CHAPTER IV

ESTABLISHMENT OF CHURCHES

Scholars hold different views regarding the origin of Christianity in India. Tradition goes that the influence of Christianity in the strips of the sandy tract stretching from Cranganore to Cape Comorin is due to the visit and work of the Apostle St. Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ.¹ No book or inscription or monuments of the first or second century remains in support of tradition. Hence there is much uncertainty about the actual history of St. Thomas.² But it is a historical fact that Quilon in the south, like Cranganore in the north, remained as a prominent centre of St. Thomas Christians. The remnants of a Church at Kumari Muttam locally called “Thommai Palli” and the old Church at Tiruvithamcode are considered to be the most ancient Churches and they are said to have been consecrated by St. Thomas himself.³ However, expansion of the Christian faith and the formation of congregation as well

² Firth, C.B., op.cit., p.3.
³ Padmanabhan, S., Three Historic Churches in Kanyakumari District, p.6.
as establishment of the Churches began as a regular feature since the advent of the Portuguese.

On 21st May 1498 Vascoda Gama landed at Calicut and yet the religious influence of the Portuguese could be felt only after 1526. Duarte Barbosa writes that “At this Cape Comory there is an ancient Church of the Christians which was founded by Syrians who still direct it, and perform in it the Divine services of Christians and have crosses on the altars. The mariners pay a tribute to it and the Portuguese celebrate mass there when they pass by Cape”. There are many tombs, among them there is one which has written on it a Latin epitaph.

The opening of the route to India around the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 paved the way for greater and steady influence of Christianity. In 1534 the Diocese of Goa was established by Pope Paul III. At this time the cruel persecution by Muslims drove the Paravars of the Pearl Fishery Coast to seek the protection of the Portuguese in Cochin. The Parish Priest of Cochin with four other priests were sent down to the Pearl Fishery Coast where in the following years, about 20000 were converted by Fr. Michael, the Vicar General of Goa in 1535. With the arrival of the Portuguese the Paravars of the Pearl Fishery Coast including
those at Cape Comorin, Kovalam and Rajakkamangalam in Agasteeswaram taluk were baptised in 1535 A.D.

To work among the Paravas St. Francis Xavier, a noted professor of the Sorbonno University of Paris, came to the southern tip of the Peninsula in the year 1543. For 14 months he worked continuously along the coast naming it “the Mission of Cape Comorin”.

**Our Lady of Ransom**

From the time of St. Xavier there has been a Church and a resident Parish Priest at Cape Comorin and it forms the nucleus of the present Church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title “Our Lady of Ransom”. In the year 1900 the old Church was demolished and the foundation stone of the present Church of sublimity was laid. It was completed in the year 1956. The altar and sanctuary of the old Church are kept intact behind the present Church. The structure of the new edifice is well proportioned and very imposing and it forms an outstanding example of Gothic architecture.

The interior portion is very graceful and quite conducive to prayer and worship. The hall of 153 feet in length and 53 feet in breadth is divided into three aisles by two rows of pillars. At the entrance is a big mandapa on which three towers rise into the skies. The central tower with

---

a height of 153 feet was crowned with a golden cross blessed by Rt. Rev. T.R. Agniswamy, the Bishop of Kottar on the 20th November, 1955.\textsuperscript{11} The towers on either side are 100 feet tall. Two big bells are hung in them at a height of 53 feet from the ground. The wooden altar depicting all the Apostles and many saints and also some scenes from the Bible is a masterpiece of carving.

**The Shrine of St. Francis Xavier**

The Cathedral of St. Francis Xavier, one of the most impressive historic monuments of Agasteeswaram taluk, containing a small chapel of our Lady where Xavier used to celebrate Holy Mass, is situated at Kottar. To many a people it is a pilgrim centre which has earned the title ‘Second Goa’ – where the body of St. Xavier is kept.\textsuperscript{12} The invasion of Travancore by Vithala, a Vijayanagar Viceroy is closely connected with the life of St. Xavier. The then ruler of Travancore named Unnikerala Varma was a friend of Xavier because of the saint’s miraculous help when the king was in deep trouble.\textsuperscript{13}

A contemporary letter from Portugal dated 22nd October, 1545 also confirms the existence of a chapel. The letter reads thus: “A Rajah has given orders throughout his kingdom that all are to show obedience to his brother the Great Father as though it were to himself; all

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Cit.
\item Villavarayan, J.M., *op.cit.*, p.34.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
who wish are free to become Christians. He also gave him much money, but Xavier distributed it all among the poor. Along the coast he has built 45 Churches. The small chapel of Our Lady which was housed in the Cathedral at Kottar is the most important among them.

