CHAPTER 1

History of Priestly Formation

Introduction

Christian priestly formation began with Jesus Christ and his disciples. The apostles received three years of personal, individual, and non-formal education in ministry from their teacher. Finally, at the Last Supper, he conferred the priesthood of the New Testament on them and commissioned them to go out into the whole world and preach the Good News. After the first Pentecost, the apostles went out and preached the Word of God, established Christian communities, and ordained bishops and priests. The formation of Christian priesthood developed through various stages. The history of the first fifteen centuries can be divided into three stages, and this period is briefly treated in the first part of this chapter:

- Monastic Schools
- Episcopal Schools
- Universities

Christianity was brought to India by St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, and priestly formation first started in Malabar, the southern part of the country from the first century itself. The system followed was Gurukulavasam where a candidate for priesthood stayed with the parish priest or with an elderly priest who gave some instructions in Syriac, mostly based on catechetical principles. This is commonly known as the Malpanate System. The Malpanate system slowly vanished after the arrival of the
Portuguese. The history of the formation of priests in India is treated in the second part of this chapter.

The Portuguese arrived in India in 1498, and their efforts towards colonisation and Christianisation formed an important chapter in the formation of the clergy in India. Credit goes to them for establishing seminaries and recruiting and training a native clergy. Seminaries were started by Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans and Carmelites. The chapter continues through its third and fourth parts, briefly surveying this period.

The Council of Trent (1546-1563) was a milestone in the history of the Church, especially in the renewal and formation programme of the clergy. The establishment of the ‘Congregation for the Propagation of Faith’ in 1622 marked a turning point in the policy of the Popes concerning native clergy. This period is the main consideration of the fifth part of the chapter.

The structure of seminary formation throughout the world for four centuries remained basically the same until the Second Vatican Council (11.10.1962 – 08.12.1965) revolutionised it all over the world, and this revolution challenged, and continues to challenge, formation to a great extent in India also. The last part of this chapter concludes with a brief survey of this period.

India 16th-19th century, an Historico-Canonical Study' by Carlo Merces De Melo, and 'Theological Formation in India' by George M. Anathil have been consulted and quoted.

1.1 Priestly Formation in the Early Church

The history of Christian priesthood began with Jesus Christ and his disciples, the first teacher and the first seminarians. St. Mark narrates this event:

And passing along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the Sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them: “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little further, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. (Mk 1:16-20).

These words constitute a description of the founding of what may be called the Church’s first seminary; it was during the three years that followed this episode that the apostles received from Jesus their education for the priesthood that he conferred on them at the Last Supper.

1.1.1 Priestly Formation in the First Four Centuries

The establishment of the earliest churches is undoubtedly attributed to the apostles. It is very probable that the church of Jerusalem was directly instituted by them,
and this served as a model for others to follow. Every church was supposed to appoint its
own officers because, since every church possessed the gift of the Holy Spirit, it was felt
that the selection of officers should be left to the Spirit. For example, the Holy Spirit,
speaking through the church of Antioch, selected Saul and Barnabas for the mission to
the Gentiles (Acts 13: 2-3). But the apostles were not only possessed by the Holy Spirit to
a pre-eminent degree but were also directly commissioned by the Lord himself to preach
the Gospel and to found churches.

In churches where the wishes of an apostle were known, it is probable that they may be authoritative, and persons selected and
approved by an apostle would be regarded as possessed of similar authority especially when confirmed by the voice of the Holy
Spirit, speaking through the church to which he was appointed. Persons thus selected had in all cases to undergo the rite of
ordination or “laying on of hands” in which all the elders took part and which was regarded certainly by Paul, and universally as
conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit.3

Newman has recorded a few facts and inferences, namely that St. John, besides
having some catechumen, had a number of students whom he familiarly instructed.4 The
Acts of the Apostles furnishes the names of certain other men who were attached to the
apostolic band, the nature of whose work is seen, for example, in Paul’s selection of
Timothy as the apostle wished to go forth with him. The account continues to relate: “As
they passed through the cities, they delivered to the brethren for their observance the

3 John Tracy Ellis ed. A Short History of Seminary Education: The Apostolic Age to Trent. Seminary

decisions arrived at by the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem” (Acts 16: 4). That strictures were exercised for the selection of candidates for the ministry is known from Paul’s directive to Timothy: “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands”, and he then gave Timothy several other points to guide him in selecting candidates when he said: “The sins of some men are conspicuous, pointing to judgment, but the sins of others appear later.” (1 Tim 5: 22-24).

We further find that at the time of the Apostles there were ‘presbyters’ in Jerusalem (Acts 14: 23) and in the Pauline communities (1 Tim 4:14), but there is no clear knowledge about their function.

Towards the close of the second century, we find a council of presbyters and a group of deacons to assist a bishop, the successor to an apostle in Christian communities. The presbyters were counselors to the bishop and assisted him in the governance of Christian communities. Deacons took care of the communities’ goods, and provided for the needs of the poor, orphans and widows. Later, when the gospel spread especially into rural areas, the presbyters became the bishop’s representatives to function in liturgical services.⁵

In the first three centuries, presbyters were spoken of in plural and never in the singular; they constituted a college. They were Christians chosen from among more mature members, even in terms of age, and ordained for service in the community. As the

first letter of Peter says, presbyters should be exemplary Christians, models of life for the faithful: "Be examples to the flock with all your heart." (1 Pet. 5:3).

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, who succeeded Peter as the Bishop of Antioch and was martyred at Rome about A.D. 107, handed down a very vivid picture of the life of the clergy in this period. His letter reveals that the chief responsibility of pastors is the preservation of unity in the community. He wrote to the Ephesians:

You should always be of one mind with your bishop. This is something that you always do, because your presbyterate is a credit to its name and a credit to God. It is in harmony with the bishop like the strings of a harp. That is why the symphony of your thoughts and the symphony of your love sing the praise of Jesus Christ...Continue in your flawless unity so as to remain united always to God.⁶

In the Letters of St. Ignatius, we find the form of a monarchical episcopate, namely, one overseer (episcopus) as head of each local community, surrounded by elders (presbuteroi) and deacons.

Charles Davis writes that only in the second century the term 'priestly' was applied in a more restricted sense to Christian community as embracing all its members: "It was only at the turn of the second century that the priestly vocabulary was applied in a more restricted sense to Christian ministers and the Christian ministry understood as a priestly class with a special priesthood not possessed by other Christians."⁷

⁶ Ibid., p. 9.
Davis includes ministerial priesthood in the early church among the charismatic gifts. The general organization was fluid, with a diversity of functions, each member being considered as having his gift for the building up of the community. In the first letter of Paul to Corinthians chapter two, we find listed among those God appointed in the Church: apostles, prophets, teachers, and workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators and speakers in tongues. The structure based on elders-presbuteroi, attributed to Paul in Acts, has not made its appearance in the Pauline Letters, David thinks. The problem of retaining the apostolic identity and continuity after the passing of the apostles was part of the solution it adopted to establish an orderly succession to their ministry, he argues. Gradually, the training of clergy became more personal and practical. They were attached to the service of a particular church and there, by assisting the bishop and presbyters, they gradually learned to look after the church and to do its ministrations. In some places there already existed the practice of gathering prospective candidates around the bishop, all living together in the Episcopal dwelling, like the *vita communis* of the clergy of the church of Vercelli under bishop Eusebius.

