CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a universal social phenomenon. There is no society known which has not practised religion in some form or other. Sociologists and anthropologists have accordingly recognised the importance of religion as a universal feature of human society: Max Müller accepted that a belief in divinity was universal among humankind; Edward Tylor implied that magic, science and religion are present in all human societies; and Bronislaw Malinowski held that religion is both universal and necessary (quoted in Morris 1990:93, 105 and 149). Thus, there has been a high degree of consensus among social scientists on the universality of religion.

Considering the ubiquity and salience of religion, sociologists have evinced a good deal of interest in understanding the reciprocal relationship between society and religion. As Berger (1969:51) has observed, the sociology of religion has shown in numerous instances the intimate relationship between religion and social solidarity. Since, according to him, every human society engages in 'world building,' he proposes that religion creates and maintains a social world that allows people to survive in their environment. From the functionalist point of view, religion is seen as establishing and reaffirming social solidarity, and in turn as being strengthened by it. Thus, for example, Durkheim (1995) analysed how religion creates a sacred reality that helps to organise and find meaning even in the mundane experience of everyday life. Scharf (1973:23) sees religion as a social fact powerfully reinforcing a given social structure. Summarising the ideas of historian Fustel de Coulanges, Evans-Pritchard says that religious ideas are the
causes of social changes and the primary factor in social phenomena, and that the reverse is also true (Morris 1990:112). Max Weber (1971) and Yinger (1971) go beyond the reciprocity and describe the way the reciprocity expresses itself. According to them, religion itself goes through a process of adaptation and modification depending on the existing needs of the society or to the changing situation of the society (Max Weber 1971 and Wichers 1979:201)

The relationship between society and religion is mediated by culture and it is culture that provides the foundation for religion. The religious symbols are constructed or derived from the larger cultural resources of the community. Even to grasp the meaning of religious symbols one needs to understand the cultural universe from which these symbols emerge. Thus, religion as a social institution has been regarded as a ‘central and fundamentally important’ (O’dea 1969:133) and an ‘immanent’ (Dawson 1948:46) aspect of culture. Geertz (1973:90) goes to the extent of defining religion as ‘a cultural system.’ For him, ‘Religion is (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in (people) by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic’ (ibid.). Therefore, he suggests that symbols seem so critical for religious institutions that religious meanings are stored in symbols, such as a cross, a crescent, etc.

Religion originates in a given cultural context, and takes root, develops and lives in that cultural context. It is this fact of religion being mediated by culture that makes a particular religion what it is. While religion as a social phenomenon is universal, how religion is experienced and practised by the adherents in a given society makes it
particular. Specific expressions in beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols make religion
typical to a particular area, environment and its socio-economic context. Since religious
ideas, values and experiences develop from the total cultural matrix of a society, religious
beliefs, customs and rituals can be understood only in relation to that cultural matrix.
Thus, we can speak of Hinduism in India, which is very different from Hinduism as
practised in Sri Lanka or Trinidad. The same is true of Buddhism in Asia, Islam in the
Middle East and Christianity in the West.

This difference is noticeable not only between countries but also within a country
and even within a region. The regional cultures do play an important role in shaping the
way religion is practised by the people of that region. Nevertheless, we can also speak of
the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Islamic cultures. There are certain
commonalties in the doctrines and basic beliefs of a religion that are more or less static
and are maintained, in spite of the differences noticed among these religions and their
capacity to adapt to a particular culture. This gives a religion a unity that could be
recognised anywhere in the world. Thus, one can speak of Christianity without making
any reference to any country or people, and so is the case with all other religions of the
world. Religion is particular to a culture and at the same time it has a universal character.

Interaction among Religions

Societies do not live in isolation. As Kramer (1960:26) observes,

The occurrence and importance of cultural contact in the course of history have
been far greater than we often know or imagine. Cultural anthropology ... (has)
shown the great significance of migrations and reception of foreign material and
spiritual, cultural element even in prehistoric times, taking place on a grand scale
between all the five continents.
In congruence with the physical movement and the spread of people and cultures across the world down the centuries, religions have moved from their places of origin. They have encountered other religions and interacted with them in multiple ways.

Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are classic examples of religions that have moved far and wide from their places of origin and interacted intensely with other religions. Buddhism originated in the middle of the fifth century BC in North India and spread to other regions like Sri Lanka, Mynmar (Burma), Thailand, China, Tibet, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Mangolia, Nepal and Bhutan. Christianity, since its birth after the death of Christ, spread initially in the Greco-Roman world. Its second wave of expansion was in Europe and with colonisation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it spread to the colonies. Islam began in Mecca about 610 AD, and after the initial expansion in the Middle East, North Africa and Western Europe, it spread to Central Asia, the Indian Peninsula, Eastern Europe, and Africa South of Sahara, Malaysia and Indonesia (Beaver et al. 1992:314-33, 228-42). The spread of these religions resulted in the emergence of definite locations for each religion vis-à-vis the local cultures and religions. Thus, while Islam acquired a specific location vis-à-vis the religions in India after the Mogul conquests, Christianity came to hold a definite position during the European colonisation of India.

With the possibility of this cultural exchange in view, we can distinguish between the indigenous and implanted religions. An indigenous religion is one which has originated within a given socio-cultural context and has developed within it over a prolonged period of time. It is also called the native religion. The innumerable tribal
religions are typical illustrations of such indigenous religions. An implanted religion is one which, having had its origin outside a given socio-cultural context, takes root there under certain socio-historical conditions. It is also called alien religion. The incoming religion has to encounter both the existing culture and religion. During this encounter, the interacting religions adopt a process of give and take or one of them dominates the other by imposing its own religious symbols and meanings.

Historically, the incoming or ‘alien’ religions have become a part of the host society under various circumstances. Trade, commerce and military conflicts and conquests, proselytisation through welfare and other activities are the most common circumstances under which interaction among religions have taken place.

