Chapter 4

Christian Missionaries in Kerala

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CHAPTER - 4
Christian Missionaries in Kerala

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is purported to concentrate on the influence of European religious missionaries in developing dualistic social and cultural situation in Kerala society. It is very obvious that the European missionaries have made deep impact on social, cultural and economic aspects of Kerala society during the colonial and pre-colonial period. “Simplistic conflations between Christians and colonialism, conversion, or caste have almost invariably resulted from confusing complex forms of dual identity. These have themselves reflected confused manifestations of cultural ambiguity and ambivalence, not to mention manifold verities within each Christian community in India”1.

“Lets us now imagine that the time of Independence in 1947 Kerala was not made part of the nation of India. Instead, it became a separate nation. Because Catholic Christian predominance in the state, the decision is made that Kerala will be Roman Catholic nations. They justify their decision to refuse membership in India by saying that they are a distinct people and that they want govern themselves by laws deriving from their own tradition, which is very different from that of other Indian regions.”2 As in Goa, Kerala’s contact with Christianity had a transforming effect on Kerala society from decades ago that itself is a distinguishing feature to identify it from other states of India.

4.2 History of Christianity in Kerala

Christianity in Kerala is as old as Christianity itself, and Kerala is rightly called the cradle of Christianity in India. Many Keralites had become Christians even before St. Peter reached Rome in 68 A.D. Kerala Christians have a longer history and a more ancient ancestry than the Christians of most of the European countries. Even the European missionaries, when they first landed in Kerala found that there were several Christian strongholds here. The number of Christians in Kerala now is estimated to be nine million. Among them the Catholics form the majority with 5 million. The approximate figures of Christians belonging to different denominations: Syro-Malabar-3,000,000; Latin-Catholics- 1,700,000; Syro-Malankara Catholics-300,000; Syrian Orthodox Christians (Methran Kakshi)-1,100,000; Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Christians (Bava Kakshi)-1,000,000; Church of South India (CSI) and other Protestants - 700,000; Marthomites-500,000; Christians of the Church of the East (Nestorians/Surais)-100,000; St. Thomas Evangelical & Others - 10,000; Independent Jacobites (Thozhiyur)-9,000. 3

According to history, Christianity in India and Kerala started by the arrival of St. Thomas in A.D 52. He is believed to have landed at Cranganore near Cochin. He converted many local Hindu inhabitants including many from the upper class known as Namboodiri Brahmins. It is also believed that St. Thomas established Churches in seven places in Kerala, i.e. Kodungallore, Palayur, Paravur, Kokkamangalam, Niranam, Chayal, Korakkeni, Kollam and a chappal (half church-"Arappalli") at Thiruvankottu.4 Later, St. Thomas moved on to the east coast of India (Coromandal). He was martyred in 72 A.D. by a fanatic Brahmin at Little Mount in Madras and his body was

brought to Mylapore in Madras and was buried there. His tomb is venerated until this day.

Some of the early Christian settlements in Kerala were Paklomattam, Shankarapuri, Kalli, and Kaliyankavu in the north and Thayyil, Pattamukkil, Manki, and Madathilen near Niranam. The present Christian population has descended from these early groups. They are popularly referred to as Syrian Christians because of the Syrian Liturgy which they use in church services. They have also sometimes been called Nazaranis (followers of Jesus of Nazarene) or St. Thomas Christians.

An added boost to the growth of the Church took place when a group of about 400 people migrated from Syria in 345 AD and joined the then existing Kerala Church. The leader of this group was Thomas of Kana. He and the other Persian Christians who came with him allegedly played a great role in the organization and building up of the church and community of Cranganore and apparently exerted very great influence on the faith and worship of the whole Christian community of Kerala. The descendants of this group even today maintain their separate identity, and are known as Kananites. Syrian Christians remained as an independent group, and they got their bishops from the Eastern Orthodox Church in Antioch in Syria. Between the period of 1490 and 1504 there were five Syrian Bishops in Malabar, i.e. Mar John, Mar Jaballaha, Mar Thomas, Mar Denha and Mar Jacob. It is said that when Thomas of Cana came to India, he found Christians in Cranganore and Quilon, who were descended from the disciples of the Apostles St. Thomas. These Christians were only Christians in name, and they married the Nayars promiscuously. The distinguishing