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1.1.2 Priestly Formation from St. Augustine to the Council of Trent

During the pre-Tridentine period, there were neither specific institutions nor any systematic formation programmes for priests, as we know them today. Each bishop chose a small group of young men from his diocese to live with him as collaborators and successors. "There was no common method or criterion for discerning vocations and for preparing the candidates adequately for their future life and ministry."¹¹ Anthony Vieban, S. S., wrote: "Before the time of St. Augustine (354-430) no trace can be found of any special institutions for the education of the clergy."¹²

1.1.3 Episcopal Schools

Augustine became a bishop in A.D. 396 and his episcopal residence at Hippo was the school for superiors of a great many monastic houses, as well as for many diocesan bishops. One of his biographers wrote about the moral uplift that followed the great bishop's carefully supervised education of the clergy:

The saint left behind him a seedbed of sanctity and what was really the first seminary for Priests. It was an imperfect thing, but its essential features were to be repeated through the Ages. Augustine could not know what Genseric and Huineric had in store for the African clergy, but though their churches were destroyed their spirit survived and has continued to be effective to this day.¹³


Another biographer, Possidius, speaks of the establishment of a sort of convent where he lived, together with his clergy, a life of prayer, discipline and study. He had imposed the obligation of passing a certain period of discipline and study as a condition necessary for ordination. The practice was not widespread and not all bishops were solicitous for the welfare of their clerics as we see in the papal interventions by Gelasius, Leo I, Gregory I, etc., admonishing bishops to take the training of clerics seriously. The practice of assigning a responsible person to undertake the formation of clerics under the direction of the bishop began around this time. The Second Council of Toledo (circa 527 or 531) speaks of entrusting the formation of clerics to a praepositus, and the Fourth (633), of the necessity of having the candidates for Holy Orders to live together so that they might be trained together. Some monasteries were also engaged in the formation of clerics, like the monastery of Lerins, and a number of bishops copied this model in their own dioceses.

1.1.4 Monastic Schools

During the age of persecution, there developed among Christians, pastors and faithful, a mystique of martyrdom that fostered and evangelic lifestyle. Persecutions ended with the Edict of Constantine in A.D. 313, and Christianity became the state

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religion. Christian life in many communities lost its original fervor and many lay people reacted by resolving to live the gospel to the letter.  

Antony, an Egyptian peasant, fled alone into the desert around A. D. 270, and returned in A. D. 305 as a great spiritual master. Pachomius, another Egyptian, founded a community of ascetics in the desert near the Nile, which gave birth to a new monastic ways of life. Most monks after this either lived near each other in loosely knit villages or joined to live a life with certain common times of prayer, worship and labour. They spent most of their time in prayer, some in work, and usually always in silence. St. Martin of Tours founded a monastery in Gaul (France) in A. D. 371, and is often called the Father of Western Monasticism.

St. Benedict founded a monastic community at Monte Casino in Italy in A. D. 529, which would soon change the face of Europe. Based on a sane policy of “work and pray” and monks staying in one place, the monasteries of St. Benedict became places where Roman and Western culture was preserved and where the gospel was spread. Under Pope Gregory I (the Great), the Benedictines became a great missionary force.

Alfred Lapple writes on the influence and achievements of the Benedictine Monasticism:

\[18\text{cf. Pepe. op. cit., p. 9.}\]

\[16\text{Alan Schareck. The Compact History of the Catholic Church, (Bombay: 1997) p. 33.}\]

\[20\text{Ibid. pp. 39-40.}\]
The achievements of the Benedictine monks can be summarized by three symbols: the Cross (they were messengers of the Christian faith), the book (pioneers and preservers of Western culture), and plow (promoters of civilization and new settlements). According to the English historian Edward Gibson, a single Benedictine monastery may have done more for the cause of knowledge than Oxford and Cambridge combined.

St. Gregory was a Benedictine monk before he became Pope. From his own experience as a special envoy to Constantinople and later as Pope in Rome, he knew that a pastor of souls ought to live Christian spirituality in an exemplary fashion. He also knew that important pastoral duties, can distract one from union with God. Gregory offered his own experience to all those whom God called to the pastoral ministry. He wrote for them the *Pastoral Rule*, which became for the diocesan priests of the West what the Benedictine rule was for the monk. “St. Leander, bishop of Seville, kissed his copy of the rule when it arrived from Gregory personally, and promoted the book all over Spain. Emperor Mauritius had it translated into Greek by Anastasius, the patriarch of Antioch, who became its chief promoter in the East.” The influence of the Rule of Gregory continued throughout the Middle Ages.

St. Gregory the Great, Pope from A. D. 590 to 604, laid the foundation for the Church in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. His theological and spiritual writings shaped the thought of the Middle Ages. Towards the end of the ninth century, Islam was suppressing the Church in the East, and political instability and weak Popes stifled the


22 Enrico, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
Western Church. "Clergy were controlled by secular rulers and lapsed into illiteracy and unfaithfulness to their vow of celibacy. Even most of the monasteries had lost their fervor and become worldly or corrupt." 23

An important chapter of the Church was opened with the renewal of the monastic life, which began with the founding of a new monastery at Cluny in France in A. D. 910. This Benedictine monastery set aside certain monks for full-time prayer. Silence was observed by all except for chanting the Divine Office. The monastery was so effective that many bishops and princes invited the monks at Cluny to form daughter houses in their dioceses (in the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, England and Germany). The reform of Cluny led to the renewal of other monasteries and to the founding of new monastic orders, such as the Camaldolense by St. Romuald and the Carthusians by St. Bruno. 24 This renewal in the monasteries and cathedral schools brought new life to the Church.

The 11th and 12th centuries were clouded by schisms, crusades and heresies after which brought the Church to its 'sinful and human' form, which is not a subject of study here.

The 12th century marked the beginning of 'Scholastic theology' or the theology of the schools. Theologians wanted to form a synthesis using the teaching of the Bible, the

23 cf. Lapple. op. cit., p. 47.
24 cf. Ibid. p. 48.
early Fathers of the Church, and philosophy. The leading theologian of this time was St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), known as the Father of Scholasticism.  

1.1.5 Universities

We find two important types of institutions for clerical formation that existed in the first few centuries: the episcopal school and the monastic school. During the period after the death of St. Benedict around 547 to the opening of the Roman College in 1551, clerical education underwent a number of changes.

The 13th century saw the pinnacle of the thought and culture of the Middle Ages. Around 1170, a new centre of higher learning emerged—the university. It began as a union or guild of scholars, which first attracted members of the clergy and were financially supported by the Church. The first two great universities were founded at Paris (specialising in theology) and Bologna (law), but soon Oxford (1200), Cambridge (1209), Naples (1224), Salamanca (1220) and others followed. Theology was called the 'queen of the sciences' and it was studied mainly through a critical reading of the sacred texts. The great theologians of this period came from the ranks of the new Mendicant orders: a Franciscan, Bonaventure (1217-74) and two Dominicans, Albert the Great (1200-80) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74).

The emergence of universities in Europe was an important period in the history of the formation of the clergy. "Universities became the centres of learning but few

\[25\text{cf. Ibid. p. 55.}\]

\[26\text{cf. Ibid., p 61.}\]

\[27\text{cf. John Tracy Ellis. op. cit. p. 5.}\]
clerics were able to pursue their studies there. They did not offer the candidates any spiritual formation nor prepared them for ministry. The Third (1179) and Fourth (1215) Lateran Councils legislated regarding this. But, Padinjarekkuttu thinks it did not produce the desired result: "It was a common knowledge that clerical formation lacked a solid and well balanced intellectual and moral foundation in the pre-Reformation period."

There was an urgent need for a reform of the Church, which was undergoing one of its worst periods in its history. The following report summarizes the poor state of affairs:

The clergy (priests) and deacons of the Catholic Church suffered from lack of education and widespread corruption. Many were poor and worldly, and lived with women in violation of the Church's law of celibacy. Even the Mendicant orders had largely lost their fervour and were the brunt of the satire of the humanists for rivalling thieves and legitimate beggars in their constant quest for money.

Another report gives a similar picture of the pathetic state of affairs of the formation of the clergy before the Council of Trent (1563):

Before the council of Trent, clergy morale and morality were at low ebb. They were morally deficient, intellectually unqualified and professionally incompetent. The Church was being torn apart

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29 cf. Ibid., p.85.