The encounters and interactions between the native and the new religions have resulted in a process of religio-cultural adaptation. There has been an interplay of multiple factors in shaping the forms and content of the interacting religions. In the ultimate analysis these religions, both ‘native’ and ‘alien,’ appear to have inevitably borrowed some elements from the other religions and have incorporated them in their own. Under certain conditions they have even discarded some elements of their own religion.

The interaction can further be explained in the ways in which some religions like Buddhism, Christianity and Islam interacted with local cultures and religions in regions of the world. In the process of conversion to Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam people have been relating to the religio-cultural symbols of the new religion as well as to those of their earlier religion in different ways: The first possibility is the complete negation of the old religious symbols and the adoption of the new religious symbols. The second possibility is the partial negation and partial affirmation of the old religious symbols and the
adoption of the new religious symbols. Finally, the third possibility is the full affirmation and retention of the old religious symbols, which in reality is not possible and conversion itself would be meaningless.

However, the extent of negation and affirmation depends on the social background of the converts. Studies have shown that whenever there is a mass conversion there is a tendency to retain some of the earlier religious symbols and religio-cultural practices. This is so because the converts belong to a homogeneous background and that they find it easier to partially retain their earlier moorings (Hrangkhuma 1998). Thus, the second possibility in relating with symbols appears to be realistic and observed reality.

For example, Buddhism in China has undergone inner transformation due to the impact of the Chinese political economy and culture. The monks made concessions to various beliefs of the lay people (Max Weber 1967: 257-71). As Kramer (1960:160 and 167) observes, in China Buddhism has retained its well established ‘ancestral worship or the treasury of magical lore,’ and in Japan it has assimilated to the extent that ‘the common people do not distinguish between Buddhist divine beings and Shinto gods.’ Houtart and Lemerciner (1985:187) also point out that Buddhism in Sri Lanka had no difficulty in achieving the necessary synthesis. Accordingly, though Buddhism originated in India, it came to be known in China as the Chinese Buddhism and elsewhere as the Japanese Buddhism, the Thai Buddhism and the Sinhalese Buddhism. Similarly, with reference to Islam in Africa, King (1971:100) has observed that it ‘was more akin to its native inclinations and that many African customs can sail into the future under the lee of Islamic customs which are really remnants from the pre-Islamic days of Arabs.’
Considering the history of Christianity, Yinger (1971:484) has noted that Catholicism has proved marvellously adaptable to changing circumstances:

Christianity was strongly influenced by the setting in which it developed. Historical research has shown that many of the elements of Christianity that were long thought by its adherents to be unique were common ideas, practices and myths in the ancient world. Some of its doctrines and practices were added, as it developed from a small Jewish cult into a dominant religion (ibid. 482).

From the beginning Christianity has sought to establish its relevance with the existing culture in which it became a part. Wach (1971:272) points to the process of adaptation that Christianity underwent when he says, ‘The first phase of early Christian society was determined by the social, economic, and cultural conditions of the late Roman Empire, to which the new Christian community had to adopt.’

Christianity has continued to change, and has continued to absorb new elements. Heyndrick (1991:161) observes that the faith-healing and exorcism in Chinese Christianity is directly related to the Chinese folk religion. While referring to the Japanese Christians, Crollius (1986a:137) finds that, for the Japanese, ancestral worship is a very important part of life and it has found its expression in prayers for the dead that the Church has officially recognised the same.

Though the observed reality is the second possibility in relating with symbols, there are cases of full affirmation of the new religion. For instance Harber (1995:14) found that the low-caste converts to Christianity ‘frequently resisted orientalising efforts to promote indigenisation and instead embraced opportunities for westernisation. [They] often preferred western ways to *prima facie* indigenous ones; frequently the latter
signified to them aspects of caste or regional oppression that they wished to avoid rather than embrace.'

Interaction among religions in India. India is as multi-religious country.

According to the 1991 Census, the religious composition of India’s population is as follows: Hindus 82.41 percent, Muslims 11.67 percent, Christians 2.32 percent, Sikhs 1.99 percent, Buddhists 0.77 percent, Jains 0.41 percent and others 0.40 percent. Hinduism, the religion of the vast majority of the people of India, is considered to be as old as the Indian civilisation itself, with its existence traced back to more than 3,000 years. Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism emerged as reactions to the orthodoxy of Brahmanical Hinduism. In addition to these indigenous religions, India is host to several implanted religions like Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Though originating outside the country these religions have been so integral a part of the Indian society for centuries that they have become and are regarded as ‘Indian’ religions.

A dominant view is that the plurality of religions constitutes a single cultural stream and that concepts of ‘alien’ and ‘native’ do not apply in the case of religions within India. However, one comes across scholars who apply these concepts to explain the inter-religious interactions. Radhakrishnan (1992:308), for instance, makes the following observation about Hinduism’s adaptation to native cults:

Behind the façade of Vedic orthodoxy and its tendency to abstract symbolism, an extensive and deep rooted system of popular beliefs and cults and a decided tendency to anthropomorphic presentation prevailed. The Vedic religion, however, absorbed, embodied, preserved the types and rituals of older cults. Instead of destroying them, it adapted them to its own requirements. It took so much from the social life of the Dravidians and other native inhabitants of India that it is very
difficult to disentangle the original Aryan elements from others. The inter-
penetration has been so complex, subtle, continuous, with the result that there has
grown up a distinct Hindu civilisation which is neither Aryan nor Dravidian nor
aboriginal.

In the way the Vedic religion adopted itself to the religions of the native
inhabitants of India, the implanted religions such as Islam and Christianity too went
through a process of adaptation. Commenting on the adaptation of Islam in India, Ahmad
(1987) notes that there has been injection of caste into the theoretically egalitarian ethos
of Islam. He also observes that Muslim marriages are conducted according to local
customs (1976:157). He finds parallels between Muslim worship and household rituals
with that of local Hindu devotional practices. In brief, he highlights the uniqueness of

Thus, Indian culture is deeply rooted in the pluralistic ethos of age-old history
providing creative expressions, value-sustenance and belief patterns to thousands of
communities that constitute the contemporary Indian society. The interaction between
alien and native religions presents an important area of sociological study of religion in
India. The instant study analyses the nature and implications of such an interaction with
reference to Roman Catholicism in South India.