The Cathedral at Kottar is a complex of many structures built at various times. In 1600, with Portuguese help Kulasekara Perumal, the Raja of Travancore, won the battle against the Madurai Nayak. In recognition of that the king granted permission to the Jesuits to build churches. He also gifted land and sufficient timber for the construction of the church at Kottar. Hoping to receive the land Father Andreas Buserio started the construction work. On 17 January 1603 Buserio started the construction work of the church with the help of Nadar Christians of Pallam, Christians of Rajakkamangalam and Periapara. There was local opposition to the construction of the church. But in the teeth of opposition a part of the church was completed. Father Andreas Buserio used to celebrate the Feast every year on the day of the death of Xavier, “and for that Feast the greater part of the Christians of the coast used to gather”.

Buserio, the founder of the first church at Kottar, died on 1617 in the Jesuit house at Madurai. The next priest Antony Aranjis

---

15 George Schurhammar, S.J., op.cit., p.442.
16 Venancius, S., *Thiruthalam Kottar*, Bangalore, 1988, p.27.
18 Venancius, S., *op.cit.*, p.43.
assumed charge of the church in 1622 after a gap of five years. In 1640 saint-hood was awarded to Xavier. To commemorate this occasion people demolished the old clay church and its place built a new stone church.\textsuperscript{19}

The Jesuit records of 1644 read that Kottar church was made up of stone in 1640 and the stone church retained the wooden altar of the old church.\textsuperscript{20} The 17\textsuperscript{th} century saw the rise of anti-catholic Dutch power in India, and the catholics of the Cochin jurisdiction had to go through trials and tribulations under the Dutch. In short, the Dutch domination over Cochin in 1663 and this adversely affected the Catholic Church in Kottar also.\textsuperscript{21} Despite this difficulty, Kottar went ahead with the construction of the second stone Church. The first stone Church appeared insufficient to accommodate all the devotees at a time. To overcome the difficulty in 1698, the Jesuit priest constructed a huge Church of stone with tiled roof on the side of the small church.\textsuperscript{22}

The construction work of the new church is mentioned in the letter of Fr. Andrew Gomex, the provincial Head of Cochin, from Thope to the Society of Jesus, Rome, dated 09.08.1698.\textsuperscript{23} In the year 1865 the church was enlarged and the shrine of Our Lady where Xavier used to celebrate Holy Mass was also renovated and vaulted over.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{19} Alex Kurush Muthiah, \textit{Then Pandi Mandalamana Veera Nadu} (Tamil), Azhalcappapuram, p.257.
\textsuperscript{20} Venancius, S., \textit{op.cit.}, p.53ff.
\textsuperscript{21} Narchison, J.R., \textit{op.cit.}, p.20.
\textsuperscript{22} Venancius, \textit{op.cit.}, p.20.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Padmanabhan, S., \textit{Three Historic Churches in Kanyakumari District}, p.11.
An altar of proportionate size was found indispensable to match the extension of the church. Hence it was decided to construct an altar of a proportionate size. The construction work of the proposed altar was entrusted to an artist by name Jockin Fernandus of Quilon. The main altar was consecrated on 23rd August 1874. The whole altar is gilted and it is in the floor of the altar the mortal remains of the first Bishop of Kottar Rev. Dr. Lawrence Pereira was buried. The beautiful statue which adorns the main altar has been brought from Goa.

In the nineteenth century, the front portion of the church was extended with the construction of a stone Mandapam. For the construction of the Mandapam huge stone blocks were brought from the Aralvoimozhi mountains with the help of the native king's elephants. The Mandapam was designed and built by John Louis Fernandos, an engineer in the Travancore Government. In 1930 the church was raised to the status of a Cathedral. The cruciform church has acquired different styles of architecture. The old church of round arches and vaults are Romanesque, the extension with high pointed arches is of Gothic and the fine stone mandapam in front is purely Indian.

---

25 The artist name was engraved on the altar.
26 Villavarayan, J.M., _op.cit._, p.35.
27 Inscription on the floor of the altar, St. Xavier's Church, Kottar.
28 Villavarayan, J.M., _op.cit._, p.35.
29 Venancius, S., _op.cit._, p.55.
In 1942 in commemoration of the fourth centenary of the arrival of St. Xavier in India, a beautiful tower to the saint, a grotto to our Blessed Mother and a small shrine to St. Ignatius, who sent him to India were constructed in the cathedral premises.