30 Lapple, op. cit., p. 69.
of schism and separation. Priests were ordained with little or no theology and spiritual training. Candidates to the priesthood were gathered and taught in a priest’s house by an individual. There was no common method for discerning vocations and preparing candidates for their role as priests.\footnote{Peter D'Cruz. "Priestly Formation." Indian Theological Studies". Vol. XL.1 no. 3-4 (Bangalore: 2004). 272.}

The Catholic Reformation was ignited by the founding of new religious orders and groups, as well as the renewal of existing orders. The need of the hour was for a holy, zealous and celibate clergy to lead the Church in its reform. The religious order that led the way was the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola in 1534 and recognized by the Pope in 1539.\footnote{cf. Lapple. \textit{op. cit.}, p. 77.} Suffice it to state here that the Society of Jesus with its illustrious and saintly sons contributed much to reform the Catholic education in the centuries that followed.

1.2 Priestly Formation in India before the Council of Trent (1546-63)

It is generally accepted and agreed that Christianity was brought to India by St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, and he established Christian communities there. There are different opinions about the continuance of a hierarchy and clergy in India after the death of the apostle. It is also accepted that the formation of the native clergy there was in the traditional Hindu form of training known as \textit{Gurukulavasam}—disciples living with, and being trained under, an experienced senior teacher. The system known as \textit{Malpanate} continued till the advent of the Portuguese towards the close of the
15th century. Misunderstanding between the Portuguese and the native clergy, apparent doctrinal differences and the Latinisation policy of the Portuguese finally led to the Synod of Diamper, which divided the Christian community.

1.2.1 Christianity in India

The introduction of Christianity into Malabar and the subsequent history of the Christian Church, like the early history of the Jews, is shrouded in obscurity, and even the available information, to a great extent, is based on the legendary and disputable traditions of the apostle Thomas. According to the traditions, he introduced Christianity and established the Church in Malabar in the year 52. He arrived in Cranganore, a place that in those days was a flourishing seaport called by the ancient geographers as Mouziri (Muyiri Kotta). He founded seven churches on the Malabar Coast, viz., Malankara, Kottakayil, Kokkamangalam, Niranam, Chayil, Quilon and Palur, the sixth being in Travancore and Cochin and the seventh in Chavakad in South Malabar. He also founded eight bishoprics, of which Malabar was one. He is said to have laboured for thirty years in these parts and converted the people of all castes, among whom were the Namboodiris of thirty-two families. Prominent among them were Sankarapuri, Palamattam, Kalikavingal, Koikara, Madapoor, Vyampilli, Muttdal and Kottakara. Of these, the first two families were ordained and set apart for sacred orders and bishops. Priesthood has been practically hereditary in the two families, Sankarapuri and Palamattam, for several centuries with the inheritance in the female line.

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34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.
While most authors agree on the existence of the Christian community founded by Apostle Thomas the Apostle, opinions vary on the continuance of the hierarchy and priestly formation in Malabar. Some of these authors are briefly studied.

L. K Anantha Krishna Ayyar, quoting *The Travancore State Manual*, gives the following account regarding the continuance of priesthood after the death of the Apostle:

Traditions regarding the continuance of the priesthood after the death of the apostle are conflicting. According to one account, after the death of priests ordained by the Apostle, the church had only laymen and no sacrament except baptism. According to another, presbyter laid hands on presbyter and so continued the priestly office. It is also said by one Latin writer that the Apostle established eight archbishoprics, of which Malabar was one.36

Mathias Mundadan argues that the Malabar Church “entered into relation with the Chaldean Church in the middle of the 4th century, and through that these relations were further reinforced at the end of the 8th century.”37 He continues that St. Thomas Christians, before the arrival of the Portuguese, “were more or less Chaldean in character, for the Chaldean prelates governed them; they shared the theological, juridical and liturgical traditions of the Chaldean Church....”38 Quoting Tisserant-Hambaye, he further states: “Actually we have no record which testifies to the existence of an indigenous

36Ibid., p. 4.
38Ibid. p. x.
hierarchy, or even of indigenous bishops in the Malabar Church before the 17th century."

1.2.2 Priestly Formation in India in the Early Centuries

George. M. Anathil writes: "From the earliest times, India had a native clergy of her own on the Malabar Coast and the clergy belonged to the Syrian Rite. The history of the priestly formation in India therefore starts with Syrian clergy, though they may have been few in number and their training may have been rather rudimentary."

Ananthakrishna Ayyar gives the following account of the clergy of Syrian Christians before the Synod of Diamper (1599):

It has been the custom among the Syrian Christians to ordain boys as priests without a proper examination of their lives and manners, and that all the inferior orders are conferred upon them in one day. The Synod commanded that one to be ordained sub-deacon were to be made neither under twenty-two nor deacon under twenty-three nor priest under twenty-five. All those who were ordained should understand Latin and Cyriac. Priests simonically ordained were absolved by the Synod, and no leprous priests were allowed to officiate. The Athanasian Creed translated into Cyriac was to be used. The Synod directed the priests to be punctual in their attendance and be devout in their department at Church. As for the

\[\textit{Ibid.}, \ p. 28.\]

\[\textit{Anathil G. M., Theological Formation in India ( Poona: Pontifical Athenaeum,1966) p. 1.}\]
growth of their beards, they were given the liberty to do, as they liked.41

1.2.3 The Malpanate System

The system followed by the Syrian Church in Malabar for the formation of their clergy is known as the “Malpanate” which corresponds rather closely to the Hindu Gurukulavasam. An elderly and experienced priest gathered around himself some young prospective candidates for priesthood and trained them in all subjects which he considered necessary or useful for their office. There is a report about such a malpanate in Angamali to illustrate this: “For there is a Cathanar (priest) who is like a father among them and in him they had great confidence on account of his old age and learning. It is 50 years he is teaching the Sacred Scripture and has many disciples from all parts of Malabar.”42 The subjects taught in such a school were Syriac, Scripture and Liturgy.

Cardinal Tisserant, an authority on Syrian Christians of Malabar writes on the Malpanate system thus:

All these seminaries had never educated more than a very small portion of the clergy. Most of the priests were given Orders after going through a very jejune and elementary training with a priest reputed for his learning, called Malpan (from the Syrian Malpana i.e., master or professor). The Malpan taught them to read Syriac, gave them a few practical notions about liturgy, together with the elements of dogmatic and moral theology. This kind of formation

41 Ayyar, op. cit., p. 163.

42 Anathil, op. cit. p. 9.
was all the more elementary, for no printed manual, in Syriac or Malayalam was available at the time.\textsuperscript{43}

There were about 20 such Malpanates. The main ones were those of Angamali, Poonjar, Palai, Pallipuram, Ollur, Karakunnam, Kuthyathodu, Chathanadu, Nagapuzha, Vadayar, Poothotta, Changanacherry and Mailacomb.\textsuperscript{44} Anathil makes the following evaluation of the Malpanate system:

The Malpanate system, being the original form of the training among the Syrian Christians in Malabar, was deeply rooted in the consciousness of the community. It had also a close affinity to the Guru system of the surrounding Hindu majority. Therefore, even after ecclesiastical legislation had prescribed the seminary system as the only legitimate form of theological training, the Malpanate system did not disappear. For two and a half centuries after the Synod of Diamper such Malpanates continued to appear and disappear all over Malabar. The system developed from the catechetical schools of the early Christian era such as that of Alexandria (A. D. 180), Antioch (A. D. 290) and Edessa (A. D. 363) which later on spread rapidly in the East as well as in the West.\textsuperscript{45}

Isaac Padinjarekkuttu, writing about “Priestly Formation” gives a picture of the St. Thomas Christians’ formation of their clergy:

