CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE REUNION MOVEMENT

Until the end of the 16th century the St. Thomas Christians had hierarchical relations with the Chaldean Church and was enjoying an autonomous status. Their Bishop was called the Metropolitan and the Door of All India. He was assisted by an Archdeacon, an indigenous priest, whose title was “the Archdeacon of All India”. These titles show that there was only one Church under one head. After the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century, the Thomas Christians were put under the Royal Patronage of Portugal (Padroado). Latin Bishops, then, were appointed for them. The latinizing policy of these bishops met with great opposition. It culminated in 1653 in an open revolt which caused a division among the Thomas Christians for the first time in their history. Several attempts were being made to reunite all under one head. Many were reunited. However, a small group under the then Archdeacon remained separated and later they accepted Jacobitism. This particular group was again divided due to the Anglican influence. Further divisions were also made among them on the issue of the jurisdiction of the Antiochean Patriarch over them. Division also occurred among the Syro-Malabarians on the question of restoring
their ancient customs and traditions. In spite of these divisions, all these Christians hail their origin from St. Thomas and possess a common heritage. This chapter is an attempt to study the division among there Christians in the past as well as the present milieu of their church.

1.1 The Thomas Christians: One Church under One Head (62-1653)

Until 1653 the Thomas Christians formed one church under one head. This period can be divided into two.

(a) The Chaldean Period
(b) The Portuguese Period

1.1.1 The Chaldean Period

Till the Synod of Diamper in 1599, the church of the Thomas Christians depended on the liturgical and sacramental matters of the East Syrian Patriarchate. But we know nothing for certain as to the beginning of this relation. In internal affairs, they enjoyed to a large extent an autonomy. They received Bishops directly from the Patriarch of East Syria. These Bishops often did not know the local language and the actual jurisdiction was exercised by the Archdeacon.

1.1.2 The Title of the Head of the Thomas Christians

The Bishop of the Thomas Christians called himself the Metropolitan and Door of All India¹. The word ‘Gate’ in oriental terminology means the same as authority. Vatican Codex 22 speaks of Mar Jacob (1500 - 1550/52) as Metropolitan of the See of the Thomas Christians and the whole church of India². Bishop Alexander Parampil (1663-1687) also made use of this title³.
1.1.3 The Residence of the Bishops of the Thomas Christians

The Eastern Patriarch never erected any episcopal See in Malabar, but only appointed Bishops who established their residence in places of their choice. Some fixed their residence at Cranganore. This was probably a matter of convenience, Cranganore being a good harbour, or perhaps, or of devotion, as the church in the city was founded by St. Thomas⁴. In 1567, Patriarch Abdiso, by the order of the Pope, erected Angamaly as a residential See with Mar Abraham as its Metropolitan⁵. When Francis Roz S.J., the first Latin Bishop, was appointed to the See of Angamaly by Rome on 5th November 1599, it was presumed that Angamaly was the official See, and it was as such that the new incumbent was nominated⁶.

1.1.4 Liturgical Rite, Language and Customs of the Thomas Christians

The Thomas Christians followed the church customs, discipline and the forms of liturgy and the sacramental usages of the East Syrian Church with a certain degree of adaptation to the local customs. They had a very great esteem and love for the East Syrian rite and language for the reason that Syriac was spoken by our Lord and the Apostle, St. Thomas. In 1579, their representatives wrote to Pope Gregory XIII,

“Our prayers are in the Syriac or Chaldean language which was given to us by our Lord, St. Thomas”.⁷

Even though they accepted and practised the East Syrian rite with modification, they developed an individuality of their own, adapting
themselves to, or rather christianizing, their ancient culture. This individuality was Christian and typically Indian. It was properly understood and duly respected.

1.1.5 Faith and Communion of the Thomas Christians

It is true that there were in use among the Thomas Christians books that contained Nestorian or Theodorian formulas and expressions which were of a very subtle nature. It is also true that certain superstitious practices and errors had crept in among them. But, in spite of all these, they professed the Orthodox faith. The fact that they spontaneously and constantly treated the Portuguese as brothers in faithfully entering into communion with them 'in sacris', not considering themselves as separate and independent from Rome, is a clear proof of their Orthodoxy. Though the Portuguese were not favourable to the difference in rite, they had no suspicion of the faith of the Thomas Christians. The only thing the latter wanted was to keep intact their faith, rite and the peculiar way of life, depending on the East Syrian Church. On 4th January 1570, Fr. Dionisio, Rector of the College of Cochin, wrote:

"Commonly these Christians profess all the articles of the Nicean creed, and the equality of the Divine persons, the natures in Christ and the one person as the Archbishop and the Archdeacon admit. About the Pope, they consider him as the Vicar of Christ, our Redeemer, on earth; the Patriarch as subject to the Pope from whom he receives his power" 8.
In 1601, Bishop Francis Roz S.J wrote:

"These Christians are certainly the oldest in the Orient ..........having been converted from idolatry ........ to our Most Holy faith by the Apostle St. Thomas; and although they had lived among the heathens, Jews and Moslims, they have till this time always stood very firm in the faith. Chaldean prelates infected with Nestorian heresy were set over them having been for this office deputed and sent hither from Babylon". ⁹

This statement clearly affirms that the Thomas Christians had accepted their faith from St. Thomas and remained in it till 1601.