The church of St. Xavier enjoys a great fame as a place of miracles from early times. It is said that a blind man from Midalam having seen Xavier in a dream proceeded to Kottar and while he was in prayers before the image, was suddenly cured. Perumal, a learned man of Kottar who contracted the dreadful disease of leprosy could not move about in spite of various forms of treatment. At last he visited the Church and prostrated himself at the feet of the image of St. Xavier and prayed to him in songs. Miraculously the man was cured of the deadly disease. The fame of these miracles spread far and wide and ever since the church has been visited by thousands of pilgrims for fulfilling their desires. It has become almost proverbial to say that, “Xavier of Kottar grants all prayers”.

Every year the annual festival of the church which lasts for ten days is held from 24th November to 3rd December. The car festival on the ninth day is most important. During these festival days the shrine attracts people of all castes and religions from all over South India. The tenth day of the festival is declared as a district holiday.

31 Ignatius was a spaniard and the founder of the society of Jesus.
33 Annual Festival Programme Notice, St. Xavier Church, Kottar, 19.11.2005.
The Mylaudi Mission

The 25th of April 1806, was a memorable day in the history of Christianity in Agasteeswaram taluk. It was on that day, Ringeltaube entered the land of charity and proceeded to meet the little group of converts at Mylaudi where the Christian community had been clamouring long for a native teacher. They had also been inconvenienced with the denial of permission to build a Church there, as the entire state had been conventionally held to be gifted away to Brahmins by the king of Travancore. As Ringeltaube was not permitted to stay in a Ceravansary appropriated for the Brahmins at Aramboly, the Missionary spent two day in a hut. Thus anticipating fully well the difficulties ahead, he began his mission in all humility by with determination.

Ringeltaube called on Col. Macaulay, the British Resident of Travancore at Cochin on 8th May 1806. Col. Macaulay welcomed him to his house at the island of Bolghautty. He stayed for five days at the residence of Col. Macaulay and discussed the prospects of initiating a mission field. Macaulay hinted to Ringeltaube that if a mission could be started at Cochin, he would render all aid in his power. But the commitment to people of Mylaudi weighed so compelling in the

---

missionary's mind that he could not accede to the Resident's request. However before leaving, Ringeltaube made a special request to Macaulay that he should exert his influence and get sanction from the Maharaja for building a protestant church at Mylaudi. Macaulay assured all possible help and even offered to build the church at his own expense.

On his way back Dr. Kenneth Macaulay, the nephew of Col. Macaulay helped Ringeltaube to obtain audience with Dewan Velu Thampi. But the Dewan a hard-core Hindu paid little heed to the missionary's request for permission to build a Church. He expressed a fear that such a permission would violate established customs and hence delayed giving sanction on grounds of such specious arguments. Whatever might have been the attitude of the British East India company towards Christianity in India, its representatives in Travancore, in the early part of the nineteenth century were favourable to the cause of the Christian religion. Macaulay even assured to Ringeltaube that he would use his good offices to obtain the necessary permission to erect a church at Mylaudi. At last with the Resident's intercession, permission was procured by Ringeltaube to propagate the Gospel in Agasteeswaram taluk. The Maharaja also promised Buchanan, who visited the ancient Churches of

---

38 Ivy Peter and Peter, D., op.cit., p.83.
40 Joy Gnanadhason, op.cit., p.53.
42 Agur, C.M., op.cit., p.504.
Travancore, the request for permission to build a church at Mylaudi would be granted in a few weeks after his proposed visit to Suchindram.44

In the meantime the Dewan conducted enquiries and postponed the settlement of the matter until December which His Highness would travel to the South to take part in the Suchindrum festival. While the king had agreed for the grant of the land, the Dewan remained uncompromising.45 This attitude of the Dewan alienated the friendship and sympathy of the British Resident. Velu Thampi who had been a good friend of Macaulay, apprehended that the Christian flags would begin to flutter on the tops of Pagodas,46 and even wrote that the chief cause of his hostility to the British was his fear of the extension of the Christian religion in Travancore.47

Dewan Velu Thampi joined hands with Dewan Paliat Accen of the State of Cochin and carried on a dreadful massacre of the Christians sparing not even women and children and priests. Christians were maimed, tortured, butchered and thrown into back-waters.48 During the troubles attending the revolt of Dewan in the early part of 1809 the Christians of Mylaudi suffered grievous persecution and had to take to the hills and hide in caves and bamboo brakes.49 Ringeltaube found it difficult

44 Yesudhason, R.N., A People’s Revolt in Travancore, p.58.
45 William Robinson, op.cit., p.61.
48 Agur, C.M., op.cit., p.536.
to remain in Mylaudi in this unsettled condition of the state and shifted his headquarters to Palayamkottai while helping the S.P.C.K at Palayamkottai, he could direct the work at Mylaudi also. Vedamonickam, the follower of the white man and the friend of the Resident, was a marked man. Orders were given to seize and imprison him or shoot him at sight. He and the members of his family took shelters in the nearby Marunthuval hills and hide there for nearly 30 days.