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5. Ibid. 90.
6. Ibid. 283.
feature was they had crosses on walls and doors and gave their children
Christian names.7 The Thomas Christians lived in the territories of about 20
Rajas and a multitude of petty chieftains. About one half of them, however,
were to be found in the three kingdoms of Cochin, Kaduthuruthy
(Vadakkumkur) and Kottayam (Thekkumkur).8 Scholars widely differ about
the number of Thomas Christians during the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries. Archdeacon Thomas Parampil in his letters to the pope and to the
cardinals of the propaganda claimed that the Thomas Christians were more
than 200,000. But, Fr. Francis Barreto S.J. wrote in 1645 that the St. Thomas
Christians numbered about 150,000.9

Thomas Christians had distinctive religious observances in their daily
lives. In the sixteenth century, children were baptized as a rule, forty days after
they were born and later the Synod of Diamper ordered children to be baptized
within eight days of their birth. After childbirth, women kept away from church
from 40 to 870 days.10 They received gifts on the occasion of “chattams” (sradhas),
which were held in honour of the dead. Historians agree that after the Synod of
Diamper in 1599 the Thomas Christians followed Roman Catholic faith at least up
to the rebellion of 1653. Even after that date majority continued to adhere to the
same faith while the minority followed Mar Thoma I and made a gradual shift to
the faith, discipline and worship of the Antiochian Syrian Church.11

4.3 Jews of Kerala

History identifies that Jews settled in Cranganore, perhaps also in
Cochin and certain other trade centres of Kerala. After the Portuguese

7.  Ibid. 92.
8.  Joseph Thekkedath, History of Christianity in India, vol ii, (Bangalore: Church History
    Association of India, 1982), 25.
9.  Ibid. 24.
10. Ibid. 25
11. Ibid. 28.
influence increased on the Kerala coast the Jews of Cranganore moved to Cochin and joined the Jews there, and under the special protection of the Raja of Cochin, flourished as a business community and contributed to the trade interests of Cochin ever since. ‘It has been claimed that Jewish colonies were strewn all along the coast in the first century A.D. And it was these colonies that attracted St. Thomas, the Apostle of Kerala and that it was among these Jews he preached Christian Gospel and established nucleus Christian communities.’12 Anyway, there is clear evidence to show that the Jews came to Kerala before the sixteenth century. It is quite probable also that Kerala merchandise like cassia, cinnamon and other spices, ivory, apes and monkeys were known and used among the Israelites during Solomon’s time and even earlier.13 The present Jewish in community in Cochin is considered as the descendants of the Jewish community that settled here in ancient times.

4.4 Portuguese Religious Missions in Kerala

The Portuguese who arrived by sea in 1498, gradually established their power base and were eager to bring all Christians to the fold of the Church of Rome. The fleet of Vasco da Gama, which made the famous journey to India was accompanied by two priests. A precedent had been set; it can be taken for granted that almost all the fleets, which successfully made the long voyage to India, would carry priests among their passengers. Some of these have received appointments as vicars, or as missionaries. Thus the history of Western Christianity in India begins with the decision of the Portuguese to build a settlement at Cochin.14 The number of clerics in India increased with the arrival of successive fleets from Portugal. In 1500, one