Catholicism in India

Christianity as a religion has its origin in the preaching of the disciples of Jesus
Christ. In the beginning, the disciples carried the message of Christ in the Hebrew and
Greek regions. Gradually it took root in the Roman Empire. What began as a charismatic
movement of people embracing a new way of life on receiving baptism in the name of
Jesus became an organised state religion in the Roman Empire under Constantine (AD 306-337). Latter Christianity entered into synthesis with the Greco-Roman, or with what was popularly known as the Meditrian culture. Subsequently it spread to various parts of Europe and got more and more organised in terms of doctrines, rituals and practices. And, with the European nations establishing their colonies in Africa, America and Asia, Christianity also spread in those continents (Pelikan 1987:348 and 349).

Christianity was introduced into India through two main movements historically separated by some fourteen hundred years. The first movement was soon after the death of Jesus. It was the East Syrian Christian movement of traders and merchants, who made converts and established settlements of Christians on the southwest coast in what is now the State of Kerala. Thus, Christianity in India is as old as Christianity itself (Mundadan 1984).

Tracing the history of Christianity in India, Church historian Mundadan (1984:21-64) claims that St. Thomas, one of the twelve close disciples of Jesus, brought Christianity to Kerala in the first century AD. Fuller (1976:54) notes that while this legend has various versions, it is by no means impossible that St. Thomas did come to Kerala. Irrespective of the historical veracity of St. Thomas legend, it is important to note that unlike elsewhere in India Christianity existed in Kerala much before the European conquest and colonisation with which Christianity is normally associated (Visvanathan 1999). In other words, in India Christianity has a long history extending to about 2,000 years.

During the pre-colonial period Christianity remained confined largely to the Malabar region (K. J. John 1981:349). The second movement came from Western Europe
in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the Portuguese, in their voyage of discovery, took control of the trade centres and established colonies. During the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, when colonialism spread roots in the western coastal regions, one sees notable expansion of the Church. The Church established Christian communities along the western and eastern coasts and other parts of India (Thekkedath 1982:3). The real thrust of the influence of Christianity came to this region along with European imperialism during the nineteenth century (M. D. David 1985).

This period is viewed as a period of inflexibility and in particular the age of European colonial expansion deeply affected missionary activities. In the views of many missionaries and ecclesiastical authorities, Catholicism was so integrated into European culture that no distinction could be made between them. Thus, conversion meant accepting the European cultural expression of faith. The priests brought by the Portuguese introduced a form of Catholicism which though had accommodated itself to Greco-Roman culture did not seek to adapt itself to Indian culture. In 1622, efforts were made by some members of the Church to condemn the ecclesiastical and European ethnocentrism and encourage indigenisation of Catholicism (Arbuckle 1986:513 and 514). A notable person in this regard was the Italian Jesuit missionary, Robert de Nobili, who, in the first half of the seventeenth century, adopted the life-style of a sannyasi (see Chap. 2).

Thus, the Church took a different turn with the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries in the fifteenth century. While the St. Thomas Christians had not given up their native practices, the Portuguese priests persuaded, and even coerced the native converts to give up their traditional practices. Christianity was introduced from the West,
with a Western understanding and interpretation and Western cultural forms. A similar observation has been made with reference to the introduction of Christianity in Africa (see Abogurriin 1988:235).

Accounting for the implantation of the European form of Christianity, Amalorpavadass (1978:29) writes,

Church being a part of society, knowingly or unknowingly transmitted along with the Gospel the cultures of the countries from which missionaries came forth. The natural and simple fact that the missionaries were westerners implied also that they were products and expressions of the west. Christianity came to be associated by them with western culture and western cultural expressions were identified as the Christian culture.

One of the important features of Christianity in India is its uneven geographic spread and the qualitative diversity found in Catholicism. These different groups were born of very different traditions. The process of conversion to Catholicism in the Portuguese colonial territories, such as Goa for instance, was markedly different from that among the Assamese tribes. Similarly, the implantation of a group of immigrants from abroad, such as the Syrians in Kerala, and the conversion of the fisherfolk of the Tamil Nadu coast, were the result of very contrasting social mechanisms. These differences resulted in the formation of diverse socio-religious groups within the same Church (Houtart and Lemerciner 1981:2).

It is important to note that the Catholicism that came to India in the colonial period was a fully evolved religion compared to the Christianity that was brought by St. Thomas in the first century AD. It had already developed its own identity, as regards beliefs, rituals, and symbols, on the one hand and doctrine and theology, on the other. It
had also established a structure of authority that meticulously supervised the functioning of the Church all over the world. Nevertheless, this fully evolved religion has gradually gone through a process of give and take in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Thus, as Amaladass (1988:75) observes, from the beginning Christianity had to encounter native religions and culture; and, in India, the religion with which Christianity had to interact followed varied religio-cultural practices broadly known as Hinduism.

There are two aspects involved in the interaction between Christianity and the native converts to Christianity in India. One, in the initial stage, Christianity remained a 'non-Indian' or 'foreign' religion. The other, the first Indian converts to Christianity, either Hindus or tribals, obviously had nothing of the Christian symbols in their worship. Given their traditional religious background, the converts tried to retain certain symbols and practices related to their old religion, while at the same time accepting certain symbols, beliefs, rituals and practices of the new religion. The dynamics of this religious interaction reflected a tendency to combine elements from both religions and cultures. The converts accepted the forms of worship and rites, which were predominantly Latin, while they continued to practice their traditional religious beliefs and practices. As a consequence what was once 'foreign' gradually became 'indigenous.' To understand how exactly this has happened we ask: What are the native religio-cultural practices that still persist among the Catholics? What meanings do the Catholics attribute to these practices? In other words, how have they reconciled with these practices along with the religion they follow? Has the Catholic Church accepted and legitimised these practices? And, has Catholicism become fully or partially integrated with the native culture? These and related questions are sought to be examined in this study.
cultures. Focusing on the socio-religious rituals practised in Christianity they claim that there has been a high degree of adaptation with native religious and cultural traditions. Estborn (1959), for instance, observes that the ceremonies and customs followed by Christians in Tamil Nadu are almost identical to that of the Hindus.