In February 1809, the British armies captured Aramboly Fort and went to Oluginasery near Nagercoil, defeated the Travancore Army. Velu Thambi shut the door and committed suicide. The dead body of the Dewan was soon despatched to Trivandrum through express bearers to satisfy the hug vengeance of his rivals. An armistic was concluded between British and the Travancore on 29 February 1809. As a result British power was made paramount in Travancore.

When Vedamonickam heard that the British troops captured the Aramboly Fort, he came out of his hide-out and went to the British Camp carrying his Bible with him. The English officers received him kindly and were surprised to find a Christian. He also went to Palayamkottai to meet Ringeltaube who escaped to Palayamkottai when

---

50 Silvester Home, _op.cit._, p.96.
52 Azariah, S.A., _op.cit._, p.77.
54 Yesudhason, R.N., _A Peoples Revolt in Travancore_, p.60.
55 William Robinson, _op.cit._, p.61.
the rebellion had started. Ringeltaube received him with great joy "as
one from the dead". As soon as possible, Ringeltaube visited Mylaudi.

On 13 March 1809, Col. Macaulay appointed Umini Thambi
as the next Dewan. He had great sympathy for the Christians. Once again
Ringeltaube applied for permission to build a church and obtained the long
awaited order permitting the Christians of Mylaudi to build a church in
March 1809. Mannan Annavy, the local Tahsildar and magistrate was
instructed by royal order to render necessary help in the execution of the
work and if desired to build the church at Sircar cost.

Mylaudi Church

As soon as the order was issued permitting the construction
of a church, Vedamonickam donated a piece of land where the foundation
stone for the first protestant church was laid in May 1809. In spite of
royal orders to help in the execution of the work, the local Tahsildar
jealously hindered the work in various ways. But Vedamonickam gave
him presents and then won his co-operation in completing the small
churches. In September the church was dedicated by Ringeltaube and at
its opening service many converts were baptised and the Lord’s Supper
was celebrated in their own chapel.

56 James Hugh, *The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era*,
Vol.IV, p.280.
60 Bi-centenary Celebration (1806-2006), *op.cit.*, p.25.
As Ringeltaube feared that the descendants of Vedamonickam might in future put forth claims to the land donated by the latter a nominal price was paid for the land and it was legally transferred to the mission. Near the church he built a small native hut for himself ten feet long and six feet wide, furnished with a wooden table, one or two stools and a native cot. In this way he lived like a Rishi, a pure and poor Indian showing to what extent a servant of God could deny himself, the comforts of life in order to do good to his fellows.

As soon as he settled down at Mylaudi Ringeltaube began to plan and organise the work of the Mylaudi Mission with extraordinary care. He started training Vedamonickam and Masilamony, two young men of piety and considerable talent and thus the nucleus of a native ministry was formed. Vedamonickam was appointed a paid catechist of the Mission at the end of 1809. Vedamonickam preached from village to village, door to door. More than others the Shanars devoutly listened to him and readily accepted the Christian faith. One striking feature of the expansion of the Mylaudi Mission in Agasteeswaram taluk was the “Mass Movement” which began with the conversion of Vedamonickam.

---

62 John A. Jacob, *op.cit.*, p.35.
As in other L.M.S Mission fields in India, in Agasteeswaram taluk also mass movements began first among the outcastes because the depressed classes lacked a sense of individuality and hence acted corporately.\textsuperscript{66} Did the missionaries initiate such mass movements? In fact the missionaries did not invent the mass movement as a facile method of getting converts.\textsuperscript{67} However when they devoted themselves to work among the poor and the lowly, large numbers of them who were nominal Hindus embraced Christianity because Christianity offered relief from the most searching and relentless form of social tyranny – the tyranny of caste and offered them independence, self-respect, education and advancement and a new life.\textsuperscript{68}

The liberal treatment of the missionaries attracted the lower castes.\textsuperscript{69} Once they became Christians, their image changed as they were carefully educated and treated with kindness and the converts as a class began to earn for themselves a constantly improving position in public estimation.\textsuperscript{70} However there is no denying the fact that there were inferior motives also behind mass-movements. Ringeltaube was also not aware of the fact that the primary motive of his converts was to escape from the

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p.4.
\textsuperscript{67} Pickett, Vaskom, J., \textit{Christian Mass Movement in India}, Lucknow, 1933, p.36.
\textsuperscript{68} Riseley, Herbert, \textit{The People of India}, Delhi, 1969, p.249.
payment of a poll-tax and the rendering of certain services to the Sircar.\textsuperscript{71}
In 1813 the missionary had about 600 converts but only about three or four of them as he knew had a longing for their salvation.\textsuperscript{72} Of his converts he remarked in August, 1814 that the poorest of them consented to become proselytes for material gain.

