly progress, owing to the lack of which they were losing ground in the competition of life.

Therefore, the Latin Catholics, who were then distributed in the Archdiocese of Verapoly and the Dioceses of Cochin and Quilon also began to aspire to have indigenous bishop or bishops to rule over them.

While this feeling had been gaining ground the issue of the famous encyclical, *Maximum Illud*, by Pope Benedict XV, on November, 30, 1919, brought new hope to the Latin Catholic leaders of both the clergy and the laity of the Archdiocese. The encyclical declared:-

“Wherever therefore exists an indigenous clergy, adequate in numbers and training, and worthy of its vocation, there the Missionary's work must be brought to a happy close”.

Inspired by this pronouncement from the Holy Father the leading members of the clergy and the laity of the Archdiocese submitted a lengthy memorial, dated December, 8, 1922, to His Holiness, praying for the appointment of an indigenous Archbishop for their Archdiocese.

"THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH YIELDING PLACE TO THE NEW"

As a result of this and subsequent representations the Holy See was pleased first to Indianize the administration, except its headship, and for this purpose to withdraw the European Carmelite missionaries to the undeveloped part of the Archdiocese to continue their work in that area, and, constituted it into a new Diocese, called Vijayapuram, near Kottayam, with its headquarters in that town. This happened in November 1930. The new Diocese was comprised of the Latin Christians, mostly new converts, of the taluks of Muvattupuzha, Thodupuzha, Devicolum, Peermade, Meenachil, Kottayam and Changanacherry and several 'Pakuthies' of the taluks of Kunnathunad, Thiruvalla, Pathanamthitta, Ambalapuzha and Vaikom. As is well-known, the Christians of these regions were mostly Syrians, Catholics and non-Catholics. The missionaries had under them a comparatively small population of Latin Christians, now about 65,000. The Diocese is a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Verapoly.

After the separation of this portion, the main part of the Archdiocese remained under the same name, namely, the Archdiocese of Verapoly.

APPOINTMENT OF DR. JOSEPH ATTIPETTY AS ARCHBISHOP

Two years later the Indianisation of the Archdiocese reached its culmination when Rev. Fr. Joseph Attipetty, Ph. D., D. D., the first of this Archdiocese to be educated in the Propaganda Fide College, Rome, was nominated on the 29th November, 1932, as Co-adjutor to Archbishop Angel Mary, the last of the long line of Carmelite prelates who ruled over the Vicariate and the Archdiocese of Verapoly.

The appointment was hailed with joy by the whole of Malabar, and particularly by its Latin Catholic population. The Archbishop-elect was called to Rome and consecrated in St. Peter's by Pope Pius XI himself, on 11th June 1933.

On Archbishop Angel Mary's retirement Msgr. Joseph Attipetty assumed charge of the Archdiocese as its first Indian Archbishop, on 21st December, 1934. He was at the time the only Indian Archbishop of the Latin rite in the whole of India.

PROGRESS UNDER THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

The Archdiocese under the able administration of the new Archbishop has been making remarkable and even spectacular progress in the

spiritual, educational, cultural and social fields for the last thirty years in spite of the meagre resources at his disposal and the numerous difficulties he had to tide over.

The number of priests serving the Archdiocese has been steadily on the increase. Several extensive and overgrown parishes have been reorganized into small units to make the administration more effective. New churches were built and new stations opened for the convenience of the faithful. To study the needs of his flock at close quarters Archbishop Attipetty has personally visited each and every family of the Archdiocese — a unique example in the whole of India.

A new impetus was given in fostering vocations with the result that the number of candidates aspiring to priesthood has almost tripled. For the accommodation and efficient training of all aspirants, the old minor seminary has been enlarged and a new one built. All possible encouragement is being given to the young Levites to go out to the vast mission fields of India to preach the gospel of Christ.

Many religious congregations of both men and women — contemplative and active as well, such as Jesuits, Capuchins, Salesians, Vincentians, Oblites of St. Joseph, Poor Clares, Bridgetines, Daughters of Immaculate Heart of Mary, Medical Mission Sisters, have been brought in.

Effective means are adopted in the Archdiocese to spread genuine devotion and piety among the faithful. Direct conversion movement was started with a view to approaching the non-Christians with a broader mind and a warmer heart; Catechetical Institute to reorganise and direct the teaching of Catholic doctrine on modern lines and Summer Classes regularly conducted every year to enrich the young minds with sound principles of Christian religion.

To ensure higher education and to form an enlightened and well-informed laity, University Colleges have been started in the Archdiocese for both men and women. Funds have been formed to encourage higher education of the clergy and laity. It is worth recalling in this connection, that at the time Dr. Joseph Attipetty took charge of the administration of the Archdiocese the number of priests holding University degrees was nil and that of the laity very slim. Now, there are over thirty priests and over seven hundred laymen holding university degrees. Many of the youth, it can rightly be said, would not have been able to cross the portals of any University College if the Archdiocesan Colleges had not come to their help.

In the social field much has been done to train the young people in various trades by providing them with industrial, technical and engineering schools. The Social Welfare organisations and hospitals functioning in the important centres of the Archdiocese perform great works of charity to the poor and derelicted sections of the population.

These are some of the distinctive services that the Archdiocese has been doing for its people for the last thirty years under the administration of Dr. Joseph Attipetty. The present statistics of the Archdiocese, appended here, will attest to the foregoing conclusions.

May God bless the Archdiocese, its Pastors and Faithful to continue their onward march.

APPENDIX

Present Statistics of the Archdiocese

Suffragan dioceses: Alleppey, Calicut, Cochin, Quilon, Trivandrum and Vijayapuram.