There are studies which go further to explore the adaptation of Christianity. They point to a multi-directional process. Sahay (1976:22), in his study on the Christianisation of the Uraon tribe in Central India, identifies five types of cultural processes: Oscillation, Scrutinisation, Combination, Indigenisation and Retroversion. We shall later consider the definitions of these processes.

Some studies claim that the process of adaptation was not comprehensive in the sense that it did not touch all aspects of the lives of the converts. According to Godwin (1972), conversion to Christianity and contact with the Portuguese have not greatly changed the socio-economic life of the community. The adaptation remained confined to the sphere of religion.

It is often assumed that the converts were passively adapted to the new way of life through conversion to Christianity. In this the role of the foreign missionaries is emphasised. Pruett's (1974) study of the Baptist Mission in Nagaland claims that, around 1930, there was a strong movement in Nagaland and Manipur to enforce a westernised culture. Pruett, however, notes that the general thrust was towards an authentic Ao Christianity. He suggests that the converts did not receive the new faith passively, and they played a definite role in evolving a new variant of Christianity. Bayly (1992:454) shares this perspective when she says, 'New doctrines, texts and cult personalities were
introduced by a variety of Indian, West Asian and Churchmen, but over times these were
taken over and transformed by the recipients."

Houtart and Lemerciner (1982) draw our attention to indigenisation in areas other
than culture and to aspects other than religious rituals and symbols. They refer to the
changes in the structure of the Catholic Church and note that after India became
independent from the British colonial rule, the authority structure of the Church got
indigenised, meaning that the Indian clergy replaced the European clergy at all levels of
authority within the Church.

Roche’s (1984) study reveals that indigenisation was not confined to any
particular community. He studied indigenisation among the fisherfolk in the coastal areas
of Tamil Nadu and observed, ‘Parava [fisherfolk] Catholicism was Latin Catholicism
[read as Roman Catholicism] by adaptation but Tamilised Catholicism in practice’ (ibid.
48). Devdutt (1984:55) makes a similar observation with regard to the Catholics in
Kerala.

Unable or unwilling to be uprooted from their cultural moorings, the converts
seem to adopt a strategy of filling their original religious symbols with parallels from the
new religion. Bayly (1992) explains how the warrior Christian saints filled the place
vacated by the warrior kings and heroes whose valour was celebrated in their native
culture. In this manner we understand some aspects of the relationship of the Christian
communities with the political powers and the religious world of the time. While
discussing the Christian fisher women of Tamil Nadu village, Ram (1992) notes very
close resemblance between the veneration of Virgin Mary and the worship of the goddess
in popular Hinduism. This Diehl (1969:159) calls substitution, which is the outcome of
the meeting of religions. He points out that the meeting of religions may mean a complete change of context in the sense that a person takes over a set of concepts and traditions entirely different from that of his old religion or that he may substitute them while the functions remain essentially the same.

Yet another way in which Christianity took shape was to superimpose the Christian meaning to cultural elements that persisted with the converts. Sinha (1989) points out how a tribal festival like Nava Khani (harvest festival) was allowed to continue after conversion and how the Christian liturgy was made an integral part of that festival.

Allowing both explicitly Christian practices and the traditional practices in the same ritual is said to be another mode in which adaptation took place in India. In order to explain this, Visvanathan (1999) makes a distinction between the ‘domestic’ and the ‘canonical’ rituals. Canonical rituals are rituals those that are performed in the Church. Those rituals which though are not officially accepted as an integral part of Christian rituals and yet performed in the domestic sphere are domestic rituals. She observes that Christians comfortably maintain the distance between these types of rituals and perform them with equal respect.

Though converted to a religion different from the rest of the community, there still persists the need to identify oneself beyond religious identification. Thus, caste identity has remained a part of Christians in India. This social reality is revealed in studies of caste and Christianity in rural Andhra Pradesh (Reddy 1987), Kerala (Fuller 1976) and Tamil Nadu (Mosse 1986).

Often adaptation could be a reversible process. What was once accepted as part of Christian rituals could at some point of time be abandoned fully or partially. Mosse
(1986:375) explains how caste and associated practices during Hindu religious festivals became part of the Christian celebrations. According to Hindu tradition, those who occupied the authority structure were given importance in accordance with their position. This practice was known as *kooyil mariyaatai*. The Christians who had followed the same for decades abolished all caste privileges in 1983.

In the process of conversion the earlier identity of the convert has to encounter a new identity. Whatever may be his or her inclination to adapt to the new identity, the convert is forced to relate with both identities all the time. In the process one becomes dominant. More’s (1998) study on Hindu-Christian interaction in Pondichery between 1700 and 1900 highlights the dominance of Christian identity over their past Hindu identity.

In dealing with these two identities, the converts tend to be selective as in the case of the Catholics in two Goan villages studied by Robinson (1998). She observes that the converts avoided practices which are explicitly Hindu in orientation like the festivals of Ganesh Chaturthi, Divali, etc., whereas they continued to follow the rituals associated with agricultural seasons and the feasts of the Churches were incorporated to synchronise with them.

There are communities in which one finds not deliberate selectivity but simple combination of both Christian and Hindu practices. For example, ‘tie a cross round their necks and on the same thread put a Hindu charm or talisman’ (Luke and Carman 1968:165).

Many accounts of South Indian Christians view the non-Christian elements in their beliefs and practices as ‘hangovers’ from the Hindu culture. Studying the persistence
of Hindu practices among Lutheran Christians, Diehl (1965:39-41 and 45-52) for example, concludes that these practices are 'hangovers,' deviations from the Christian norms, the presence of which is explained in terms of social obligations and pressure from the dominant Hindu groups. In contrast, Mosse (1986:1 and 2) considers the way in which these constitute part of a structured whole comprised of both Hindu and Christian elements. Using ethnographic and historical data, he explores how Christianity 'has become embedded in the indigenous social and religious order.'