\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{44} cf. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{45} Anathil, \textit{op.cit.} p.29.
Ordination to the priesthood took place in two stages. The first stage was when they were made *samsans*, when Orders up to the diaconate were conferred. The second stage was when they were made *cathenars* or priests. In selecting candidates age does not seem to have played any major role. Training was done under the care of a *Malpan* (teacher), an elderly and learned priest. Under his instruction, the candidate learned to read Syriac and to perform the various functions attached to their office, like saying the mass on certain days, reciting the divine office, performing marriages, funerals and such family functions as the annual feasts of deceased relatives, the first rice feeding of a child, etc. The young clerics studied for a parish and not for a diocese, and the community was responsible for their training. There was no fixed duration for training. After having been recommended by the *Malpan* the *palliyyogam* (parish assembly) and the archdeacons, they were ordained by the bishops. The recommendation (*deshakuri*) gave the assurance that after ordination he would serve that parish and that the parish would be responsible for his upkeep.⁴⁶

Padinjarekkuttu also gives us a picture of the unique structure of the Church in Malabar before the Portuguese period:

The Patriarch of Babylon or Persia was its spiritual head, who ordained bishops for India. They celebrated the liturgy in the Syriac language, using the East-Syrian rite. The archdeacon was a native of India and for all practical purposes the head of the Church in India. The clergy were almost totally indigenous and local; though there may have been some East-Syrian priests also

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⁴⁶ Padinjarekkuttu. *op. cit.*, pp. 61-98.
working in India. The clergy were plentiful and attached to each Church."7

1.2.4 The Portuguese Period

We have seen that Christianity in India in the first fifteen centuries was confined mainly to Malabar and the priests there had a special system of formation known as Malpanate. With the arrival of the Portuguese in India in 1498, the formation of priests entered a new chapter. We shall briefly survey the progress of the two centuries that followed: "The first attempt to train Indian priests was made by Albuquerque, the architect of the Portuguese empire in the East, himself. In 1514 he sent an Indian, Antonio de Costa to Portugal in order to be trained there as a preacher, to learn what belongs to the Faith and how to preach the Faith."48

In 1518, Pope Leo X by the Bull *Vidimus quae Super* granted an important privilege to the King of Portugal—the permission to ordain coloured candidates who had come to Portugal, giving at the same time dispensation from the ecclesiastical impediments resulting from their former pagan background. In 1537, the Sacred Penitentiary granted the Bishop of Goa the faculty of conferring Holy Orders on any baptised candidate, whether newly converted to the Faith or of Christian descent, of his own diocese or of another diocese, secular or religious, provided the candidate was fit

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7 Ibid., p. 87.

and in case of a secular, provided that he had the necessary title. However, throughout the first four decades there was no organized attempt to train native priests.\textsuperscript{49}

The year 1540 is one of the most important dates in the history of theological formation, marking the beginning of modern seminary training in India.\textsuperscript{50} In this year, independently of each other and at two different places, two attempts were made, both by the Franciscans, to establish “colleges” for the training of the native clergy. The first attempt to establish a training centre for native priests in India was made in 1540 in Goa, the capital of the Portuguese empire in the East. The second attempt was made in Malabar to give adequate and up-to-date seminary training to the Syrian clergy. Frey Vincente, a Franciscan, founded a seminary-college at Cranganore in 1540 or 1541.\textsuperscript{51}

According to Mathias Mundadan, Vincente’s name became immortal for all times for founding this college for the formation of the children of Thomas Christians.\textsuperscript{52} Many felt the need for an organised training for the clergy among the Christians of St. Thomas. The formation that many of the native priests received at this time was rudimentary and inadequate. The community, however, was quite content with their priests who looked after their ordinary spiritual needs.

\textsuperscript{49}cf. \textit{Ibid.}


\textsuperscript{51}cf. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{52}Mundadan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 128.
St. Francis Xavier wrote in 1549 that the college had hundred students, all sons of St. Thomas Christians. From the Portuguese point of view, the training of a native clergy in the spirit of the Latin Church was necessary for winning over the conservative Thomas Christians. It must have been with this purpose in mind that some students had already been sent to Portugal for training before 1540.

Writing about the training imparted in this seminary, Mundadan gives a detailed picture: "There was no regard or provision for native culture or language, the books made available was only of Latin culture and the priests ordained from here seem to have learned only Latin. Quoting Wicki, Mundadan gives the timetable followed here. They were divided into two groups: one for grammar students and the other for those in sacred orders."^54

53 cf. Anathil, op. cit., p.15.
54 cf. Mundadan, op. cit., pp. 139-140: The boys, at least some of them, had to rise up very early in the morning and spend some time in study. At daybreak the canonical hours were said; namely the prima, teria, sexta and nona and all who had sacred orders took part.... The office over, it was time for the community Mass, which was heard by all. After the Mass the students of grammar went to their lessons and the others either went to school or engaged themselves in private reading and writing. The work continued till 11 o'clock when it was time for meals.... Then all proceeded to the refectory and after the blessing ate their food while listening to some spiritual reading. The meals over, grace was said and all went to the church...in the church, the office of the dead was said in this order; on Sunday, the vespers; on Monday, the first nocturn; on Tuesday and Wednesday, the second and third nocturns respectively; on Thursday, the lauds; on Friday, the penitential psalms; on Saturday, the "the canticum grao" and this for the king and all the benefactors. After the office they went to make their ablutions and then they were free either to sleep for an hour or to study.... At two in the afternoon the bell was rung for vespers, and when this was over the boys went out to beg alms. At four, the compline was said; and then came the time for physical exercise. For this they went to the garden where there were three hermitages and their anchorites. The boys entered these in turn. At these hermitages they said prayers for the whole Christian world.
Supper followed; and when it was over prayers were said and a procession in honor of Our Lady wended its way to the hermitage of her name. Then all were occupied with studies for some hours till the bell rang for sleep (as a rule at 8 or 9 p. m.).
There were other seminaries also that need special mention: the Seminary of Angamali, the seminary of Vaipicota and the seminary of Ambazhakad, all under the administration of Jesuits. The Jesuits directed a college or seminary for the Saint Thomas Christians at Vaipicota, only a few miles away from Cranganore around 1581. The basic training system was very much like in the West. Latin was taught but it is significant that humanities and cases of conscience, rudimentary exposition of Catholic dogmas and necessary training in liturgy were introduced. This seminary was closed down in 1652.

After the Dutch had conquered Cochin and its surroundings in 1663, a new training centre first for the secular Syrian clergy and later also for the Jesuit scholastics was opened at Ambazhakad outside the reach of the Dutch. Here the seminary for the Syrians was separate from that of the Jesuit scholastics, though the rector was the same. Towards 1670, about 50 Syrian clerics were studying there. The number remained more or less constant. During the existence of this seminary, the Jesuits trained an average of 40 Syrian clerics every three or four years. In the course of years, the seminary of Ambazhakad became a famous centre of linguistic studies. Sanskrit, Tamil, Malayalam and Syriac were taught there with great success. A good printing press for all these languages was also established there. Adrian Moens, Governor of the Dutch

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55 The Jesuit house of Vaipicotta was found in 1577. A new residence was added in 1581, which soon developed into a seminary. Cf. Anathil, op. cit., p. 18.

56 cf. Ibid., op. cit., 19

57 cf. Anathil. op. cit., p. 25.

58 cf. Ibid.

59 cf. Ibid.
Company wrote in his memorandum on 18 April 1781 that the "Jesuits in Ambelacatte teach the Malabar youths all sciences and languages for nothing; so that just about all native priests are imbued with their principles." The seminary was destroyed towards the end of the 18th century, probably in 1790 during the raid of Tipu Sultan.