13. Ibid. 20.
vicar, eight secular priests, eight Franciscans, an organist, a ‘chorist’, and one lay brother accompanied Pedro Álvares Cabral and later in 1501 four more Franciscans joined with the Portuguese. In 1503, Albuquerque brought with him five Dominicans, one of whom Fr. Rodrigo, was specially charged with the care of the Thomas Christians, many of whom had not been baptized.\textsuperscript{15} The Syrian Christians found out many things about the Portuguese. They found their rites differed from those of the Portuguese. Hindus and Muslims held the beef and pork-eating Portuguese in contempt. They had no sexual morality and desired to marry Syrian Christian girls. The Portuguese soon earned for themselves notoriety for lawless living and the term ‘Parangi’ by which the Portuguese were known to Indians degenerated into a synonym for an unclean barbarian.\textsuperscript{16} In 1503 Portuguese built their first church in India and dedicated to St. Bartholomew.\textsuperscript{17} Portuguese also advanced conversion rapidly. There are interesting histories about the Portuguese influence in on traditional Hindu society of Kerala. In 1513, a Hindu merchant named Joao de Cruz, a native of Calicut and a Hindu by birth was sent to Lisbon by Zamorin to study higher commerce as the lad gave promise of a brilliant commercial career. In Lisbon together with commerce he studied Christianity, embraced this religion and received his Portuguese name. Loaded with honours from the King of Portugal, de Cruz returned to India to advise the Zamorin on his commercial policy. His conversion fortified the Zamorin’s favour. De Cruz started business of his own with the

\textsuperscript{15} This suggests that the Thomas Christians had at that time no priests. But this does seem to have been case. It seems more likely that these Christians had maintained the very ancient custom that only the bishop baptized; in periods when there was no bishop no baptisms would take place. A western priest was, of course, not bound by this rule.


\textsuperscript{17} Op. cit. no. 14, 113.
help of the Portuguese and ended it in ruin.\textsuperscript{18} With rise and dominance of Portuguese power in India and especially in Kerala they formed a sound idea about the religions and peoples of India. They understood the Hindu traditions of Thomas Christians. Conversion and trade carried on hand in hand. In Cochin they baptized 20,000 \textit{Paravas}\textsuperscript{19} in accordance with usual practice to gain from fishing trade and protected them from Arab traders.

In 1514 Pedro de Mascarenhas, captain of the fort of Cochin, supplied a list of more than one hundred Indians now married to Portuguese and a further list of more than fifty women who had been born children to Portuguese men without any regular form of marriage. Of all these married Indian women, majority of them were baptized.\textsuperscript{20} Converted Christians were reckoned as outcastes by Hindu Brahmins and not permitted to walk through the streets by the Raja of Cochin. Systematic efforts of Portuguese religious missions started by the arrival of Alvaro Penteado in Cranganore. In 1516, Lopo Soares who succeeded Albuquerque as governor of India took him to Cochin. While he was living in Cochin he heard about the Christians in Cranganore and proceeded to Cranganore and started his mission there. Later King Manuel of Portugal nominated him officially as the spiritual caretaker of Christians of St. Thomas and administrator of the house of St. Thomas in Mylapore.\textsuperscript{21} Penteado won confidence of the Christians of Cranganore and they came to his Mass and they liked to learn and practise Christian faith. In 1523 Muslims attacked the churches of St. Thomas

\textsuperscript{18} Op. cit. no. 16, 52.
\textsuperscript{19} Paravas were very good fishers and Golden Goose of the Muslims. The conversion of Paravas and the transfer of their allegiance to the Portuguese were quite unforeseen events and it became clear to all Muslims who traded with the Indian ports that they would not be left the undisputed masters of Indian that they had so far been. So open hostilities broken between Portuguese and Arabs.
\textsuperscript{20} Op. cit. no. 14, 118.
\textsuperscript{21} Op. cit. no. 4, 291.
Christians in Cranganore and the ancient St. Thomas Church burned down in an act of barbarity. 22