Studies of non-Hindu communities generally focus on the commonalties they share with the orthodox Hindus rather than on the ways in which they are different (Parry 1974:118). Agreeing with Pary, Caplan (1980:214) argues that though 'religious minorities are not independent of their environment, and...they do not constitute autonomous societies, it does not necessarily follow that the distinctive religious beliefs of these minorities are thereby unable to exert a crucial or even dominant influence on their adherents.' He, therefore, recommends that the study of non-Hindu communities should look at what is distinctive about the religious beliefs and practices and not what they share in common with Hinduism. Responding to these studies Robinson (1998:17) holds that a balance could be achieved only if the two form part of a single perspective. Her study postulates that there is unlikely to be a community born through conversion which radically and completely overthrows its earlier moorings, and observes that the new is perceived through and integrated with the old.

One of the first studies on the lived Christianity of a small community in India is that by Diehl (1965) who found that the lived religion of the Lutherans in a Tamil village embraced practices from Hinduism. In his study of Christianisation of the Uraon of
Central India, Sahay (1976, see also 1986) has enumerated the cultural process through which Christianity absorbs elements of tribal religion into the lived religion of tribal converts. Neither of these studies is concerned only with Catholicism; while Diehl deals with the Protestantism, Sahay deals with both Catholicism and Protestantism.

Much light has been thrown on indigenisation of Christianity by the above mentioned studies. Each of these studies has explained the changes and continuities in the practice of Christianity with regard to some individual aspects. However, they do not cover all aspects of the life of Catholics. An integral approach is essential to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the process of indigenisation of Catholicism. Accordingly, this study covers aspects that are significant from the point of the Catholics (Laity) and the Church (the Clergy). It examines the role of the clergy and the laity in the process of indigenisation of Catholicism in South India.

**Indigenisation: A Conceptual Clarification**

To understand the interaction among religions scholars have used such concepts as adaptation, acculturation, syncretism and indigenisation. Adaptation is a process by which a group or an individual adjusts its/her or his behaviour to suit the social environment (Scott 1999:5). Acculturation, ‘is the process of change toward greater cultural similarity brought about by contact between two or more groups’ (Yinger 1997:69). It encompasses not only the external cultural traits, such as dress and language, but also the internal ones, such as beliefs and values. Syncretism, is the term

Used to denote any mixture of two or more religions, as for instance, in Hellenistic syncretism, where elements from several religions are merged and influence each other mutually. It might also be used to refer to cases when elements from one religion are accepted into another without basically changing
the character of the receiving religion (because of the relatively small quantity of

Amalorpavadass (1978:47), a theologian, views *indigenisation* not as mere going
back to the traditional culture and religions. Rather it involves addressing itself to both
traditional and modern cultures in so far as the values, elements and aspects of the
traditional culture continue to be in vogue today and permeate the modern form of one’s
national culture.

As already mentioned, in his study on the interaction between Christianity and the
Uraons in Central India, Sahay (1976:22) delineates five types of cultural process:

- **Oscillation** is the ‘nominal affiliation with Christianity and partial understanding of it.
The simultaneous observance by the converts beliefs and practices having Christian
and native elements, which normally tend to be contradictory.’

- **Scrutinization** is ‘a process that leads to the elimination of certain Sarna (religion of
the Uraons) elements on the one hand and to the retention of others on the other, on
proper scrutiny.’

- **Combination** is ‘the mixing up or combination of the retained Sarna elements with
newly introduced Christian elements.’

- **Indigenisation** refers to the

  Persistence of indigenous cultural values and beliefs. This, within the framework
  of a particular Sarna belief or practice, refers to the replacement of Sarna elements
  by Christian ones, the two generally being contradictory to each other. This
  process is similar to cultural combination, with the only difference being that here
  we note the partial replacement of a Sarna belief or practice by functionally
  similar Christian elements fulfilling indigenous needs. Such a specialised type of
replacement by or combination of Christian elements does not seem to disturb the framework of the indigenous beliefs or practice in question; rather the new elements get integrated in it and are thus indigenised.

- *Retroversion* is 're-evaluation of indigenous cultural beliefs and practices.'

The Church in India has shown a favourable attitude towards indigenisation, especially after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Many Indian Christian thinkers were encouraged by the outcome of this Council and have shown interest in developing an indigenous theology, forms of worship, and art and architecture, and have initiated inter-religious dialogue. In the process of making the Church Indigenous they use the term 'inculturation.' *Inculturation* refers to the process by which a particular Church expresses its faith and life in and through the local culture (Geffre 1995:24). This concept has been used mostly by the theologians and the meanings carried by this concept are theological in orientation.

While some of these concepts have been referred to in this study, the main concept around which it revolves is indigenisation. *Indigenisation* essentially denotes the interaction between two communities which are culturally alien to each other. Though they are alien to each other one pre-exists the other in a given socio-cultural space. The pre-existing community is viewed as native while that which begins its interaction at a later point of time is viewed as alien.

Following this, we define indigenisation of Catholicism as a process by which the Catholic community has absorbed, totally or partially, some elements of the native religion and acquired an identity which is different from its counterparts elsewhere in the world where Christianity is practised, for example, in Africa, China, Japan, etc. In this
study we look at indigenisation of Catholicism as a process whereby the Catholics in India incorporate Indian cultural symbols in their worship, lifecycle rituals and popular beliefs and practices.

Indigenisation is basically a cultural process in the sense that the interaction between the two religions is characterised by exchange of cultural symbols in form and/or content. The exchange takes place through different modes such as partial selection, partial retention, total absorption, total retention, etc. These modes explain the level of indigenisation that Catholicism has gone through.

Indigenisation is fundamentally a collective process. So much so it is almost impossible to locate the source that prompts changes in the cultural sphere. Nevertheless, the exchange is conducted by individuals and groups. Identifying and understanding the role of individuals and groups is crucial for any sociological inquiry into the process of indigenisation.