From a report by Cardinal Gesualdo to the Pope (December 1599), we gather information about a seminary conducted by the Jesuits at Angamali:

There is a seminary which is under the fathers of the Society of Jesus, and there are some fifty or sixty from the descendants of those who had received the true faith from St. Thomas the Apostle, in humanities, Latin and Syriac and also in questions of conscience, in the rudiments of Catholic faith and in the rituals of the Church, and from the said seminary many have gone out very satisfactorily instructed and promoted to the sacred order of presbyterate.

Besides the above mentioned seminaries, other seminaries were also founded: The Dominican missionary Francis Donati founded a seminary at Kaduthuruthy in 1624 and it was accepted by the community since the seminary tried to preserve the traditions of the community. But it disappeared with the death of its founder.

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60 Ibid., 26
61 cf. Ibid.
62 cf. Ibid.
In 1682, the Carmelite missionaries started a seminary in Verapoly. In 1767, a seminary was started in Alangat for the Syrians. In 1833, the Syrian Carmelites started a seminary in Mannanam. Four other seminaries were started for the Syrians, at Mannanam, Puthenpally, Vazhakulam and Elthuruth. In 1866, a new seminary was started at Mangalapuzha under the Padroado. In 1932, the seminary at Puthenpally was transferred to Mangalapuzha and was opened to all the three Rites. A seminary exclusively for St. Thomas Christians was founded in Vadavathoor near Kottayam in 1962. In 1977, the Magalapuzha seminary was divided between the Syrians and Latins.63

1.2.5 Seminary of Santa Fe

The task of establishing the Church in a non-Christian country needed constant efforts and an abundant supply of men specially set apart for that mission and charged with that mandate, namely priests and lay missionaries. Every contingent of soldiers or officials that sailed from Portugal to India was accompanied by a group of ministers of the gospel, destined to work also among the non-believers. These missionaries, however numerous they were, could not be sufficient for the huge task of preaching the gospel to the vast areas in India. Moreover, it was the constant practice of the Church to recruit and train native vocations. The Portuguese saw this need and became promoters of the native clergy in India by establishing seminaries.64

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64 Seminary: In ecclesiastical circles, a term designating a special type of school dedicated to the spiritual, moral, and intellectual formation of the clergy. It is derived from the Latin word seminarium, which was commonly used to describe a place where young seedlings were prepared for eventual transplantation. The first official use of the word to describe institutions of clerical training dates back to Council of Trent (sess. 23. c. 18) which did not invent the term but accepted it from some of the writings of the period, by men such as Cardinal Fischer and St. Ignatius of Loyola. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIII. (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966) p. 72.
Twenty years after the arrival of Vasco da Gama in India in 1498, Pope Leo X, through the Bull of *Exponi nobis* authorized the Head Chaplain of the King of Portugal to admit to the Holy Orders Ethiopian, African and Indian candidates residing in Portugal.65

In 1537, the Sacred Penitentiary, through its rescript *Sedis Apostolicae Indefessa* dated April 24, granted to the Bishop of Goa the faculty of conferring the Holy Orders on any baptized candidate - whether newly converted to the Faith or to Christian descent, secular or regular, of his own diocese or of another diocese—provided he was fit and, in the case of a secular, provided he had the necessary “title”. The age required was 16 years for the subdiaconate, 18 for the deaconate and 23 for the priesthood.66

In 1541, two clerics, Fr. Diego da Borba and Fr. Miguel, conceived the idea of founding a pious association of confraternity. The main objectives of this confraternity were to promote the conversion of the neighbouring non-Christians to the Church and to give assistance to the new converts. The statutes were drawn up and promulgated in the Cathedral Church on 24th April 1541. The association was given the title of *Confraria da Santa Fe*, and the 25th of January, the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, was fixed as its feast day.67

Not long after the foundation of the *Confraria*, a major project took shape in the minds of the members of this pious association: the foundation of a special college (to be

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later known as the Seminary of Santa Fe, or St. Paul's College) in which suitable and promising young men from different nations of the East could be gathered and trained for priesthood and missionary life.  

St. Francis Xavier who landed in Goa on 6th May 1542 became a great friend of the two founders of the college and was their guest for some days. In one of his several letters he wrote: “Over here we trust in God our Lord that, before many years, from this college will come out men who will spread much in these countries the faith of Jesus Christ and increase the boundaries of (our) holy mother the Church.

In 1548, the seminary (college) received its first rector in the person of Fr. Antonio Gomes, S.J., who was specially sent from Portugal for this post since “besides Francis Xavier there were no able Jesuits in India.” The new rector took the University of Paris as his role model for the intellectual formation of students in the college. As for the ascetical formation, he wanted to remodel it according to the Jesuit seminary of Coimbra. Such hasty reforms brought disastrous results. Most of the students ran away and the remaining sent away.

In 1551, the college was formally entrusted to the Society of Jesus and thereafter the whole intellectual and spiritual formation as well as the administration was taken over

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68 cf. Ibid. p.70.

69 cf. Ibid., 71.

70 cf. Ibid.

71 Anathil, op. cit., p.34.

72 cf. Ibid., p. 35.
by the Jesuits. The students of the college were of different races and castes. In 1557, there were 15 Portuguese, 9 Portuguese born in India, 18 mestizos, (persons of mixed blood) 40 Canarese (Goans), 9 from Malabar, one African (son of a chieftain), 5 Bengalis, 2 from Pegu, 4 Kaffers, 2 from Gujarat, one from Abissynia, one from Madagascar, one from Armenia, 6 Moors, one Maratha, 4 from Java, 6 Chinese and 9 so called “slaves”. In 1558, the first Goan priest of the college, Fr. Andre Vaz, was ordained. The college existed till the Jesuits were suppressed in India in 1759.

1.2.6 Synod of Diamper

The Synod of Diamper or Udayamperur was a dark chapter in the history of Christianity in India, especially in Malabar. It brought the rivalries that were going on between the Portuguese and the natives to a breaking point and culminated in the division of the church with the ‘Coonan Cross Conclave’ at Mattanchery, near Cochin in 1653. The synod, presided over by Alex-de-Menezes, Archbishop of Goa was held on Sunday, 20th June 1599, the third Sunday after Whitsuntide. It came to an end after a session of six days on 26th June 1599.

The causes that led to the Synod may be summarized as follows: The Portuguese suspected Syrian Christians of being tainted with the Nestorian heresy. So they attempted to wean them from the Syro-Chaldean Liturgy that they followed and to make them

\( ^{73}\) cf. Ibid.

\( ^{74}\) cf. Ibid.

\( ^{75}\) cf. Ayyar. op. cit., pp. 26-31
embrace the Latin Rite. Bitter feuds broke out on this score between the Syrian Christians and the Portuguese authorities of Goa.

Dogmatic questions were hardly touched upon at the Synod. It concentrated more on the legal questions concerning liturgical rites and ecclesiastical discipline. The Syro-Malabar Rite was retained, but subjected to many of the changes finalised at Trent. Sacerdotal celibacy, sacramental confession and Sunday observances made it very much akin to the Latin Rite. But the Syro-Malabar Church was in such a sorry state of affairs that one could not blame the Archbishop of Goa for interfering. In this intervention the Jesuits were his chief support. But in spite of their efforts, there seemed to lack any understanding among the Indian Christians. This gave rise to much friction and finally led to the schism in 1653.76

Anathil gives the following assessment on the Synod: The Synod was an important chapter in the history of the Church in India, especially for the formation of the clergy. It gave official sanction for the Latinization of the seminary formation, which was going on for nearly half a century. At the same time it brought about a number of badly needed reforms both for the Syrian community as a whole as well as for the training of the clergy.77

The Synod also chalked out a programme for the future training of the Syrian clergy in India. The Syrian clergy was considered as an appendix to the Latin clergy and,

77cf. Anathil. op. cit., p. 23.
therefore, their training as a corollary to the Latin training. The salient features of the training programme can be summarized as follows:

1) The theological training even for the Syrian clergy was based on the principle of the Tridentine Council.78