4.5 Franciscan Missionaries

The first group of Franciscan Missionaries arrived in India in 1500, headed by their notable leader Henry de Coimbra with orders from the king that they should found three residences, one in Goa, one in Cochin and one in a place to be determined by themselves. Two of the friars died in Calicut, and only two were left to take up residence in Cochin. The situation improved in 1517, when a further contingent of twelve friars arrived, under the leadership of Antony de Louro or Loureiro, who must be regarded as the real founder of Franciscan missionary work in India. 23 Francis Xavier landed in Goa on 6th May 1542. 24 Of all the missionaries who came to India, Francis Xavier was undoubtedly the greatest. Soon after his arrival in India, he visited the Fishery Coast and ministered to the needs of the newly converted Paravars. When Pandyan and his powerful army attacked the Paravars, Francis Xavier helped them by feeding the refugees. A huge number of Paravars fled to Travancore to escape from the Pandyan onslaught. During this time Francis Xavier gained permission from the Raja of Travancore to do missionary work in Travancore. His missionary work chiefly aimed at helping the fishermen of the coastal areas, especially the Paravars. Francis Xavier took great interest in the Christians of St. Thomas. In the year 1541, a Franciscan named Vincente de Lagos, founded a college or seminary at Cranganore for education of the Thomas Christian young men. Fr. Vincente worked there for ten years. This college was used to train boys for priesthood. In 1549 Francis Xavier wrote that many of the sons of best

22. Ibid. 302.
Thomas Christian families studied there. In 1549, Francis Xavier wrote to Simon Rodrigues, the Jesuit Provincial of Portugal about the opening of a college in Quilon. This was intended primarily for the children of Portuguese, but those of the Paravars and of the Thomas Christians would also be admitted. But later no Thomas Christians come to study there for they were reluctant to have such a mixing. The training in these colleges was evidently directed towards the narrowed purpose: latinisation. All books and religious articles which Vincent desired to get from the king for the college were designed to mould the young mind of the students in the Latin spirit and shut out any oriental influence. Latin theology and liturgy were taught and very few priests learned Eastern Syrian mass in order to serve in Thomas Christian churches. The Latinizing trend of the college was even more evident from the time table followed in colleges. Daybreak of the canonical hours was said; namely, the prima, tertia, sexta and nona and all who had sacred orders took part. While conversing with these issues, one has to highlight the fact that even at the present time many of the Christian missionary congregations follow Latin theological teaching in majority their seminaries and colleges. Latin is one of the main subjects taught in these institutions. ‘The Franciscans fully shared the views of their Portuguese contemporaries, and were in favour of latinising the Thomas Christians. They were convinced that this was the only policy to ensure their spiritual welfare.’

4.6 The Jesuit Mission in Kerala

The Jesuits established themselves in Cochin in 1548. Fr. Melchior Carneiro was the first Jesuit who visited the interior parts of Kerala

the most of the Thomas Christians lived. Fr. Alexander Valignano who visited India in 1575 realized the possibilities missionary efforts among Thomas Christians and he chose Vaipicotta as residence of Jesuits.\textsuperscript{28} The first Jesuits who took up residence were Fr. Bernardine Ferrario and Fr. Peter Louis, a Kerala Brahmin convert. Vaipicotta as their base Jesuits started missions among Thomas Christians. In 1577, they established a church in Vaipicotta and in 1587 foundation for proper seminary building was laid. In 1595 there were 45 students in the seminary; twelve of these were priests, three deacons and eighteen others in minor orders. Theology, moral cases, Latin, Portuguese and Syriac were taught in the seminary.\textsuperscript{29} Jesuits taught Syriac in their seminary and in many ways sought to accommodate themselves to the customs and mentality of Thomas Christians and with an aim to latinise them. Later the efforts of Jesuits to latinise Thomas Christians resulted in Synod of Diamper, where under the pressure of contemporary thought and the demand of the council of Trent, almost complete latinisation of the church of St. Thomas Christians was effected. In 1599 Francis Ros appointed as the first Jesuit Archbishop in Angamaly. Archbishop Ros did considerable amount of pastoral work among the people. He did pastoral visits to the churches of Karingachira, Pallikkara, Kothamangalam, etc. The Jesuit fathers of Vaipicotta also visited different churches. At Purakkad there was a resident Jesuit father who was in charge of two churches, one of the Syrians and other of the Latins. In 1609 Archbishop Ros excommunicated Archdeacon George of Cross for his rebellion against him and the catholic churches. During the first the government of Ros, there were Jesuits staying not only at Cranganore and Vaipicotta, but also at Kaduthuruthy and Udayamperur. Jesuits missionaries did considerable amount of pastoral

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid. 57.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid. 58.
work in many parts of Kerala. Fr. Campori S.J conducted an eleven months tour of different churches in the southern parts of Kerala, from Kottayam to Quilon. Important churches visited during this tour were those at Kottayam, Changanacherry, Chengannur, Kartikapalli and Kayamkulam. They taught Christians on the mysteries of faith and Christian doctrine to the children. Jesuits encouraged confessions and did not allow young Christians for marriage without confessions. They distributed rosaries and articles of piety and taught people how to meditate on the mysteries of the rosary.