The population of the Archdiocese in and around Ernakulam (Archdiocesan headquarters) within a radius of 10 kilometres is 91,017.

This is 49% of the total population of the whole Archdiocese.

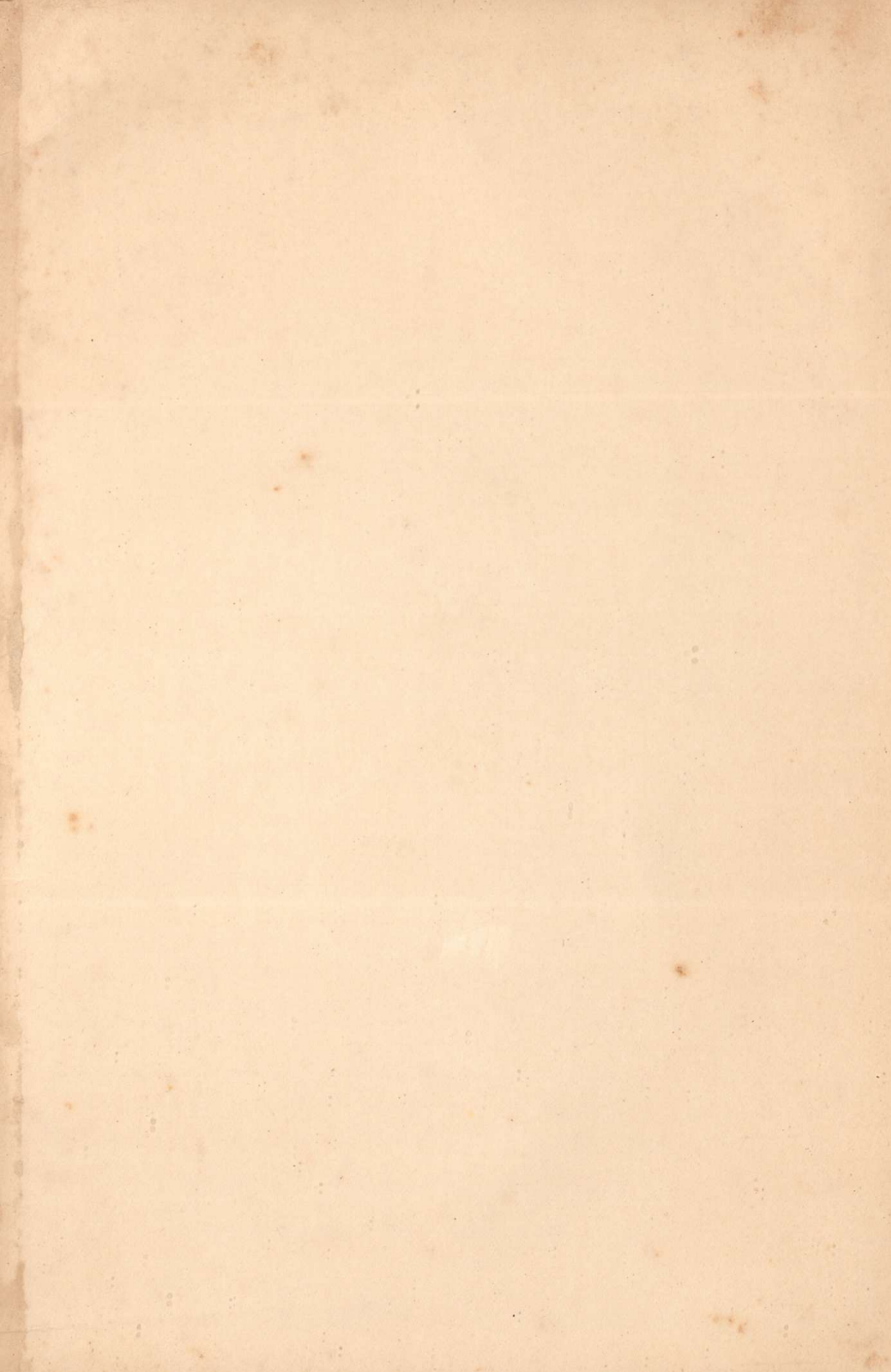
Families	26,827
Population	1,89,951
Ecclesiastical districts	5
Parishes	51
Stations with resident priests	25
„ without resident priests	44
Diocesan secular priests	113
Priests working in missions outside the Archdiocese	69
Seminarists: major	27
minor	71
Religious; priests	71
Scholastics	51
Postulants	21
Aspirants	256
Brothers	35
Sisters	382
Novices and postulants	31
Hospitals	4
Beds	109
Dispensaries	5
Orphanages	18
Orphans	928
Creches	3
Infants with nurses	81
Asylum for the aged	4
Inmates	128
Printing Presses	3
News papers and periodicals	5
Nursery schools	7
Students	503

Lower Primary schools	77
Students	28,936
Upper Primary schools	35
Students	11,684
High Schools	17
Students	7,041
Training schools	2
Students	137
Colleges	3
Students	2,549
Technical and Industrial schools	14
Student	732
Boarding houses and Hostels	17
Inmates	1,162



77	Lower primary schools
58256	Students
35	Upper primary schools
11681	Students
17	High schools
7041	Students
2	Training schools
137	Students
3	Colleges
5540	Students
11	Technical and industrial schools
737	Students
17	Boarding houses and hostels
1752	Inmates

1910



476
Role
of
The Archdiocese of Verapoly
in
The Malabar Church

By
L. M. Pylee, M.A., B.L.

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