2) It was therefore decreed that in conformity with the general laws of the Church the private formation of the candidates to the priesthood until then in use, especially in the Malpanate system, had to be suppressed and all candidates for priesthood were to receive their training in special houses of formation, called seminaries.79

3) The decrees of the Council of Trent were applied strictly only to the St. Thomas Christians who as an old Christian community were considered mature enough.80 At the same time, the legislation took strong measures against widespread abuses among the Syrian clergy, and tried to raise their moral and intellectual standard.81

4) The study programme followed more or less the rather vague directives of the Council of Trent, enumerated in the 3rd Council of Goa: singing, ecclesiastical accountancy and “other branches of art,” Sacred Scripture and homilies of the saints.82

78 cf. Ibid.
79 cf. Ibid.
80 cf Ibid.
81 cf. Ibid., p. 24.
82 cf. Ibid.
The post-Diamper (1653) period was tragic because it split the Syrian community formally—heretic and schismatic—and in course of time Protestantism emerged as a third power. Each of these established their theological training centres. The Catholic training system followed two different streams. A small section followed the officially prescribed seminary system while the majority of the Syrian clergy was trained till recent times in the *Malpanates.*

1.3 Priestly Formation in India after the Council of Trent

The Council of Trent, which took place from 1546 to 1563, brought about the much needed reforms in the Church, especially on the formation of its clergy. It took several decades to introduce the desired reforms in practice in India. The Church in Goa admitted native vocations only to the secular clergy and there were Papal decrees prohibiting the admission of candidates to the religious clergy, which we shall briefly examine.

1.3.1 The Council of Trent

Pope Paul III in his Bull *Ad Dominic Gregis* of 2nd June 1536 announced the Ecumenical Council of Trent. It was convoked for May 23 of the following year. In the mind of the Pope, it was the shortest and most efficacious means of extricating heresy

\[\text{\cite{Ibid.}}\]
and reforming morals. One of the first things he did was to gather around him a band of eminent prelates who could help him in preparing for the Council. He constituted a commission of Cardinals whose work was to draw up a list of the abuses in the Church and to suggest remedies to be applied. It was made up of nine members, with Cardinal Contarini as the President. Everybody felt that for any reform in the Church the formation of the clergy was very necessary.

On 9th March 1537 the commission submitted to the Pope the result of three months of frequent deliberations. Among the abuses the commission mentioned, the first and foremost concerned the ordinations to the priesthood. Since there was no care or diligence used in the selection of the candidates to the Holy Orders, the Commission reported, unworthy men were raised to priestly dignity. As a result of this, there was scandal and contempt of the priestly order and loss of respect for sacred things.

The Council met in Trent and it was declared open on 13th December 1545. The Decree on Priestly Formation, after lengthy discussions and considerations, finally was solemnly proclaimed in the 23rd session of the Council, on 15th July 1563. It contains 18 chapters, the last being about the foundation of seminaries, the summary of which is given below.

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8cf. De Mello, op.cit. p. 113.
8cf. Ibid.
8cf. Ibid., op.cit. p. 114
8cf. Ibid.
8cf. Ibid., op.cit. p. 115.
8cf. Ibid., op. cit.p. 118.
9cf. Ibid., op. cit. pp. 127-128.
1) Every diocese, according to its means and the size of its territory, must erect and support a seminary for the training of a certain number of clerical students chosen from the Episcopal city and from the whole diocese or from the entire Province. The college should be situated near the cathedral or metropolitan church or in any suitable place chosen by the Bishop.

2) Only those born in lawful wedlock and knowing how to read and write should be admitted to the seminary as students. The minimum age fixed for admission was twelve years, and their character and behaviour should be such as to give good hopes that they would perpetually serve the Lord in the priestly ministry. Preference ought to be given to the poor but the rich were not excluded.

3) The bishop should divide the seminarians into different classes according to their number, age and progress. He could attach some to the service of the various churches of the diocese and send fresh recruits to take their place in the college, so that the college might remain a permanent seminary of God’s ministers.

4) The seminarians should receive the tonsure and the ecclesiastical habit as soon as they join, and wear them always. The subjects to be taught were grammar, accountancy, letters, Sacred Scripture, ecclesiastical literature, homilies, and the way of administering the sacraments and ceremonies.

5) They should hear mass every day and go for confession at least once in a month and receive Holy Communion as often as the confessor would permit. On Sundays and feast days they would serve in the cathedral or other churches. The Bishop was directed to visit the seminary and see that the rules were observed.
Finally, it was decreed that in the Provinces where the dioceses were too poor to be able to afford their own seminaries, the Provincial Synod or the Metropolitan Bishop should deliberate about establishing regional seminaries, in which students coming from various dioceses could be trained in common. This famous Decree became a law of the Church through the Bull *Benedictus Deus et Pater* of Pope Pius IV (26th January, 1564), which confirmed all the Decrees of the Council. It has ever remained the fundamental law of the Church on the education of candidates to the priesthood.

Anathil has the following observations on the Council's Decrees:

The Tridentine decrees mark a decisive turning point in the history of the theological formation. From then on the Latin Church, the Oriental Churches and the emerging Protestant Churches went different ways in their theological formation. Whereas, in the Middle Ages ecclesiastical and lay students largely enjoyed the same intellectual training in the same institution, now with the confinement of all ecclesiastical studies to seminaries and scholasticates the gap between ecclesiastical and secular education broadened more and more....There emerged an ever broadening scheme of secular education which ignored both the humanistic foundations as well as the divine revelation on which traditional Christian education was based, and concentrated on the natural sciences.\(^1\)

\(^{1}\)cf. *Ibid.* 128

\(^{2}\)Anathil, *op. cit.* pp.45-46
1.3.2 Provincial Councils of Goa and Seminary Formation

The Council of Trent had decreed in its 24th session that within one year after its closure, provincial councils should be held to apply its decrees to the local conditions. The Archbishop of Goa convoked the first provincial council of the ecclesiastical province of Goa (including Cochin, Mozambique and Malaca). The council was held in 1567. A second council was held eight years later in 1575. The decrees of the Council of Trent concerning seminary training did not receive any special attention in these two councils. And that was because Portuguese India had already its own central seminary in Goa besides a number of local seminaries, and these trained enough priests and soon even more than needed.

Twenty years after the decrees of Trent had been published, the 3rd Council of Goa in 1585 took up the points concerning seminary training in India. This Council gave definite norms, which determined Indian seminary training for a long time to come. The third act of the Council made many reforms, such as the suppression of child-ordination and simony, enforcement of celibacy and material support:

The Council applied for the first time to Indian conditions the norms laid down by the Council of Trent concerning theological studies. The fourth Council of Goa dealt only with the titles of ordination, and the fifth Council repeated the norms given by the third Council for the selection and admission of candidates. Only candidates from older Christians of better classes and higher castes

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93 cf. Ibid., p. 46.
94 cf. Ibid.
could be admitted. Neophytes and those from lower castes were to be excluded from the priesthood.\textsuperscript{95}

The entire third "Action" is devoted to the affairs of the Syrian Christians of Malabar. There was the problem of native clergy there, since the local clergy had from times immemorial been recruited on the spot. What was needed was some kind of reform, and the Council took suitable measures with a view to \textit{improving} the recruitment and formation of the native clergy.\textsuperscript{96} Three important modifications of the general directions given by the Council of Trent were made for India.\textsuperscript{97}

1) The age for ordination was raised from 25, as given by Trent, to 30. Those candidates who were converted as adults were to be ordained only 15 years after their conversion, and only after 30 years could they be entrusted with the regular care of souls. The 5\textsuperscript{th} Council of Goa, convened twenty-one years later when the number of native clergy had already increased, took even stricter measures in this regard. No sons of pagan parents could be ordained, nor any one "who had been baptised standing" as an adult.