Stephen Britto was appointed as new Bishop of Angamaly in 1624. He started a new congregation for priests in 1626 at Idapally called “the Congregation of St. Thomas Apostle”, ordinarily known as “Recolhimento of Idapalli”, with the support of Archdeacon. The congregation did not attract many candidates because the rules were very austere. The members were expected to spend much time in church for long prayers and they had to abstain from meat, fish, eggs and wine. In 1641 Francis Garcia became the Archbishop on the death of Stephen Britto. His relationship with Archdeacon Thomas Parambil was not good. Jesuits did a certain amount of pastoral work during this period. ‘Several of annual letters and other reports briefly describe the zealous activity of the missionaries during their tours of Serra (the interior parts of Kerala). They taught catechism, heard confessions, distribute Holy Communion and make use of indulgences they had from Pope. At time invalid marriages were set right. They staged sacred plays and preached several hours during fest days.’

“Jesuits were a body of pastoral priests living together, having taken the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, in order to live the apostolic priestly life in as perfect a

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30. Ibid. 81.
31. Ibid. 85.
manner as possible. While not accepting the official charge of either parishes or hospitals, they were busy in preaching, in hearing confessions and exhorting to the more frequent reception of sacraments, in charitable works of the sick and the distressed, in study and especially in preparing for the reform of the liturgy.” 32 They were experts in correspondence and in creation of archives. It was expected that every Jesuit should write to the general of the society in Rome and tell of his doings. 33 It is remarkable that Jesuit missionaries rendered valuable service thing to educate the Christian community of Kerala.

4.7 Latinisation of Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper

In 1551 some important events took place in the Chaldean Church. This led to a division in the East Syrian and Chaldean Church; with two patriarchs one is union with Rome and other remaining outside that union, i.e. into the Catholics and Nestorians. 34 Thomas Christians were unaware of the happening in the Chaldean church. The first Bishop to reach Kerala from the Nestorian line (in 1556) was Mar Abraham. He entered Kerala through the port of Cochin, disguised as a poor man. He travelled to interior parts of Kerala to work among Thomas Christians. He set his headquarters in Angamali and ordained deacons and priests. The Portuguese along with the Franciscans and the Jesuits were not happy with the religious activities of Mar Abraham. They arranged a discussion with him, which did not take place. Mar Abraham feared that the Portuguese might capture him, so he fled to the kingdom of Vadakkumkur. But Thomas Christians rescued their bishop and brought him to Thekkumkur. After the departure of Mar Abraham from Kerala, Mar Joseph and his helpers continued his work. Later,

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33. Ibid. 135.
the Portuguese arrested Mar Joseph and the accusation against him was his promotion of Nestorianism. However, Mar Joseph left India in 1568. After the forced absence of Mar Joseph from Kerala, Mar Abraham came back to India in 1568 to work among the Syrians with recommendations from Pope, Patriarch and Superior Generals of the Franciscans, Dominican and Jesuits. But the Portuguese did not allow him to work here on the ground that he did not bring on authorization from the king of Portugal. He was detained in a Dominican monastery. But later he managed to escape from there and secretly made his way to Kerala. He guided the Christians in Kerala until his death in 1597. Mar Abraham was at heart a strong Nestorian who showed great interest in getting liturgical books corrected, introducing changes as suggested and recommended by Portuguese councils.