There was no relationship between the Thomas Christians and Rome due to political and geographical circumstances. The absence of communication does not mean that they had no communication with Rome. They acknowledged the divinely instituted primacy of Rome. The history of the 16th century bears witness to this. When the Portuguese arrived in Malabar, they entered into relations with Rome and spontaneously put themselves in touch with the Pope as his children. Therefore, the Thomas Christians did not separate from Rome nor did Rome consider them as separate from her.

1.2 The Portuguese Period (1599-1659)

This period begins with the famous ‘Synod of Diamper’ convoked on 20 June 1599 by Archbishop Alexis Menezes. The Synod enacted
fundamental changes in the rite and ecclesiastical laws of the Thomas Christians. Thus the several centuries-old authority of the Eastern Patriarch over them was eliminated and the royal patronage of Portugal (Padroado) was extended over them. During this period, three Latin Bishops governed them. These bishops curtailed the rights and privileges of the Archdeacon and latinized the Church.

1.2.1 Archbishop Francis Roz, S.J. (1599-1624)

On 5th November 1599, Roz was appointed Archbishop of Angamaly. But on 20th December of the same year, the ancient See of Angamaly was reduced to a bishopric and made suffragan to the Portuguese Latin Archdiocese of Goa which was founded in 1534. Then, on 4th August 1600, the Padroado was extended over it. Thus the church of the Thomas Christians, which had enjoyed a kind of autonomy together with several privileges, was subjected to the Latin Church. It is to be noted that the Chaldean Patriarch, to whom the Malabar church had been subjected, was in communication with Rome. Since there was strong reaction against this reduction of their Archdiocese, Rome restored the Metropolitan title of Angamaly on 22 December 1608. But its title and residence were transferred to Cranganore on 3rd December 1609.

Archbishop Roz began to centralize all authority, reducing to almost nothing the power of the Archdeacon. He once excommunicated the Archdeacon in connection with the arrival of an Armenian whom the Archdeacon had honoured as Bishop. Besides Roz, when he
went to Goa, left the administration of the see to the Rector of the Jesuit College at Cranganore instead of the Archdeacon.¹⁵

1.2.2 Archbishop Stephen Britto (1624- 1641)

Archbishop Britto also followed the method of his predecessor by centralizing all the authority. He did not like other religious orders to work in Malabar. His refusal to hear the grievances of the Thomas Christians was reacted with grave protests from the part of the priests and the faithful.

1.2.3 Arch Bishop Francis Garcia (1641- 1659)

Archbishop Garcia determined to govern the Archdiocese personally, forgetting that he was called upon to guide a church which had ancient traditions of its own based on the canon law of the Chaldean church. He showed no inclination whatever to share his powers with the archdeacon.¹⁶ The Archdeacon, on the other hand, was equally resolute and determined to maintain his traditional status of the Archdeacon in the Church of the Thomas Christians. The diametrically opposed characters of Archbishop Garcia and the Archdeacon made it inevitable that they should come to a clash.

1.3 The Division

It was in 1653 that the Thomas Christians were divided for the first time in their history. This division was an outcome not of a sudden emotion, but of the struggle for liberating themselves from under the Latin rule and for constituting themselves definitively under their own
indigenous Bishops. The remote reasons of these divisions were the following:

1. The excessive changes of Archbishop Alexis Menevez in the Synod of Diamper.

2. The severance of the long standing relation of the Malabar church with the Chaldean church.

3. The extension of the Padroado jurisdiction over their church.

4. The unnecessary changes made in the ceremonies and rules of the celebration of Holy Mass and the administration of the sacraments in order to bring them more in line with the Latin usage.

5. The attachment of the Thomas Christians to the Bishops of their own rite.

6. The imposition of strict rules of discipline and pastoral care on the priests.

7. The elimination of the authority and the special position that the Archdeacon held for centuries. The Archdeacon was a symbol that kept the Thomas Christians united.