Undoubtedly in many instances there was a mixture of low and inferior motives in embracing Christianity.\textsuperscript{73} But the missionaries did not consider the secular motives as incompatible with religion. Ringeltaube also worked with this considerate attitude and the church began to grown by leaps and bounds though motives for conversion were different.\textsuperscript{74}

**Thamarakulam Church**

Vedamonickam's itinerary in the surrounding villages added great strength to the mission founded at Mylaudi. The foremost among the Shanar villages converted by him was Thamarakulam. Thamarakulam Church was dedicated on 10\textsuperscript{th} March 1810, on which day he baptized 40 persons.\textsuperscript{75} Vedamonickam Moopan, Pakiamuthu Moopan and Abraham Moopan were the first deacons of this church. Abraham Moopan's Hindu name was Perumal. At the time when his eldest son Palaveshamuthu aged

\textsuperscript{71} Pickett, Vaskom, *op.cit.*, p.4.
\textsuperscript{72} Hacker, I.H., *op.cit.*, p.24.
\textsuperscript{73} Samuel Mateer, *The Land of Charity*, p.267.
\textsuperscript{74} Northcott Cecil, *Glorious Company – One hundred and Fifty years' Life and work of the L.M.S.* 1745, London, 1945, p.85.
\textsuperscript{75} John A. Jacob, *op.cit.*, p.37.
15 was ill. Though he made all offerings to Hindu God for his recovery, he died. From this time he began to distrust his god and his mind was prepared to receive the more sober truths of the Gospel of Salvation. Masillamoni who accompanied Vedamonickam on his pilgrimage to Chidambaram was appointed the first catechist of Thamarakulam Church.

Puthalam Church

From Thamarakulam when Vedamonickam began preaching the word in the village westward and a man in Puthalam embraced it. Puthalam is a village named after a salt pan that exists very close to it. It is on the coast of Indian Ocean about seven miles south of Nagercoil. It has been a settlement of Nadars. There was one Nadar called Veerasuran. He had four sons namely Ramar, Iyyamperumal, Esakumuthu and Elayaperumal. Ellayaperumal used to go to market at Mylaudi in order to buy and sell things. At Mylaudi Ellayaperumal met Vedamonickam, and he was baptised under the name of Vedamonickam.

Ellayaperumal Vedamonickam with the help of Ringeltaube, founded a church at Puthalam. His brother Esakimuthu donated a land to Puthalam Church for building. A church was built in 40 x 20 inches and dedicated on 20th July 1810. Vedamonickam’s eldest son Devasagayam

---

76 Agur, C.M., op. cit., p.554.
80 Annual Report for 1835, London Mission Puthalam Church, p.3.
was the first catechist of Puthalam Church. Puthalam Church, a decent and modest building, was built mainly through the exertions of Gnanamuthu, the headman of the Mylaudi family. The decent and clean dress of the converts on that occasion and their conduct in general pleased the Missionary very much. Rev. S. Vethamony worked hard for the development of this Church. Many people accepted Christianity and were baptised. As the members of the Church increased the church was expanded (90 x 45’ + entrance 45’ x 12’) and the inauguration was conducted on 6th December 1900. During his service orphanage was also started on 15th November 1895. He began the orphanage with one orphan. The European Missionaries and the Indian friends supported him by their prayers and liberal contributions. The Travancore Government in 1921 was kind enough to dig well in the orphanage compound at their own cost. The primary object of the orphanage was to impart a sound moral and religious training to the pupil. They were taught to read and write. Great care was taken to reform their habits and manners. In 1898, he also began an Industrial School for the orphans. At the beginning they were taught how to make baskets with Palmyra leaves and plait mats with coconut and palm leaves. Carpentry too was taught to the children.

---

The weaving section also started. Every year pupil were sent for the government examination in elementary and intermediate weaving and most of them came out successful. The Silver Jubilee of the orphanage was celebrated in 1920, under the presidency of Rev. George Parker, a patron of the institution. A report of this meeting was sent to Rev. Franklenwood, the foreign secretary of the L.M.S. The students studied in the orphanage left the institution after a course of study in English and in technical subjects and won creditable success in various public examination.