2) For the first time, the caste restrictions, which in practice had been long since applied, were officially extended to the clerics. Henceforth only sons of "noble castes" could be admitted to the priesthood. The lower castes and \textit{a priori} the vast majority of outcasts were to be excluded. The 5\textsuperscript{th} Council of Goa gave further

\textsuperscript{95}\textit{Ibid.} p. 47.
\textsuperscript{96}cf. De Melo. \textit{op. cit.}, p. 135.
\textsuperscript{97}Anathil, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 46-47.
specifications in this regard. Only Brahmins and Prabhus (caste of royal clerks coming after the Brahmins in rank) could be ordained. In any case, only those castes that were considered respectable in the countries, for which the candidates were to be ordained, could be admitted. Two reasons were given for these restrictions: a better selection and a higher esteem for the priesthood as a whole, which otherwise would have been exposed to the contempt of the higher classes, if access to it would have been open to the lower or outcasts.

3) The standard of clerical studies prescribed by the Tridentine Council, which actually constituted the minimum of intellectual training required for a priest, was still lowered in order to meet the existing Indian conditions. Under the given circumstances, the Fathers of the Council regarded the following points as required and sufficient for the Indian priests: First of all a good knowledge of the vernacular of the country for which they were destined was required. They should have also sufficient knowledge of Latin and enough training in dealing with moral problems of the ordinary life. Finally they would be given such a general pastoral formation that would enable them to help in the conversion work and in the care of the newly converted Christians.98

The reason underlying these decrees was first of all the policy then in vogue of training only assistants to the European clergy occupying the higher ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. For such a role, a minimum of theoretical formation would suffice. Other reasons for lowering the standard of studies were the lack of books, 98 cf. Ibid.
professors and even funds, which confined the early seminary training to the minimum. Nevertheless, ecclesiastical legislation also aimed higher. Already the first Council of Goa in 1567 had given definite prescriptions for the so-called "preachers". They ought to have full course of philosophy and three years of theology (one year Scripture and two years of scholastic theology).\(^9\)

The 4\textsuperscript{th} Council strictly demanded from the parish priests a working knowledge of the vernacular of the people among whom they had to work. This had to be proved henceforth by an examination in the vernacular before appointment. Priests who did not avail themselves of the time limit of half a year to learn the vernacular "eo ipso" remained suspended.\(^10\) The council also made the provision that younger priests should always have a chance to complete their knowledge of morals through refresher courses. The regular moral courses, given at least at the cathedral churches, should be always open for them.\(^11\) The 5\textsuperscript{th} Council of Goa made the attendance of such courses obligatory for all clerics below forty who had not had a full course of at least two years of theology.\(^12\)

1.3.3 Policy after the Goan Councils

In spite of the prescriptions of the Council of Trent, the authorities in India did not establish seminaries in the full Tridentine form for the next two centuries. In 1575, the idea of establishing a central seminary for the whole ecclesiastical province of Goa at a

\(^{9}\) Ibid., op. cit. p. 48.

\(^{10}\) Ibid.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
diocesan level took concrete shape. The seminary was supposed to be staffed by the Jesuits and Vlignano had accepted it but in the end it did not materialise. Ten years later in 1585, Archbishop D. Vicente de Fonseca obtained from King Philip II the royal placet to establish a central seminary for the whole East. The Fathers of the 3rd Council of Goa who were complaining that in spite of the clear prescription of the Council of Trent, there was not a single diocesan seminary in the East, took up the plan immediately and drew up a blueprint to establish a central seminary in Goa. Half of its alumni were supposed to be for the archdiocese of Goa and the other half for the suffragan dioceses. The financial support was to be given by the King. But this plan also was not realised. Thus the seminaries remained in the hands of the religious orders that had started them, till the suppression of the latter in Portugal and her colonies. The seminaries also retained their mixed character and lay people attended classes along with the clerics.

1.3.4 Secular Clergy

As far as the number of indigenous clergy trained in the Indian seminaries was concerned, success was remarkable. India was, from the beginning, a land of priestly vocations, though the rush to the seminaries was not always motivated by purely religious considerations. A great advantage for the Indian seminary system was the broad basis upon which it was built: orphanages, schools and colleges from which the vocations were drawn. Moreover, there was no strict separation between the candidates for priesthood and lay students, which favoured a smooth transition from the one state to the other. The primary as well as the higher education was mainly in the hands of the religious who were much interested in imparting an education conducive to priestly vocation and the

103 Anathil. op. cit., p. 49.
State was not much happy with this. Thus the Viceroy of Portuguese India complained to the King in December 1630 that there were too many colleges and too many priestly vocations affecting adversely the interests of the State, which needed soldiers and farmers. He even proposed to abolish all the colleges except two, one in Cochin and the other in Goa “where some Brahmin students could be prepared for the priesthood, for they are the nobler caste and more inclined to recollection and discipline.” ¹⁰⁴ The King in his answer allowed the existing colleges to continue but made the establishment of new ones dependent on his royal placet.

Another factor favouring a rapid increase in numbers was that theological formation at that time was much shorter than it is today. It was often left to the discretion of the ecclesiastical superiors concerned to decide its length and, therefore, at times it was unduly shortened. Even the 5th Council of Goa had to complain about the insufficient formation of the clergy, who did not have even two years of theology.¹⁰⁵

The result of all this was that in the Latin Padroado dioceses as well as in the Syrian sector, the number of Indian priests increased rapidly. Goa had more native priests than it could employ. In 1644, Archbishop D. Francisco dos Martires reported to the Propaganda: “We have here many Brahmins who have been ordained by me, without work. The benefices are lacking which would provide them with work.”¹⁰⁶ Fr. Borges, a Portuguese secular priest, stated in his memorial to the Propaganda in 1656 that there

¹⁰⁴De Melo, op. cit., p.148
¹⁰⁵Anathil, op. cit. p. 50
¹⁰⁶De Melo, op. cit. p. 150.
were more than 180 priests in Goa without benefices. In 1705, the Viceroy of Portuguese India gives the incredible number of 2,500 native secular priests for Portugal's Indian territories! Another document gives for 1781 the still more unbelievable figure of 3000 native priests. The situation in the Syrian Church was similar. In 1629, the Archbishop of Cranganore, Estevao de Britto, S.J., wrote that besides the religious of the Society of Jesus there were more than 300 native secular priests in the diocese.

1.3.5 Religious Clergy: Jesuits, Franciscans and Others

Fr. Wicki who examined the policy of the Jesuits in admitting Indian candidates to their Society says that from all the many colleges and seminaries of the Society in India there was only one Indian Jesuit, the Brahmin Pedro Luis of Quilon. Among all the different superiors of the 16th century, we find not a single one who expressed himself in favour of receiving Indians into the Society. The tendency had already begun with the first rector Gomes who dismissed all Indian candidates from the seminary. Francis Xavier was definitely for receiving Indians for secular priesthood, and punished Gomes for his inconsiderate and unauthorised action, by dismissing him from the Society of Jesus. But he too was against admitting Indians to the Society, in spite of the advice and admonitions from St. Ignatius. The policy was followed by the subsequent provincials.