8. The exclusion of the other religious orders from Malabar by the Jesuits.


The immediate cause of this division was the arrival of Ahatallah, an oriental Bishop, in Malabar. On 25th August 1652, he reached
Mylapore. He was said to be sent to govern the Thomas Christians in response to a letter of the Archdeacon to the coptic Patriarch of Alexandria. Some pilgrims from Malabar to Mylapore met him and when they returned they carried with them a letter of the said Bishop, which requested the Thomas Christians that they should send two priests and forty laymen to release him and lead him to Malabar. The news was conveyed to the Archdeacon and he convened a meeting in which it was decided to request Archbishop Garcia to take Ahatallah to Malabar. They informed the Archbishop that they could receive Ahatallah if only he was sent by the Pope. In any case, Garcia would not allow him to enter Malabar. They, therefore, decided that as many as possible should assemble at Mattancherry to meet Ahatallah in Cochin on his way to Goa. When all attempts at reconciliation with Garcia failed, they entered the Church of Our Lady at Mattancherry, and in front of a crucifix with lighted candles they solemnly swore by the Holy Gospel that they would not any longer obey Garcia and the Jesuits.

It took place on 3rd January 1653. It is known as Coonan Cross Oath. According to the tradition in Malabar, a rope was tied to the cross in front of the church and all touched that rope when they made the oath. Actually the Coonan Cross Oath was not against the authority of the Pope. This is clear from a manifesto which they published in public places stating that they rejected Garcia and the Jesuits because the latter disobeyed the Pope and removed the Patriarch (Ahatallah) sent by the Pope. The events that followed the Coonan Cross Oath made things worse. On 5th February 1653, at Edappally, a forged letter granting the Archdeacon all powers of the
Archbishop was read and the people acclaimed him as their Archbishop. On 22\textsuperscript{nd} May of the same year, at Alangatt, Archdeacon Thomas was declared Archbishop by the imposition of the hands of twelve priests on the authority of the forged letter. Then letters were sent to all parishes asking the people to recognize Thomas as the legitimate Bishop.

1.4 Attempts to Reunite the Discontented

Several attempts were made to reunite the discontented, but they were only partially successful. Archbishop Garcia and the Jesuits tried in vain to bring back the discontented by force with the help of the Portuguese authorities in Cochin. Garcia was accused of bribing the local Kings to this effect. Then, at the request of Garcia, the Goan Inquisition also made a futile attempt to reunite the rebels. Since the delegates sent by the Inquisition were suspected of being partial to Garcia and the Jesuits, the mission of the Inquisition failed. Only in 1655 Rome came to know of the deplorable events that took place in Malabar. In order to settle the problem quickly, Rome sent two Apostolic Commissaries, by two different routes to Malabar. Accordingly, the two Apostolic Commissaries, Hyacinth of St. Vincent and Sebastiani (Joseph of St. Mary), accompanied by their companions, left Rome in February 1656, the first group via Lisbon, and the second via Syria and Iraq. Sebastiani reached Malabar on 5\textsuperscript{th} February 1657. By the constant efforts of Sebastiani, many abandoned the Archdeacon and promised obedience to Sebastiani. Sebastiani left for Rome on 7 January 1658 to submit to the Pope a report of his activities in Malabar.
In the meantime, on 10th March 1658, Hyacinth reached Cochin. Since there was a misunderstanding that Hyacinth was partial to Garcia and the Jesuits, his mission was not successful.

1.5 A Triple Jurisdiction among the Thomas Christians

The Coonan Cross Oath and the subsequent events put the Thomas Christians under a triple jurisdiction. The Christians were divided into three groups.

1. Those who remained faithful to Garcia (Padroado),

2. Those who were reluctant to obey Garcia but willing to be loyal to the Catholic Church under a legitimate Bishop appointed by the Pope, and

3. Those who adhered to Archdeacon Thomas and recognized him as Bishop.

1.5.1 The Thomas Christians under Padroado Jurisdiction

The majority of the Thomas Christians took part in the Coonan Cross Oath. Nevertheless, a few remained faithful to Garcia. Garcia died on 3rd December 1659. Since his death, the Padroado See of Cranganore was vacant for forty years. During this period, Bishops were nominated to the See of Cranganore by the King of Portugal, but they did not accept their nomination owing to the political and ecclesiastical conditions of Malabar. On 7th January 1663, the Dutch captured Cochin, the stronghold of the Portuguese and they did not allow the Portuguese Bishops to enter their territories. The Thomas
Christians, on their part, adhered to their oath taken in 1653 against the Jesuits. In spite of these development, the King of Portugal did not want to sacrifice his right of nominating Bishops to Cranganore. Thus, on 5th December 1701, following the nomination by the King of Portugal, Pope Clement XI appointed John Ribeiro, S.J., Archbishop of Cranganore. From then onwards, the Padroado jurisdiction continued.