After the death of Mar Abraham Arch Deacon George of the Cross-took over the administration of the Syrian diocese. At this time, Alexis de Menezes, Archbishop of Goa from 1595 until his death in 1617, together with his Jesuit advisers, resolved to bring the Kerala Christians to obedience, an obedience that they conceived as complete conformity to the Roman or ‘Latin’ customs. His intention was to separate Kerala Christians not only from Nestorianism but also from the Chaldean patriarch of Babylon and to subject them directly to the Latin Archbishop of Goa. Arch Deacon George of the Cross opposed the move of the Portuguese and at a convention in Angamali in which he along with his supporters took an oath not accept any Bishop except one sent by the Patriarch of Babylon, asserting that Rome had nothing to do with their church, which was founded by St. Thomas and hence distinct from the one founded by St. Peter. “In the writings of

35. Ibid. 44.
36. Ibid. 64.
37. Ibid. 65.
Gouvea, the Portuguese historian of the Synod of Diamper, who composed his works mainly to extol the success of Archbishop Menezes in “bringing back” the St. Thomas Christians to the obedience of the church of Rome, Archdeacon George of the Cross depicted as a suspicious character with definite heretical and rebellious tendencies against the authority of Pope.”

Archbishop de Menezes took several measures to control the Syrian Christians. He even ordered not to use the name of the Patriarch of Mesopotamia during the Holy Mass and sermons and those who disobeyed the decree would be excommunicated. He helped the poor people and showed them benevolence. He ordained priests at several places and first of the series took place in Udyamperur (Diamper). Arch Deacon George of the Cross threatened the candidates and told them that they and their families would be excommunicated from Syrian church and its activities. The Archbishop took no notice of this and ordained 38 priests in Diamper. He also ordained priests in Kaduthuruthy and Parur. 50 or more priests were ordained in Parur. After having thus won over a considerable number of people and their priests, Menezes became more confident himself and decided a direct confrontation with Archdeacon and his party. He threatened to depose him and appoint Thomas Kurian, a nephew of the Archdeacon in his place. The Archdeacon evidently frightened and agreed to obey the demand of the Archbishop to break all relations with the Chaldean Patriarch. With the Archdeacon effectively crippled, the Archbishop made arrangements to hold a Synod. Since Angamaly was a stronghold of the Archdeacon, the Archbishop chose Udyamperoor as the venue for the Synod.

38. Ibid. 65.
39. Ibid. 68.
The Synod began on the third Sunday after the Pentecost, 20 June 1599. The Archbishop presided over it. The cattanars present were 153, while the lay representatives numbered 660. The Synod issued 200 decrees. Menezes not knowing Malayalam and most of the participants not knowing Portuguese, resolutions were constructed with the help of interpreters. The people heard canons without understanding their meaning and even after the Synod Menezes arbitrarily added some canons. The uppermost aim of the Archbishop was to remove for good all Mesopotamian and Nestorian influence in matters of faith and church organization and in liturgical formulas. He succeeded in it. The local Christians’ customs were officially anathematized as heretical and their manuscripts were condemned to be either corrected or burnt. The last day of Synod dealt with the questions of inheritance, adoption, and contact with non-Christians, dress, caste distinction and the eighth decree condemned witchcraft, fortune telling and other similar practices. The Synod succeeded in establishing Christian faith under the Roman Pontiff. The Synod of Diamper was a turning point in history of Christianity in Kerala. It gave a definite form and initiated the tendency of latinisation that slowly prevailed in the Church. The oppressive rule of the Portuguese *padroado* (patronage) provoked a violent reaction from the indigenous Christian community. This resulted in the ‘Coonan Cross Oath’ in Mattancherry, Cochin, in 1653, when the rebels, headed by their Archdeacon, made a vow not to accept any allegiance other than to a Syrian Church. In the same year, Archdeacon Thomas was ordained, by the laying on of hands of twelve priests, as the first indigenous Metropolitan of Kerala, under the name Mar Thoma I. In 1665, Mar Grigorios Abd al-Jalil, a Bishop

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40. Ibid. 70.
41. Ibid. 70.
42. Ibid. 93.
sent by the Antiochian Syrian Orthodox Patriarch, arrived in Kerala and development culminated in the Mar Thoma party’s joining the Antiochian Patriarch and in the gradual introduction of the West Syrian liturgy, customs and script in the Malabar Coast.