Every religion has its own structure of authority having its own specific character. At the same time, the vast majority of the people on whom such authority is exercised assert their own right to conceive their own deities, modes of worship, and norms and customs. While considering the process of indigenisation and the role of individuals and groups, this distinction needs to be maintained to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Briefed by these conceptual clarifications, the present study proceeds to understand the process of indigenisation among the Catholics in Tamil Nadu and some parts of South India.
Scope and Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to understand the process of indigenisation of Catholicism in South India. Specifically, the study has sought to examine the incorporation of the native religio-cultural symbols in the rituals practised by the Catholics on the one hand, and to analyse the reinterpretation of the Catholic rituals and symbols by the native converts to Catholicism, on the other. Thus, we spell out:

- The study examines the socio-historical factors responsible for initiating the indigenisation process in Tamil Nadu.
- The study analyses the extent of indigenisation in the religious and social spheres. It investigates the specific aspects of indigenisation in spheres such as worship and celebrations; rites of passage; agrarian activity; everyday concerns of life; art, music, drama, and architecture; rituals carried out in the pilgrim centres; and the Catholic ashrams.
- The study classifies the rituals into two categories: (1) Church prescribed rituals (2) Native rituals, in order to understand why and how indigenisation takes place.
- The study identifies the crucial actors in the indigenisation of Catholicism.
- The study examines the modes adopted by the Catholics in the process of indigenising Catholicism. It delves into the methods adopted by them in legitimising the native practices and dealing with the tension arising as a result of indigenisation of Catholicism.
- Finally, it discusses the emerging trends in the indigenisation of Catholicism.

This study is guided by a few lead questions:
In the first place, what are the native cultural symbols that have been retained by the converts? The study seeks to locate the cultural/religious symbols of Hindus found in the Catholic community.

In the second place, what are the modes adopted by the Catholics and the Church in this process of indigenising Catholicism?

Finally, the human agency of indigenisation is considered. The Catholic Church in India, as elsewhere in the world, has its well-established and highly organised structure of authority. There is a well-guarded gap between the vast majority of lay people or laity and the small section of the clergy who exercise religious authority over the laity. How did these segments within the Catholic Church involve themselves in the process of indigenisation in South India?

The study has adopted a descriptive framework for understanding how the process of indigenisation has taken place in the religio-cultural milieu of the Tamil Catholics. In this venture Geertz's (1973:14) concept of ‘thick description’ seems to be a useful tool. To Geertz, an adequate understanding of a culture of a community is possible only through a minute description of the details of the cultural expressions. Using this approach, we record in as many as details possible of the important aspects of the lives of the Catholics in rural Tamil Nadu. We then derive the sociological meanings of these practices to understand the dynamics of indigenisation.

The Locale of the Study

With its history of nearly 2000 years, Catholicism has taken roots and grown in different parts of India. However, for certain historical reasons, the Catholics are concentrated in certain parts of India such as the states of Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, the
Chota Nagpur region, and the North Eastern states. The present study is largely confined to the state of Tamil Nadu as it meets satisfactorily the requirement of a field suitable for the study.

First of all, the Catholics constitute a sizeable percentage (5.69) of the total population of Tamil Nadu (Catholic Directory 2000), a size that is neither too small nor too large. Neither of these conditions would have been suitable for our study: When it is small, the community could be completely isolated by a reactionary non-Christian majority. When it is too large, it may subdue the non-Christians and resist any indigenisation. Hence, a middle ground on this count is suitable to pursue the study of indigenisation where a process of give and take could normally be expected to take place.

Second, it was in this region that the first ever experiment in indigenisation was undertaken nearly 400 years ago by the Italian missionary Robert de Nobili. On account of such experiments, the Catholics in this state remain well integrated with the people of the region, providing ample scope for a study on indigenisation.

Third, this study concentrates on the rural areas of Tamil Nadu, where the traditional religious practices are still found in existence. Thus, the community in the rural area provides a better vantage point to understand the process of indigenisation. Though the Catholics living in urban areas have not given up their religion, they seem to abandon many of their traditional practices as a result of education, urbanisation, etc.

Four, caste is central to all social processes in India. The caste system being well entrenched in Tamil Nadu seems to have played a significant role in mediating the establishment of Catholicism in that state. The Tamil Catholics too maintain caste distinctions, though not to the same extent as the Hindus.
Finally, the familiarity of the research scholar with the language and culture of the Tamils is yet another reason why Tamil Nadu was chosen as the field for the study. Since, this study deals with cultural symbols, rituals, etc., familiarity with the field, its people and their language is an asset in the understanding of a socio-cultural process such as indigenisation.

A preliminary visit to the probable field sites in the month of June 2000 made it possible to ascertain their suitability for fieldwork and to establish contact with the local Catholics. The final selection of the field sites was done in consultation with the locally knowledgeable persons (the priests, laity and social scientists). Table 1.1 shows the field sites from where the primary data were collected by the researcher, and Table 1.2 lists the other places visited by the researcher in connection with the study. The location of these sites is shown in Map 1.1.
### Table 1. Field Work Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Catholic Households</th>
<th>Caste Under Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tiruchirappalli (T)</td>
<td>Tiruchirappalli</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brahmins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajakambeeram (V)</td>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Vellalars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaikattur (V)</td>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatakku Andavoorani (V)</td>
<td>Ramnad</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Udayars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thekku Andavoorani (V)</td>
<td>Ramnad</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sengudi (V)</td>
<td>Ramnad</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thedakottai (V)</td>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keelauchani (V)</td>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>Nadars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valghiramanickam (V)</td>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Parayars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savariyar Pattanam (V)</td>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: T= Town, V= Village