On 16th December 1782, Joseph Cariattil, an indigenous priest, was appointed Archbishop of Cranganore. But he died in Goa on his way to Malabar from Lisbon. He was succeeded by Thomas Paremakkal and George Sankurickal as administrators of Cranganore. During this period, all the Thomas Christians came under the Padroado jurisdiction. From 1838 till 1864, the Padroado Sees of Cranganore and Cochin were suppressed and the Thomas Christians came under propaganda. After the restoration of the See of Cranganore in 1864, some of them were put under the Padroado. Cranganore was suppressed in 1886 when the Latin hierarchy was erected. Its title was given ad honorem to the Portuguese Padroado Bishop of Daman. When Daman was suppressed, this title was given to the Padroado Archbishop of Goa.

1.5.2 The Thomas Christians under Propaganda Jurisdiction

After having studied the report of Sebastiani about Malabar, the Holy See secretly consecrated him in Rome on 15th December 1659 and appointed him the administrator of the whole Malabar. This appointment was provisional for the spiritual need of those Christians who were unwilling to remain under the Padroado.
When the Dutch captured Cochin in 1663, Sebastiani was asked to leave Malabar. He, thereafter, before his departure, consecrated Alexander Parambil, an indigenous priest, as Vicar Apostolic of Malabar on 1st February 1663 at Kaduturuthy. This election was a silver ray of consolation for the Malabar Church. All the Thomas Christians preferred to be under the new Bishop. Since there was no residential Pardoado Bishop in Cranganore, it was all the more easy for the Christians to be united under one head. At the request of Bishop Alexander, the Propaganda sent the Carmelites to elect a coadjutor Bishop to him. Though they had precise directives to elect a priest of the community as coadjutor, they elected Raphael Figueredo de Salgado, a priest of Portuguese origin, on 3rd March 1677. After the death of Bishop Alexander in 1687, Raphael became the Bishop. But his episcopate was a failure. The Propaganda suspended him on 11 January 1694 and he died on 12th October 1695 before the order of suspension reached him. On 1st April 1698, the Carmelites obtained permission from the Dutch to work in Malabar. Accordingly, on 20th February 1700, Angelus Francis of St. Therese, OCD, was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Malabar. This appointment was also provisional, i.e., until the Archbishop of Cranganore would have personally occupied his See. On 29th June 1704, Agelus retired when Ribeiro, the Archbishop of Cranganore took possession of his See. But, at the request of the Thomas Christians, Rome extended the jurisdiction of Angelus on 13th March 1709. From then onwards, the Propaganda Jurisdiction began to continue side by side with the Pardoado jurisdiction.
In 1840, the title of Archbishop was given to the Vicar Apostolic and in 1845 the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar was divided into three, i.e., Quilon, Verapoly and Mangalore. The Thomas Christians came under the Vicariate Apostolic of Verapoly. In 1877, the Propaganda nominated Msgr. Marcelline Berardi, OCD, as coadjutor to Archbishop Mellano, exclusively for the Thomas Christians. The coadjutor was asked to take a vicar general and four counsellors from among the Thomas Christians, but he did not do it. In 1886, the Latin hierarchy under the Propaganda was erected and the Verapoly Apostolic became an Archdiocese. In 1887, the Thomas Christians (Syro-Malabarians) and the Latins were ritually separated and two Vicariates Apostolic (Trichur and Kottayam) were constituted for the Syro-Malabarians. The Bishops of these Vicariates were Latins, but had pontifically privileged vicars general from the Syro-Malabarians. In 1896, the two Vicariates Apostolic were reorganized into three, Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry, with Syro-Malabarians as Vicars Apostolic. In 1911, a new Vicariate (Kottayam) was erected for the Southist Thomas Christians.

1.5.3 The Thomas Christians under Archdeacon Thomas

The revolt in 1653 was not intended to effect a separation from the Catholic church. It was only a protest against the Jesuits. But unfortunately, it ended in a division. Thomas, who was declared bishop in 1653, governed the discontented till his death on 23rd April 1673. During his time, in 1665 a certain Gregory under the title of Archbishop of Jerusalem arrived in Malabar and tried to infiltrate Jacobite doctrines
among the followers of Thomas. Thomas and his followers did accept the doctrines of Gregory wholeheartedly. The differences they noticed in his doctrines made them suspect that he was not sent by the Pope. Therefore, Gregory could not openly propagate his doctrines. He understood that the people were discontented with the Latin rule and were eager to have their customs and traditions restored. He, therefore, persuaded them to restore and to maintain those traditions that were Latinised. And it was this conviction that Gregory would free them from Latin rule that persuaded the people to accept him in spite of his doctrinal differences. Thomas could not receive valid consecration from Gregory. The successors of Thomas were nominated by hereditary system and all their Bishops were known ‘Thomas’. Only in 1772, their Bishop, Thomas VI, could receive valid consecration. At his consecration, he took the name Dionysius I and with him a new period began among the followers of Archdeacon Thomas. By this time, they became Jacobites and their church gained a stability and autonomy with the valid episcopacy.