4.8 Carmelite Missionaries

In 1653 Pope Alexander VII, who was governing the church at that time sent over Carmelite missionaries to take charge of the Christians of Malabar and established a Vicar Apostolic in Verapoly. Mgr. Joseph of St. Mary, a descendant of the noble Sebastiano family was appointed the first Superior General of Carmelite Mission by the Pontiff in 1656. He worked hard among the Syrian Christians to uproot the schism and unite them in Catholic faith. In 1661 Pope sent another batch of Carmelite missionaries to the Malabar mission to reconcile with large of number of schismatic Christians and to reunite them in Catholic faith. But the Dutch refused to give permission for the Carmelites to carry their works in Malabar. Later, however, the Dutch government realizing that the presence of the Carmelites would not harm their efforts permitted them to work in Malabar. And the Carmelites worked among the Syrian and Latin Christians.

4.9 Protestants

The influence of British rule, indirect as it was within the princely domains, seems to have also opened the door for specifically British Protestant missionary activity. The Protestants in Kerala still commonly refer to themselves as “Anglican Christians” or “C.M.S Christians”, “Congregationalist” or “Basel Mission Christians”. Colonel Colin Macaulay, an ardent Evangelist was appointed the first British Resident. Two company

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44. Ibid. 211.
chaplains, Richard Kerr of Madras and Claudius Buchanan of Bengal toured Kerala in 1806. British Protestant missionaries started arriving in Kerala after 1813. Protestants became very close to Jacobite Christians of Kerala. Colonel Munroe took initiative to bring Jacobite Christians into Protestantism and gave many privileges to them. The Protestant missionary activities of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) and London Missionary Society (L.M.S) aimed at conversion from the untouchables and the Syrian Christians. L.M.S missionaries concentrated their work among the lower castes and C.M.S missionaries did most their missionary work among the Syrian Christians. Both these groups made outstanding contributions in the educational sphere. The Basel Mission started for their work in Malabar in the year 1834. They took the initiative to help the converts to earn their own livelihood by establishing cottage industries, printing presses, etc. Thus, the three major missions in Cochin and Travancore states and in Malabar district won converts and established churches, supplying them with institutions that were very important for future developments within the Christian communities: schools, hospitals and commercial outlets.

The Syrian Christians who were impressed by the Protestant Christians initiative, wanted to introduce like them the vernacular language in the liturgy. For this purpose they formed a reform Church called "The Marthomite Church," which is a very progressive and prosperous Church today. The Protestant missionaries from Germany and England laid the foundations of western education in Kerala by opening English grammar schools, high schools, and colleges. Some of the early Christian missionaries

46. Ibid. 142.
49. Ibid. 80.
rendered valuable services for the development of the Malayalam language; the grammatical works and dictionaries prepared by Arnos Patiri (Johann Ernestus Hanxleden), Angelo Francis, Rev. Bailey, Rev. Richard Collins, and Dr. Gundert are invaluable contributions to the study of Malayalam. By the time of Indian independence the Protestant church in India had split into two major divisions, i.e. Anglicans and Methodists together known as Protestant Church of South India and the Protestant Church of North India and Pakistan.

4.10 Impact of the Interaction between the European Missionaries and Kerala

The interaction between European missionaries and the local community of Kerala made far-reaching impact on the Kerala society. 'The coexistence of Hindus, Christians, Muslims and Jews in Kerala brought a modus vivendi\textsuperscript{50} which some historians have called a 'cultural symbiosis', in which it is not easy to discern the specific influence of one religion over the other.'\textsuperscript{51} In fact, conversion and its aftermath in the society developed many changes in people’s life, culture, practices, and belief. Converted Christian community of Kerala followed many practices of Latin missionaries and it even influenced the Hindu community also. 'The missionaries tried to change some of the practices among the Christians, which they regarded as objectionable. Thus they fought against usury, ordeals, belief in fatalism and transmigration, witchcraft and similar practices of various kinds.'\textsuperscript{52} Converted Christians and Hindus who were predominantly vegetarians started to eat pork, beef and chicken, etc. by the influence of the Portuguese missionaries.