The Church first erected at Ettambozhi was burnt down by the heathen Nadars at the instigation of Madavan Kumar, a Sirkar official. A second Church was built there and was dedicated on 14th October 1810. Mr. Ringeltaube with his assistants often travelled from village to village preaching to the people under the shades of trees, on the way sides and in the houses of many heathens who received him friendly. As they extended their exertions in every direction God also blessed their work, and they were glad to see conversions taking place all round. Then in three places especially at Piccaikudiyiruppu otherwise known as Jamestown, Athicaud and Kovilvilay numerous converts were ready for baptism. In the beginning of 1810 Mr. Ringeltaube obtained the Sirkar permission to build

---

90 John A. Jacob, *op. cit.*, p.38.
Churches in these places and completed them the same year because of the help of Rs.1000/- which a friend of his kindly gave him for this purpose.

In November 1810, Ringeltaube furnished the number of baptised Christians in the seven centres as detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Number baptised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mylaudi</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piccaikudiyiruppu</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puthalam</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kovilvilay</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athicaud</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eathambozhy</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamarakulam</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By the end of 1810 in all the seven centres, the converts were worshipping in their own small churches. In 1810 alone Ringeltaube baptised more than two hundred souls.\(^2\) By the end of 1812 there were in all 677 communicants.

**British Resident Macaulay and Munroe**

During the ten years of his office i.e. from 1800 to 1810 Macaulay established the British Supremacy in Travancore on a firm basis. He was also responsible for the successful establishment of the Mylaudi Mission. His judicious and humane measures offered every practicable degree of encouragement and protection to the Christians.\(^3\) On his retirement, Munroe was appointed British Resident in Travancore and he

\(^3\) *Political Consultation*, Sl. No.22, Vol.II for 1806, p.454f.
assumed office on 23rd March 1810. Like his predecessor, Munroe extended his patronage to the Mylaudi Mission. He did so much good to the Travancore Church that he came to be known as the 'Father of the Christian Missions in Travancore'. He took a lively interest in Ringeltaube work also. Munroe, who was instrumental in ameliorating the condition of the poor Christian people of the region, kept himself in close touch with the affairs of the Mylaudi Mission.

Munroe made frequent inquiries about the state of the Mylaudi Mission and Ringeltaube was often embarrassed by the length of the kind letters addressed to him by the Resident. In 1813, the Resident sent to Ringeltaube a very thoughtfully prepared questionnaire concerning the origin of the mission, the authority under which Ringeltaube was functioning, the number of churches established, the number of the clergy, their pay and designations, rules of conduct, punishment for religious offences, funds for the maintenance of the churches, education of the clergy, religious books including the Bible, mode of worship, conversions, persecution of Christians, safeguards needed, effect of conversion on the conduct and character of the people etc., for which the missionary sent a suitable reply in which he indicated in very plain terms that the L.M.S was

---

95 Ibid., p.561.
96 Ibid., p.579.
not in a position to finance the mission properly. One of the results of this inquiry was probably the Rani's grant to the Mission of 61 kottahs of paddy lands at Tamarakulam and Vayilakulam, on an annual rent of one hundred kottahs of paddy as against the estimated produce of 1464 kottahs per annum.98

As a result of the generous grant of paddy lands by Her Highness, the Mylaudi Mission began to grow on the principle of self support. This is a very important feature in the growth of the L.M.S Church in Agasteeswaram taluk.

The Last Days of Ringeltaube

Incessant labours caused great damage to the Ringeltaube's health. There was none to care for his bodily wants and make his life comfortable. He decided to leave the field of his labour.99 But before leaving he tried to get a missionary in his place but in vain. He was more worried about his converts who often fell a prey to the cruelties of the Sircar officials. So he went to meet Munroe at Cape Comorin in October 1815 and requested him to appoint protestant judge in the south so that the poor Christians might get even-handed justice. In the end of January 1816, before leaving the country, Ringeltaube called all the people to Mylaudi Church and in their presence took his own surplice and put it on Vedamonickam. He also handed over to him a certificate and licence

98 Hacker, I.H., op.cit., p.28.
99 John A. Jacob, op.cit., p.44.
written in English and Tamil, authorising Vedamonickam to appoint or
dismiss catechists and teachers and superintend the Mission till the
appointment of another Missionary.\textsuperscript{100}

On 5\textsuperscript{th} February 1816 at Quilon he boarded a ship bound for
Madras.\textsuperscript{101} As the ship sailed southward Ringeltaube remembered that he
had carelessly left on the walls of his house at Mylaudi some charcoal
writing showing some account. He feared that his successor might
interpret it as dues from the people and demand payment. So, as the ship
neared Manakudy, Ringeltaube implored the captain and succeeded in
caus[ing the vessel to be anchored off that port for a few hours. Landing he
walked over to Mylaudi and erased out the disquieting charcoal writings
and left, once again leaving his flock in great sorrow.\textsuperscript{102}