1.6 The Present Milieu: The Thomas Christians in the Divided Churches

1.6.1 The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church

The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is an Apostolic Church which traces its origin from St. Thomas. Time has made her grow to one of the biggest oriental churches in the world with 4 Archeparchies and 22 Eparchies governed by 31 Bishops. Each eparchy has its own parishes, semi-parishes, mission stations, religious houses, institutions,
etc.⁴⁴ According to ancient, strong and continuous traditions, St. Thomas landed at Kodungallor (Muziris) in A.D. 52. After preaching and establishing Christian communities in different parts of India, he suffered martyrdom at Mylapore in 72 A.D. Tradition holds that St. Thomas founded seven Churches (communities) in south India; they are at Kodungallor, Niranam, Kollam, Chayal, Kottakavu, Kokkamangalam and Palayoor. From early centuries onwards the Church of St. Thomas Christians came into intimate relationship with the Christian communities in Asia⁴⁵. The St. Thomas Christians shared liturgical, spiritual and other ecclesiastical traditions with the East Syrian Church. At the same time, they kept their distinctive character especially in church administration and socio-cultural and spiritual life.⁴⁶

In the 16th century, the Portuguese came to India and the Latin missionaries, suspecting the St. Thomas Christians as heretics, started Latinizing them and hierarchically they were brought under the rule of the Latin Bishops. This Latin influence led to the gradual disappearance of the identity of the Syro-Malabarians for some time as a separate individual church⁴⁷. The church of the St. Thomas Christians, with the restoration of its basic autonomy in 1896, received a 'new canonical' name, the Syro-Malabar Church.

In 1887, the Syro - Malabarians were ritually separated from the Latins; Rome erected a hierarchy for them only in 1923 with Ernakulam as archdiocese and other three vicariates raised to the status of diocese as suffragan sees. Pope Leo XIII, by an apostolic letter Quod Jam Pridem dated 20th May 1887, created two vicariates for the Syrian
Catholics of India at Trichur and Kottayam. In 1896, they were constituted into three propaganda Vicariates Apostolic of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry. In 1917, the Syrian Christians were placed under the oriental sacred congregation of churches in Rome. The Malabar hierarchy was restored in 1923 with Ernakulam as Metropolis and other units as suffragan eparchies. The eparchy of Palai was set up in 1930 by a division of Changanacherry. In 1953, a new diocese of the Syro-Malabar rite was constituted, the Diocese of Tellicherry, and made suffragan to Ernakulam. Changanacherry was elevated to a Metropolis in 1956 with Kottayam and Palai as its suffragan sees. Again, on 29th July 1956, the Holy See divided the archdiocese of Ernakulam and erected the diocese of Kothamangalam.48

Among the Christian denominations in South India, the Syro-Malabar Catholic Christians still occupy a pre-eminent status. They excel in the fields of socio-economic, political and cultural activities in Kerala.

1.6.2 The Syro-Malankara Church

Right from the beginning of their separation in 1653, the followers of Archdeacon Thomas began their attempts at reunion. These efforts were crowned with success only in 1930, when a few Jacobites under the leadership of Mar Ivanios, Archbishop of Bethany, embraced the Catholic Church. Mar Ivanios, with the consent of Mar Dionysius VI, first made correspondence with the Catholic Patriarch of Antioch. Later, he began to correspond directly with Rome. The Holy See considered the matter favourably and on 4th July 1930, the sacred congregation
for the oriental churches took the final decision with regard to the
reunion of the Jacobites in Malabar. Mar Ivanios, Arch Bishop of
Bethany, succeeded to realise the long-cherished dream of reunion
with the Holy See of Rome. The spiritual apathy into which the Jacobite
community had fallen was a source of great anguish to Mar Ivanios.
He founded at Bethany a religious community with the intention to
reunite with the Catholic Church. The establishment of a ‘Catholicate
in Malankara’ in 1912 made the Orthodox Church an independent
Church. Later on, in 1926, a meeting of the Bishops of the ‘Bishop’s
Party’ authorised Mar Ivanios to carry out a communion with Rome.
In the same year, they submitted a memorandum to the Propaganda
praying that they be admitted into the unity of the Catholic Church
themselves, preserving the ancient rites and rituals, retaining for the
Holy Synod and for the individual Bishops their jurisdiction over all
the Jacobite Syrians that came into reunion, accepting the supremacy
of the Holy See, the Pope being the successor of St. Peter, the chief
of the Apostles of our Lord. With the avowed intention to bring back
the separated Christians within the fold of the Roman Pontiff, the
Apostolic Delegate in India was authorised to complete the formalities
on 20th September 1930, Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilus, Bishop of
Thiruvalla, together with the representatives of their followers, were
received into the Catholic Church before Msgr. Benziger, Bishop of
Quilon. The reunited Bishops were received with their episcopal
dignity and jurisdiction. On 11th June 1932, Pope Pius XII, by the
Apostolic Constitution “Christo Pastorum Principi,” constituted the Syro-
Malankara Hierarchy. Mar Ivanios was a very able person and
nearly a hundred thousand people went over to the Church of Rome, especially from the Orthodox Church since the inauguration of the new rite\textsuperscript{54}. The Holy See acknowledged the reunited group as a distinct community of the faithful. As a community, they practise the Antiochean rite with the Papal approbation. They keep on using the Antiochean liturgy which the Jacobites of Malabar adopted officially in the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. There is tremendous progress in the reunion in 1930.