\textsuperscript{50} A practical arrangement that allows conflicting people, groups, or ideas to co-exist.
\textsuperscript{51} Op. cit. no. 4, 518
\textsuperscript{52} Op. cit. no. 8, 136.
“The new spurt in Christian expansion in India was definitely due to Portuguese initiative, though we cannot subscribe to all the methods used by them for conversion and aggressive, polemic and westernizing ideology which was an integral part of the motive behind their evangelical action. They laid a firm foundation for the growth of Christianity in modern India. The drawbacks were many. The most glaring of these drawbacks was the quasi-identification of Christianizing with westernizing: the converts were asked to adopt not only Portuguese proper names but even Portuguese surnames; even the western way of dressing was considered to be part of conversion! The segregating of converts from their fellow Indians—though done with certain good intentions—and the over-protection offered to them was tantamount to uprooting them from their natural and congenial socio-cultural milieu. All this paved the way for Christian church in India in “western grab” which came in the way of many well-placed Hindu becoming Christians. There are, however, many positive aspects, which the Portuguese fostered in India for which India should be thankful to them. One is encouragement given to inter-racial marriages and the disregard shown for caste distinction. The prohibitory measures adopted by the Portuguese against certain wrong social customs, like widow-burning, abandoning of children born on inauspicious days, practices of self immolation, abused and connected with devadasi institution etc. deserve to commended. The most striking of all are the charitable and humanitarian activities of the Portuguese, factors which
witnessed effectively to the core message of Christianity – the message of universal love and fellowship.”

The Portuguese engaged in charitable and humanitarian efforts and taught local Christians the need of it. The appeal of charity did not end with baptism, but continued with care of the poor, the sick and the disabled and formed an integral part of their pastoral services. They applied western medical practices to control common diseases like cholera, dysentery, syphilis, fever, etc. using herbs. ‘The regular visits they made to the sick and poor in hospitals and prisons and the love and care they bestowed on them, the readiness they showed in giving an honourable burial of the poor dead, and particularly the most touching manner in which they helped those condemned to death, are moving tales of the work of charity this institution undertook.”

Integration or mixing up of culture happened both ways. Traditional Hindu practices were followed and continued by Christian community too. It deserves mention that from 1570 the Christian churches came to be built on the structural model of the local Hindu temples. Royal umbrellas (muthukuda), musical instruments, torches, popguns, and so forth were (and are) used both in Christian and Hindu processions. Even now, alavattam, venchmaram, theevetti and elephants etc. are commonly used for church feast and processions. This truly replicates the mixing or integration of traditional practices in a modern or western religion, which never can be seen in its aboriginal lands. An exact of imitation of Hindu prasadam is seen the offering of eatables, money, fowls, sweets, etc. made by the people to the church and returned by the church to the people. Nercha the practice followed in

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54. Ibid. 516.
55. Op. cit. no. 8, 139.
Christian church is in spirit the same as the prasadam given in temples. In the church the bridegroom tied the thali round the neck of the bride, after the priest blessed it. The cross, made of twenty-one small gold balls, distinguished the Christian from the Hindu thali. It is very clear from all these evidences modern Christian practices still follow Hindu rituals and traditions.

4.11 Conclusion

It is obvious from the study that Christianity and the work of Christian religious missionaries exerted far-reaching influence in developing a divergent socio-cultural situation in Kerala society. By improving the social and economic background of Kerala society the religious missionaries sowed the seeds of westernization and Christianity in Kerala.

The second, third and fourth chapters explicated the historical reasons for the growth of westernisation in Kerala society. As per the findings of the study in these chapters, we have explored that the European colonization and the influence of Christian religious missionary activities played sweeping role in developing a varied socio-cultural situation in Kerala. It is obvious from the study that these historical forces influenced the religion, politics, education, language and literature, habits and hobbies, art, trade, agriculture and economy of Kerala, which in turn developed a western social pattern in the society.

56. Ibid. 139.
Notes and References


Majumdar, R. C., *The History and Culture of the India People*, vol. iii, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962.