### Table 1.2 Other Places Visited by the Researcher:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Institution/Site</th>
<th>Place and District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ashrams</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Saccidananda Ashram</td>
<td>Thannirpalli, Karur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Anjali Ashram</td>
<td>Mysore, Karnataka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ramana Shri Ashram</td>
<td>Tiruvannamalai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monastery</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Benedictine Monastery</td>
<td>Bangalore, Karnataka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Shri Mat Andavar Ashram</td>
<td>Tiruchirappalli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pilgrim centres</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Shrines</td>
<td>Adaikalamatha</td>
<td>Elakuruchi, Ariyalur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Periyanayaki Maata</td>
<td>Konankuppam, Cuddalore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Anthony</td>
<td>Muthupattinam, Ramnad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. John de Britto</td>
<td>Oriyur, Ramnad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our Lady of Health</td>
<td>Vailankanni, Nagappattinam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Sebastian</td>
<td>Valayampatti, Sivagangai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu Temples</td>
<td>Kali</td>
<td>Kollankudi, Sivagangai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mariamman</td>
<td>Thiruvettiyur, Ramnad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mariamman</td>
<td>Karai, Sivagangai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sri Ranganathar</td>
<td>Srirangam, Tiruchirappalli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nellaiappar</td>
<td>Tirunelveli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nagore Andavar</td>
<td>Nagore, Nagappattinam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>NBCLC Chapel</td>
<td>Bangalore (Karnataka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arul Perum Jyothi Church</td>
<td>Kayavayal, Sivagangai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Kokkurani (V)</td>
<td>Ramnad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idaikattur (V)</td>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: V= Village
The Catholic Community in Tamil Nadu

As a religio-cultural community, the Catholics of Tamil Nadu have acquired their own socio-cultural space. A brief description of this may be helpful to understand the process of indigenisation that has been taking place among them.

In many villages of Tamil Nadu the Catholics co-exist with the Hindus, though there are villages which are predominantly inhabited by the Catholics. The most basic unit of the Catholic community is called paMku (parish). A paMku consists of certain number of villages where Catholics live. There is no uniform policy regarding how many villages a paMku can hold. Normally a paMku will have a minimum of ten villages. Each paMku will have one or two paMku gurus (parish priests) who are based in one of these villages. The paMku guru is expected to visit periodically all the villages under the paMku and to perform the Church-prescribed rituals there.

The next higher administrative unit is maraivaTTaaram (The Vicariate) and the one who officiates it is called maraivaTTaara guru (Vicar General). The maraivaTTaara guru has a limited role of animating the paMku gurus (parish priests) and sorting out problems of the paMkus coming under his jurisdiction. The highest administrative unit is the maraimaavaTTam (The Diocese). The Aayar (Bishop) is the head of the maraimaavaTTam and is solely responsible for all the affairs within the maraimaavaTTam.

The paMku kooyil (parish church) and the paMku guru (parish priest) together give the religious identity to the Catholics in the paMku. All Catholics scattered in villages in a radius of ten km acquire their identity as ‘Catholics’ only by their association with the paMku and the paMku guru. In villages where they constitute a minority, their
association with the *paMku/paMku guru* is significant for the way they are viewed by the Hindus. At the same time, it is to be noted that the totality of their identity is not determined by the *paMku/paMku guru*. Much of their life is lived in association with the Hindus in the village and they partake in different aspects of the village including the religious practices and there seems to exist a composite culture shared by both the Catholics and the Hindus.

In the composite culture shared by the Catholics, caste remains an integral part. Though Catholicism does not officially recognise caste, every Catholic has a caste identity. Vellalar, Udayar, Nadar, Konar, Pallar and Parayar are some of the numerically dominant castes in Tamil Nadu, and Catholics are drawn from these castes in a notable way. The Catholics belonging to other castes such as Brahmins, Mudaliar, Asari, etc. are very small in number. There is another caste known as Kallar, which is pre-ponderous in number, and there are a few Catholics from this caste.

The Vellalars, who are landowners and who do agriculture with hired labour, and the Udayars, who are peasants owning land and who cultivate mostly with domestic labour supplemented by hired labour, are the dominant castes. Nadars are the toddy tapers and they provide agriculture labour to the landowners to supplement their income. Konars are cattle breeders and the number of Catholics from their community is small. The Pallars and Parayars are the two segments of the 'untouchable' caste. The Pallars are said to be occupying a position higher than that of the Parayars. They are largely landless labours besides doing all menial jobs such as disposing carcasses, cleaning common place, etc. The converted Brahmins are engaged in various occupations and their earlier ritual position in the Hindu caste hierarchy is not significant as far as Catholicism is
concerned. Our study revolves around the five castes, namely, Catholic Brahmins, Vellalars, Udayars, Nadars and the Parayars.

It must be noted that in some villages where the Catholics of a particular caste live, Hindus belonging to the same caste also live. For instance, Andavoorani has both the Catholic Udayars and the Hindu Udayars. Similarly, Valghiramanickam has both the Catholic Parayars and the Hindu Parayars. The juxtaposition of the Hindu Udayars and the Catholic Udayars has far-reaching implications for the process of indigenisation.

Research Methods

The data on which this thesis is based were gathered during August 2000 - June 2001 and in February and March 2002. Initially the researcher spent ten days in both Vatakku and Thekku Andavoorani, Keelauchani, Rajakambeeram, and Valghiramanickam, and three days in Tiruchirappalli to gather information on the Catholic calendrical festivals, the life cycle rituals, beliefs and practices related to occupation, auspiciousness, evil, and religious practices carried out in the locally popular shrines. Based on the information so gathered, she prepared a calendar of events as they would be taking place in the respective villages. Accordingly, she visited the places as and when the events took place. The Catholics kept her informed of other events, e.g., marriages, etc, to take place in their villages. In some cases the researcher found it difficult to gather data. For instance, death was a sensitive subject. Not only, the researcher had to ‘wait’ for its occurrence, but also her presence at a funeral was often mistaken: the people thought that she was there to express her condolences!

The researcher had to keep in mind her dual role - one as a social researcher and another a nun of the Catholic Church. The Catholics of the village viewed her primarily
as a nun rather than as a researcher. This was explicit as they readily engaged with her regarding their everyday concerns of life (the Catholics expect a religious person to listen to them, speak words of comfort and pray for them). Thus, often the researcher had to wait patiently to get into discussion with them on the rituals and meanings attributed to them.

Since she was viewed as a nun of the catholic Church the researcher was not sure to what extent the Catholics would disclose their practices related to superstition, consulting non-Christian religious personnel and visiting shrines of other religions, as these practices are considered by the Church to be unchristian. This was the case with a few and some of them virtually avoided her while there were a number of them willing to discuss these matters and at the same time wanted her opinion on these issues once they knew that she was eliciting all this information as a researcher.