In Kerala there are various Christian denominations other than the Catholic Church. Most of them are episcopal churches like Jacobites, Marthomites, Protestants, Nestorians and the Evangelical church. Non-episcopal denominations like the Salvation Army, Brethren Mission, Lutheran Mission, Indian Pentecosts, etc., are there in Kerala. We will really be surprised that almost all the churches in the world have got branches here, in addition to several independent churches. Thus, we see the sad spectacle of the once united St. Thomas Christians of Malabar divided into various communities.

\textbf{1.6.3 Jacobite Church}

The origin of the Jacobite Church in Kerala is recent and accidental, but epoch-making. Before the second half of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, there existed no relation between the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch and the Syrian Christians of Malabar\textsuperscript{55}. No doubt, the Liberation struggle in Asia that happened in 1653 at Mattancherry was the root cause of the schism. Until the Synod of Diamper of 1599, the Jacobite Christians
in Malabar remained an integral part of the erstwhile St. Thomas Christian community. It tried to stamp out the Hindu manners and customs, which the Portuguese thought were inimical to Christianity. The Synod of Diamper touched the very foundations of the religion and social life of the St. Thomas Christians.\textsuperscript{56}

The Jacobite Church gained a stability and autonomy with the valid episcopacy in 1772. They followed the Antiochian books with regard to the liturgical functions; as for the other things they followed the disciplinary customs of the Catholic group. Actually, it was the struggle against the Anglicanization policy of the English missionaries that helped considerably the stabilization of the Syrian customs and the Antiochian liturgy. In 1836, in the Synod of Mavelikara, it was decided that the Syrian traditions and liturgy were not at all to be changed or modified.\textsuperscript{57} From 1771 onwards, Mar Thoma VI\textsuperscript{58} or Mar Dionysius I applied several times to Rome for reunion even after having received a valid episcopal consecration\textsuperscript{59}. Finally, on behalf of Mar Dionysius I and his folk, Fr. Joseph Cariattil and Fr. Thomas Parammakkal proceeded to Rome via Lisbon to submit their request in person both to the Padroado and the Propaganda.\textsuperscript{60}

In 1876, the Antiochian Patriarch, Peter III Ignatius, established the Malankara Jacobite Church under his supremacy and supervision. In 1909, the Antiochian Patriarch Abdulla II, visited Malabar and demanded that all the Bishops should acknowledge his supremacy over the temporalities of the church.\textsuperscript{61} This caused a dispute between the Jacobite church in Malabar and the Antiochian Patriarchate with
regard to the nature and extension of the power of the latter over the former. Then the Jacobite Bishop Dionysius VI acknowledged a certain spiritual supremacy, i.e., consecration of Bishops, of the holy chrism and the general supervision over the Jacobite church in Malabar. Due to this dispute, the Jacobite Church in Malabar was divided into two groups. It reached its climax on 31st May 1911, when Patriarch Abdulla excommunicated Mar Dionysius VI and appointed Mar Kuriilos as Metropolitan in the place of Dionysius VI. The excommunicated group tried to secure independence for their church through the institution of a Catholicate. They invited the rival Patriarch, Abdul Messiah, who arrived in Malabar in 1912 and restored the Catholicate. From this time onwards, the Jacobites were explicitly divided into two groups, one acknowledging a certain spiritual supremacy of the Antiochean Patriarch, and the other completely accepting his supremacy both in spiritual and temporal matters.