How he died and where his mortal remains were buried we
cannot say for certain.\textsuperscript{103} What is available to throw some light on the
problem is his extant letters. There were written from Malacca – one to
Hard castle, London, dated September 27, 1816 and the other to his sister
Anna – which assured further correspondence from Colombo. But no letter
was written since that date. Hence it led people to conclude that

\textsuperscript{100} William Robinson, \textit{op.cit.}, p.82.
\textsuperscript{101} Agur, C.M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.618.
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{ibid.}, p.619.
Ringeltaube died of illness between Malacca and Batavia and was buried at sea.\textsuperscript{104} It was a singular end to a singular life.\textsuperscript{105}

His death, however, did not undo what he had taken on hand. A fruitful field of mission was opened and with feeble hands though he inaugurated the work, yet succeeded in giving it sufficient vitality to grow and a direction to proceed to. In this sense it can be concluded that his successors were able to build the superstructure on the strong foundations laid by Ringeltaube.

**Kallukoil**

When Ringeltaube departed from Mylaudi in February 1816, there was no missionary to take immediate charge of the mission. But he appointed Vedamonikam for the management of the mission until a new missionary would be duly appointed by the Directors.\textsuperscript{106} He was ably assisted by his eldest son Devasahayam and his son-in-law Pakkianathan.\textsuperscript{107} In the meantime, the Directors, who were not unaware of the needs of the Mission took steps, early in 1816, to send out Charles Mead to South Travancore. Though he arrived at Madras along with Richard Knill,\textsuperscript{108} on 28\textsuperscript{th} August 1816, he could reach Kolaccal only in

\textsuperscript{104} William Robinson, *op.cit.*, p.89.
\textsuperscript{105} Silvester Horne, *op.cit.*, p.97.
\textsuperscript{106} *Missionary Society's Reports (1795-1814)*, p.510.
\textsuperscript{107} Hacker, I.H., *op.cit.*, p.31.
\textsuperscript{108} Richard Knill was born on 24 April 1787 at Braunton in England. Mead invited Knill to assist him in the construction of the Home Church at Nagercoil.
December 1817. Vedamonickam heartily received and escorted him to Mylaudi.¹⁰⁹

As Mylaudi was not at all suited for vigorous missionary work Mead choose Nagercoil as his headquarters with the personal blessings of Munroe, who even promised to give his own circuit bungalow at Nagercoil for the residence of the Missionary and render every assistance in his power.¹¹⁰ Munroe also procured from the Rani Gowri Parvati Bai the tract of land on which the Nagercoil Home Church and other mission buildings around the church arose in subsequent years.¹¹¹ In April 1818 Mead transferred his headquarters from Mylaudi to Nagercoil. With this the mission entered upon a new era of expansion and development.

In 1819, on the New year Day, Knill laid the foundation stone for the largest Church in South India.¹¹² Only 18 people belonging to 12 families of the Nagercoil congregation attended the function on that day.¹¹³ Construction work started with the permission of the Rani Gowri Parvati Bai of Travancore. She permitted Rev. Mead to take the required teakwood from the government forest and to employ the elephants of Nagaraja Temple and the inmates of Nagercoil Sub-Jail in the construction

¹⁰⁹ Agur, C.M., op. cit., p.674f.
¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.679.
¹¹¹ Hacker, I.H., op. cit., p.34.
¹¹² Inscription on the front wall of the Home Church, Nagercoil.
work of the Church. With the help and co-operation of the state the building of the imposing structure of the Church in Greek style was completed in 1843. It was dedicated in 1843. The church is 140 feet long and 70 feet wide. It consists of a spacious hall and a Veranda in the front and office rooms in the rear. The 12 massive double pillars erected inside the Church in two rows support the entire structure. Today this church also called as Home Church, is one of the oldest and biggest of the protestant Churches in South India. It was constructed with a view of accommodating about 2500 people at a time. This shows the astonishing vision of Mead. He tried hard for the development of the place and its people. But at the time of dedication of this Church Mead had already left for the Neyyoor Mission allowing Mault to be in charge of the Nagercoil Mission.

Mault’s attempts at getting more converts was a great success and even some high caste people came to embrace the new faith. One among them was a Brahmin named Neelakanta Subaiyar. He was christened as Devadhason and became the first converted clergy of the church. On 13th February 1866 it became a self-supporting Pastorate.
Several Missionaries, Catechists, Evangelists, Presbyters, District Ministers and Lay Deacons worked hard for the upliftment of this congregation.