The researcher had to play two roles: one as a researcher interested in information and the other as a nun who cared for the welfare of the people. The latter role seemed more realistic since her religious identity is relatively more permanent than her role as a researcher. However, with her frequent visits her purpose became clear to the people and they co-operated in giving the needed information. On the whole the researcher was well received by the Catholics and the Hindus and had enriching experience in collecting data.

Our research design being basically descriptive and warranting a qualitative analysis, we needed a variety of qualitative data. Hence, a combination of methods was resorted to for collecting data. The primary method used was observation based on an ‘observation chart’ (see Appendix 1.1). Since rituals are essentially a part of a community’s cultural repertoire, they are embedded in the collective behaviour of its
members. As such, their meanings often elude the verbal articulation by individual participants. The researcher was present at all the rituals recorded in the thesis and she observed their proceedings closely. In some cases the researcher adopted limited participation and marginally took part in the celebrations. In a few cases she adopted total participant-observation method. For example, she walked with the pilgrims a distance of about 210 km to Vailankanni. Similarly, she stayed for ten days in Saccidananda Ashram near Tiruchirappalli. In all these detailed field notes were recorded, the rituals were photographed and pictures of the places and diagrams related to certain beliefs were collected.

Notes from observation often needed to be clarified, understood and interpreted. Thus, after observing each ritual, the researcher held informal interviews with some of the participants present in the ritual. This not only amplified the meaning of observational data, but also helped to prevent the infiltration of her personal perceptions into their interpretation.

The Catholic Church provides one of the most organised theological trainings which the clergy are obliged to undergo. Some of these training centres have been proactive in initiating the process of indigenisation, especially after the Second Vatican Council. The priests and nuns trained in these centres have attempted in their respective place of work many experiments on indigenisation in worship, art and architecture, music, etc. Based on the reputation that they have gained in their respective fields, some theologians, priests, artists and musicians were selected for formal interviews to ascertain their views on indigenisation. Since some of these individuals were scattered, the
researcher decided to elicit their views through a mailed questionnaire. The interview guide and the questionnaire used are given in Appendix 1.1.

Indigenisation has been one of the most extensively discussed and debated subjects in the Church. Such discussions and debates are documented and stored in many libraries and archives of the Church. Thus, the secondary data, mainly in the form of Church documents and studies on Catholicism, were collected from the Dharmaram Library, Bangalore; Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune; Jesuits Archives, Kodaikanal; Aikya Alayam, Sacred Heart Seminary and Sathyanilyam, Chennai; St. Paul’s Library, Tiruchirappalli; United Theological College, Bangalore; and Vidya Jyoti, Delhi. The researcher also benefited from her visit to the following libraries: Delhi School of Economics, Delhi; Goa University Library, Goa; Institute for Social and Economic Change, and Jyoti Nivas College, Bangalore; International Institute of Tamil Studies and Madras Institute of Developmental studies, Chennai, and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

The data collected from these different sources form the basis of the findings presented in this thesis.

**Organisation of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into ten chapters, including the instant one introducing the study.

Chapter 2 presents an historical overview of indigenisation of Catholicism in Tamil Nadu in order to set a background for the present study. Contrary to the popular belief that indigenisation is a recent phenomenon, it is shown that it is as old as Christianity itself in India and that it has been central to Catholicism in Tamil Nadu for
nearly four centuries. The process of indigenisation has been dynamic in that it has passed through many stages expressing itself in different forms. It has always remained an issue of intense debate not only within India, but also in Europe from where the Catholicism travelled to India.

Worship is central to any religion: It is directed towards the sacred Being; it takes place in a sacred place and at a sacred time; and it is officiated by a sacred person. It is worship which gives a religion its identity. Accordingly, Chapter 3 deals with worship and celebrations as the primary aspect of Catholicism in which indigenisation has occurred. While the first part of this chapter focuses on worship in church per se, the second part analyses the rituals that are part of the calendrical celebrations of the Church and the annual church feast. This chapter establishes how the indigenous religious elements have gained grounds even in the sacred sphere of the church.

The rites of passage constitute the second most important arena for religious expression. They are concerned with the self and its need to cope up with the crises associated with different stages of life. The performance of the rituals associated with the rites of passage presents a complex situation: While some of these are performed exclusively in the sacred domain, namely, the church (e.g., baptism and first holy communion), some are performed exclusively in the domestic sphere (e.g., puberty ritual), and some are performed both in the sacred and domestic spheres (e.g., marriage and death rituals). In some of these rituals the priest is given central place (e.g., baptism, first holy communion and marriage), while in others the community elders play a crucial role (e.g., puberty ritual). Because of this complexity in the way the rituals are performed, the process of indigenisation also has acquired a complex character. Chapter 4 presents these
Endnotes

1. For the sake of brevity, unless otherwise specified, the terms Catholic, Catholics, Catholicism are used instead of Roman Catholic, Roman Catholics, and Roman Catholicism.

2. Christianity has two main streams, namely, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The Roman Catholics acknowledge the primacy of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. The Protestants do not recognise the authority of the Pope. There are many other differences between these two Churches in their doctrines and rituals. Protestantism was born out of a sixteenth century religious movement known as the ‘Reformation.’ Besides these two main streams, numerous Churches have emerged subsequently. While Protestantism, as also some other Christian Churches have taken root in India at different points of time, the Catholics constitute the single largest (comprising 1.8 percent of her total population) and the oldest of all Christian denominations in the country.

3. For a detailed history of Christianity in India, see the six-volume project on the subject, of which three volumes - Mundadan (1984), Thekkedath (1982), and Hambey (1997) - Part 2 of the 4th volume, Grafe (1990) and Part 5 of the 5th volume, Downs (1992) have been published.

4. In this thesis, ‘Church’ spelt with capital ‘C’ refers to the formal authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and ‘church’ spelt with lower case ‘c’ denotes a place of Christian worship.