Several attempts were made to reconcile the two groups. In 1931 Mar Elias, the Antiochean Patriarch, attempted a reconciliation but his sudden death hindered its progress. After having failed in their attempts at reconciliation, in 1934, the Catholicos group formally declared its independence, codifying a new constitution for their church and calling it Orthodox Syrian Church. On 3rd January 1958, the two groups made a compromise and united. But again they were divided. The Catholicos group calls itself now the Orthodox Church of India and the Patriarch’s group is known as the Syrian Jacobite Church or simply the Syrian Orthodox Church.
1.6.4 The Marthomites

In the 19th century, the Anglican influence was prevalent among the Jacobite Church which officially acknowledged the jurisdiction of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch over the Malabar Jacobite Church in order to free them from the Anglicans. But there were some who wanted to reform the Jacobite church on the basis of the Anglican doctrines and practices. They sent a deacon named Mathew to the Jacobite Patriarch, who consecrated him as Mathew Mar Athanasius. Mathew reached Malabar in 1843 and proclaimed himself Bishop of all the Jacobites of Malabar. This was reported to the Patriarch, who sent Mar Kurillos to make an enquiry about Mathew. Since the government was against Mar Kurillos, he had to leave Malabar. In 1875, Patriarch Peter III Ignatius visited Malabar and excommunicated Mathew Mar Athanasius. Then, Mathew and his followers formed a new church. First they were known as Reformed Jacobites and then they assumed the name “Marthomites or Mar Thoma Syrian Church”. In faith, they are much in line with the Protestants.

1.6.5 The Independent Syrian Church of Malabar (Anjoorians)

This church had its origin in 1772 when Mar Gregorious, a Jacobite Bishop, who came to Malabar 1751, consecrated Mar Kurillos without the knowledge and consent of the then Jacobite Bishop, Dionysius I. Mar Kurillos began to govern the Jacobites. But he was expelled with the help of the government. He then escaped to Anjoor and founded an independent church. They follow the West Syrian rite and are now called the Independent Church of Malabar. On 28th August 1977, their Bishop Paulus Mar Philexinos embraced the Catholic faith.
1.6.6 The Church of the East

They had their origin from the Chaldean Bishop, Elias Mellus, who arrived in Malabar in 1874. Some 34 parishes followed him and he fixed his headquarters in Trichur. Mellus was excommunicated and was forced to go back in 1882. He entrusted his followers to Mar Abdisco (Fr. Antony Thondanatt, consecrated by the Nestorian Patriarch). After the death of Mar Abdiso in 1900, the Mellusians had no Bishop till 1945. During his time they were divided into two groups, i.e., the Independents and the Surays. The Independents finally embraced the Catholic Church and the Surays still remain independent, accepting the East Syrian rite as it is practised by the Nestorians. On 3rd December 1961, the Nestorian Patriarch arrived in Malabar and the Surays received him solemnly. After his visit, the Surays were divided into two groups, i.e., the Patriarch's party and the Bishop's party. On 10th January 1964, the Patriarch suspended the then Archbishop, Mar Dharmo. Mar Dharmo returned to his country and appointed Mar Ephrem as the Metropolitan of the Bishop's Party on 27th September 1968. The Patriarch's Party sent a certain Timothey Chundel to the Nestorian Patriarch who consecrated him as Mar Thimotheus. On 23rd January 1972, he returned and began to govern the Patriarch's group.

1.6.7 The St. Thomas Evangelical Church

The more radical reformers of the Mar Thoma Church separated themselves and formed the St. Thomas Evangelical Church in 1961. It accuses the Mar Thoma Church for its deviation from the reformer's
teaching. It claims to be the embodiment of the reform movement as envisaged by Malpan Abraham⁶⁹. This church is noted for its complete Protestant teachings. It follows the principles of ‘Sola Scriptura’ and ‘Sola Fides’.

1.6.8 The Protestant Churches

So far, we have seen the oriental non-catholic denominations of Kerala. As we reach the Mar Thoma Church, we see the increasing acceptance of the Protestant teachings. It reached its zenith in the St. Thomas Evangelical Church which is adamant in its Protestant beliefs and teachings. Apart from these, there are some Protestant churches in Kerala. These churches are the result of the mission work of the European Protestant Missionaries.

1.6.9 The Church of South India

The Protestant Missionaries who preached the gospel in the mission areas felt the need of working together. As a result, the different Protestant churches tried to work together. As a result of this, the Church of South India was formed on 27ᵗʰ September 1947. The member Churches of the C.S.I are the Presbyterian Church, the Congregational Church, the Anglican Church and the Methodists⁷⁰. Though all these churches have their own traditions and teachings, they work together in the C.S.I. The C.S.I. has four dioceses (Mahayidavaka) in Kerala, namely, South Kerala, Central Kerala, North Kerala and East Kerala dioceses. One of the notable aspects of the C.S.I is the acceptance of women priesthood.
1.6.10 Pentecostal Communities