The Home Church spent lot of money for supporting missionaries and missionary's children. For the spiritual welfare of the people the church has organised a Men's Fellowship, Women's Fellowship, Mault Missionary Society, Young Men's Christian Association, Sunday School, Vocational Bible School etc. These enabled the people to know about God and to lead a life in the path of God.\(^{119}\)

Street prayers were organised in 1956. The chief aim of street prayers was to create love and unity among the people and to worship God with unity. Through street prayers, the pastors are able to establish direct contact with the public.\(^{120}\) The Church also doing social work. On Christmas rice and clothes were given to poor members of the church. The church gave financial aid for the marriages of the poor people. Free health care centre was established by the Church. The doctors performed free medical services for the poor. It developed and grew steadily on the basis of self-support, self-propagation and self-government.

**Kaliankadu Church**

The Kaliankadu C.S.I Church also one of the important churches in Agasteeswaram taluk. The first church was established in 1821. It was a shed with mud walls and a thatched roof. The shed served

\(^{119}\) *Annual Report for 1998*, Home Church, p.15.

as a chapel for service on Sundays and as school in rest of the days. In 1869 the foundation was laid to build a church of 50’ x 22’ size. In the year 1873 the church had 126 adherents including 54 baptised members. It shows the development of the church. Rev. Duthie visited the church on 23 June 1884. He was much impressed with the improved condition of the church. Many Hindus of the neighbourhood were favourably inclined towards christianity believed that Christ is the only Salvation. In 1896 famine attacked most of the families of the church members contributed much for the eradication of famine.

**Booth Tucker Hall**

William Booth Tucker founded the Salvation Army in India in 1882. Tucker perceived that the Army’s work in India would very difficult due to diversification in caste, custom, language etc. However, to achieve his end, he adopted the principle of adaptation. Accordingly the Salvation Army officers in India started to live as the natives did Tucker took an Indian name of Fakir Singh, with the meaning “begging religious medicant” and dressed like an Indian Fakir. Tucker walked barefooted and preached Gospel from village to village. He also started the Indian

---

123 Ibid., 1884, p.9.
124 Ibid., 1897, p.12.
126 Booth Tucker, Forty Years with the Salvation Army in India, Simla, 1910, p.42.
Village Welfare Association for the poor people. The Army, immediately after his entry into India sent its soldiers to South Travancore to relieve thousands of depressed people of this region.

The Cape division was formed in 1892. William Johnston was appointed on the First Divisional Commander of the newly formed Cape Division. The Army established church in Vadasery and preached gospel to the depressed class people. When the Army started its work the general meetings were conducted every year at Vetturnimadam. But there was no central hall to conduct meetings. Hence an appeal was sent to the General stating the need for a common hall for the purpose. The General Bramwell who visited the territory in 1922 realized the need for a central hall and promised an amount of Rs.1500/- for the same. Immediately commissioner Suk Singh started the construction work of the Hall and declared it open on 15 October 1923 and dedicated as Booth Tucker Hall. Today in Vetturnimadam, the Hall is very famous and it looks attractive. Evening services held in this Hall every Sunday are attended by the Christians of all denominations.

Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Vadasery

The Missouri Mission was started at Chicago in 1847 and it got a chance to start its work in Agasteeswaram taluk in 1907. Most of the beneficiaries of this mission were from the Sambavar community.

129 *Inscription on the wall of Booth Tucker Hall*, Nagercoil.
G. Joshua assisted by A. Lazarus worked hard for the welfare of this community. The efforts of these leaders led to the formation of a Lutheran Church at Vadasery. The members of the Vadasery Congregation met under the shade of a tree. The Congregation felt the need for a building. In 1907 Jesudhason presented a piece of land to construct a church. In that land the first Lutheran church was established. The first service was held on 22.11.1907. Rev. A. Huebener conducted the first baptism service at the Vadasery Church on 27.02.1908 with Paramayee as the first member to be baptized. The Congregation grew day by day, and the present church was built and dedicated on 05.02.1914.

Thus with the establishment of a large number of churches and congregations under missionary guidance and control, even non-christians realised the advantages and availed themselves of the opportunity for their good. It is not far from the truth to assert that the people of this region, in consequence; come to have a sophisticated outlook never before experienced.

131 Missouri Synod Proceedings 1908, p.105.
133 Baptism Register of the Christ Lutheran Church, Vadasery, p.102.
134 "Christ Lutheran Church", 94th Year Service Souvenir, Vadasery, 2001, p.35.