One of the most important ecclesial communities of Kerala is that of the Pentecostals. There are such a lot of these groups that everyday new and new sects are emerging. But all these have certain factors in common. The origin of Pentecostal sects can be seen in the spiritual renewal that took place in the Protestant churches. They believe that once they profess the faith in Jesus Christ and receive the baptism by immersing in the water, they get the gifts of the spirit such as glossalalia, power of healing, etc. There are ever so many groups among the Pentecostals. They all do not have much difference across themselves. Pentecostalism reached Kerala through the sect called Brethren. They claim themselves to be the separated brethren for the Lord and hence the name ‘Brethren’ assumed by them. They are also called the separated ones. The important Pentecostal sects of Kerala are the Assemblies of God, India Full Gospel, Church of God, Indian Pentecostal Church (I.P.C), the Pentecost Mission, Ceylon Pentecostal Mission, Full Gospel Pentecost Church, Sharoan Fellowship, Philadelphia Church of God, Free Pentecostal Church of God, New India Church of God, International Church of God, Independent Assemblies of God, New India Bible Church, the Pentecostal Gospel Church, Full Gospel Assemblies, South India Apostolic Church of God, Soin Group Church of God, World Missionary Evangelism Church, many other such groups. These groups are more interested in working among the Christians. But now they also work among the Harijans.
1.6.11 Other Ecclesial Communities

Besides all these Churches, there are some other so-called ecclesial communities in Kerala. All these cannot be properly called Churches, as they lack the essential element of a Church.

a. The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is an ecclesial community founded by Fr. William Booth, a Methodist priest, in 1865. Helping the poor was the goal of instituting such a movement. It was in 1878 that this movement received the name Salvation Army. It does not have priesthood, sacraments or churches. The leaders of the Salvation Army are called by military titles such as Colonel, Lieutenant, etc. They are the members of God's army. They give emphasis to prayer, songs, witnessing, preaching, philanthropic works, etc. This sect reached Kerala in 1882. Now their centre is Trivandrum. They have branches all over Kerala.

b. The Seventh-Day Adventists

It was in 1914 that the Seventh-Day Adventists reached Kerala under the leadership of preacher called Suvisheshmuttu. Their speciality is that they celebrate the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as Sabbath (Lord's Day) instead of Sunday. They are much interested in running hospitals and educational institutions. The two sections of Kerala Seventh-Day Adventists are the north Kerala section centred in Trissur and the south Kerala section centred in Trivandrum.
c. Yahweh Witnesses

The Yahweh Witnesses is the present name of the so-called ecclesial community founded by one C.T. Russel. This name was given by Rutherford, the successor of Russel. Their main teachings are adult baptism by immersion (usually in a river), belief in Yahweh, denial of the belief in trinity, denial of Jesus’s messiahship, teachings on the end of the world and the millennium etc. They work mainly among the Christians and cause great ideological confusion among them.

Apart from all these, there are certain nominal Christian groups in Kerala, such as Yuyomayam and Prathyaksharakshadaivasabha. Both these are mixtures of Christian and Hindu teachings. They do not have many followers here. Both are decaying in strength and social acceptance.

These are the different churches and ecclesial groups that exist in Kerala. All the activities that are aimed at the unity of churches are to be considered only in such an atmosphere. The various groups also point to the need of giving strong witness to others by manifesting the love and unity of Christ through our lives.

We have seen how the Church of the Thomas Christians, which was one, was divided into different churches. Every division among them was an outcome of a struggle either for liberating themselves from a foreign rule or for constituting themselves under their own indigenous bishops and restoring their ancient traditions. Now, the
whole church has been mobilized in the great cause of union inviting all Christians to reflect their attitude to each other and to break the walls that separate them. Let all the Thomas Christians think of their common origin and heritage, examine the cause of their separation and make an earnest effort towards unity.
Notes and References


3. SOCG 427, ff 118 - 119.


14. ARSI; Goa - Mal, 50, f. 216.


17. APF, SOCG, 191,f. 658.


22. ARSI, Goa 68 I, f. 10z.
23. APF, SOCG 232, f. 121.
26. APF. Acta 24, ff. 80-81.
31. APF, SOCG 232, f 420, ASV, Secr, Brev, 1362 f. 197.
34. APF CP 30, f. 807; ASV Secr. Brev 1883 , f. 25.
35. AGOC 265 a, f 142.
36. APF, CP, 30; ff. 822, 829, Sc (10c) 39, f. 516.
38. AGOC 265 a.f. 199.
41. AGOC 265 a.f. 6.
42. APF, SOCG 429, f. 189.
44. The Directory of the Syro-Malabar Church, Ernakulam, 2004, XV.
45. Ibid., p. xx ii.
46. Ibid., p. xx iii.
47. Ibid., p. xx iii.
50. Margaret Gibbons, Mar Ivanios, p. 12.
51. Memorandum sent to Rome.
52. Malancharuvil Cyril, Syro-Malankara Church, op. cit. p. 131.
53. Ibid., p. 132.
58. At his episcopal ordination in 1772 Mar Thoma had received the name Mar Dionysius. But he also continued to be called Mar Thoma.
63. Ibid., pp. 68-70.