107 Ibid.
109 Anathil, p.51.
110 Anathil, op. cit., p. 52.
111 Ibid., p. 43.
112 Ibid., op. cit., p. 52.
of the Society of Jesus in India and the Visitor Valignano had the most decisive influence in this matter. In 1575, he categorically refused to take in future any Indian candidate into the Society. The reason for this is interesting and instructive. It was due to the prejudice "that dark-skinned races are of low intellectual level and show a special inclination to evil." Another reason was that "the Indians were despised by the Portuguese, and even by their own people were held in low esteem compared to the Portuguese priests."\(^{113}\)

Under such circumstances, it is understandable that according to the catalogue of the Society of Jesus in 1594 there were only 37 called "Indians" out of 312 members of the Society in India. Most of them were casticos (Portuguese born in India) and the only one pure Indian was Pedro Luis.\(^{114}\)

The Franciscans, who together with the Jesuits were responsible for the establishment of a native clergy in India and did so much for promoting their cause, followed almost the same policy as the Jesuits in admitting Indian candidates into their order. Fr. Meersmann, O.F.M., who examined the question of admitting Indians to the Franciscan Order, could for the period of 1540-1697 find only four names of pure Indian Franciscans.\(^{115}\) The first one of them was a Syrian Christian from Malabar. Three out of these four Indian Franciscans were moreover trained and admitted in Europe. The fourth, which was the only exception, was the prince-heir of the kingdom of Jaffna in Ceylon, who was admitted to the Order in 1620. Later on, Indians were strictly excluded.

\(^{113}\) Ibid. p. 53.

\(^{114}\) Ibid.

\(^{115}\) Anathil. op. cit., p. 54.
In the first statute of the Franciscan Province in 1595, Indians are not even mentioned. *Mesticos* too were excluded, though at the beginning a few of them had been admitted and the commissary allowed it against the orders of the provincial in Portugal. *Casticos* were admitted under certain conditions. Towards the middle of the 17th century, there was not a single Franciscan of pure Indian origin. Even in the provincial statutes of the Franciscans as late as 1680 and 1697, both Indians and *mesticos* were still excluded. The clause, however, against *casticos* had been quietly dropped. By 1640, over a half of the members of the province were Portuguese born in India.

Fr. Meersmann comes to the following conclusion from his study: “In the various statutes of the St. Thomas Province we have not come across anything regarding the admitting of Indians to the Order. This possibility was in those days not considered, as the vows they would have taken, would have been invalid.”*116* It was only towards the second half of the 18th century that the Franciscans started to admit Indian candidates.*117*

Other religious congregations also followed more or less the same policy as the Jesuits and the Franciscans, and began admitting Indians only from the middle of the 18th century. The Dominicans, who came to India in 1548, opened their doors to Indian candidates who possessed the necessary qualities. The first native to be admitted was Fr. Estevao de Santa Maria, in 1548. A novitiate was soon opened.*118* Augustinians also

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*116* *Ibid*, p. 54.

*117* *Ibid*.

*118* *Ibid*, *op. cit.*p. 55.
began to receive native vocations from 1619. The Discalced Carmelites had been
directed by their General not to receive natives. In 1650, Fr. Dominic of Saint Nicholas,
and still later, Fr. Denis of Jesus were insisting with the General to withdraw the
prohibition. They extolled the aptitude of the Brahmins for religious life.

The Theatines, although sent to India by the Propaganda, were reluctant as the
rest of the religious families established in India, to recruit native vocations for their
congregation. One of the main reasons they alleged in justification of their policy was the
contempt in which the natives were held by the Europeans on account of their colour.

1.3.6 Papal Decrees and Recruiting of Religious Vocations

The immediate reason to exclude natives from religious orders was the decrees of
the Holy See that strictly prohibited religious orders to admit candidates from Jewish,
Mohammedan, heretical or pagan origin. The following is a relevant passage to this
effect, concerning the Franciscans in India: “As in the aforesaid Province of St. Thomas
there are decrees of Paul IV and Gregory XIII of happy memory who have expressly
prohibited admission of the descendants of those converted from the Jewish,
Mohammedans, heretics and new converts in their monasteries...under pain of nullifying
their vows.” The superiors thus were obliged to comply with these Papal decrees under
the pain of nullity of their vows.

\[119\text{ibid.}\]
\[120\text{ibid.}\]
\[121\text{De Melo. op. cit., p.167.}\]
\[122\text{Anathil. op. cit., p. 56.}\]
1.4 Priestly Formation in India During the Portuguese Period

The mission of the Portuguese was not only trade but to conquer geographical areas and convert the heathens to Christianity. With this in mind, they received the privilege from the Pope for presenting fit candidates for bishoprics, which is known as 'padroado' and with this privilege brought untold confusion and friction between civil and ecclesiastical authorities in the centuries that followed.

1.4.1 'Padroado'

In 1518, Pope Leo X by the Bull *Vidimus quae Super* granted an important privilege to the King of Portugal—the permission to ordain coloured candidates who had come to Portugal, giving at the same time dispensation from the ecclesiastical impediments resulting from their former pagan background.

In 1534, Pope Paul III by the Bull *Aequum reputamus* erected the diocese of Goa, and its patronage was given to the Portuguese crown. In this bull we find a clear definition of the Portuguese patronage or *Padroado*. According to this definition, the right of presenting to the Pope fit candidates to the bishopric, and the right of presenting to the bishop candidates to four dignities, canonicates and benefices were given to the king. The king on his part was bound to provide for the necessities of the diocese: payment of the ecclesiastical officials; building and repairing of churches, chapels and monasteries; and providing them with the necessary things for divine worship.\(^{123}\) The civil administration of Portuguese territories in India was, from the first years of

\(^{123}\)Mundadan, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
occupation till 1505, more or less the business of the captain or admiral of the fleet. From 1505 onwards a governor was appointed for the civil administration and represented the Portuguese king. His term was generally two to four years.\textsuperscript{124} The governor was in charge of all the Portuguese affairs, military and civil (and to some extent ecclesiastical), east of the Cape of Good Hope.

The ecclesiastical administration was very intimately connected with the civil in all the lands newly discovered. Henry the Navigator had obtained concessions from the Popes with regard to his discoveries and conquests. He, in the capacity as the Master General of the Military Order of Christ, obtained from the Holy See the rights of patronage of all the churches donated to the order and later, ecclesiastical jurisdiction the lands discovered and to be discovered by him.\textsuperscript{125} Pope Alexander VI by the Bull \textit{Cum sicut magestas} of 25\textsuperscript{th} March 1500 decreed that the apostolic commissar for the newly discovered lands be appointed by the Portuguese king independent of the Master General of the Order of Christ.\textsuperscript{126} In 1514, Pope Leo X issued the Bull \textit{Dum fidei constatiam} and restored all jurisdiction to the Order of Christ. At the same time, the Pope by another Bull \textit{Pro excellenti praemantentia} erected the diocese of Funchal in the Madeira Island and to this were attached India and Brazil. Its patronage was given to the king of Portugal but other rights and privileges were given to the Order, of which the king had now become, once for all, the administrator.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{124}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 37.

\textsuperscript{125}\textit{Ibid.} p. 38.

\textsuperscript{126}\textit{Ibid.} p. 37.

\textsuperscript{127}\textit{Ibid.} 38.
1.4.2 First Diocesan Seminary: Rachol

Rachol is a small village about four miles away from Margao, the present capital of the district of Salcete. This district, which is situated to the south of the Island of Goa, was annexed to the Portuguese possessions in 1543, as a result of the donation made to the Crown of Portugal by Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur. The Viceroy Dom Constantdino de Braganca invited the Fathers of the Society of Jesus to undertake the evangelisation of Salcete. The invitation was accepted, and in 1560 Fr. Pero Macaraenhas and the lay brother Manuel Gomes entered Salcete in order to begin their apostolate there. One of their first cares was to build a college for the education of the native children. This desire was fulfilled in the year 1574 when they started the College of Salcete, in a building situated by the side of the church in Margao.

The training centres for the period (1605-1759) of one and a half centuries between the 5th Council of Goa and the expulsion of the Jesuits were seminaries conducted by the religious, especially by the Jesuits. The most important among them was the Seminary of St. Paul in Goa, which trained the highest number of priests and gave them undoubtedly the best formation. A second important training centre was the Seminary of Rachol, which became of primary importance for the theological formation with the eclipse of other training centres after the expulsion of Jesuits. This seminary was established in 1574 at Salcete and transferred to Rachol in 1610. It was called All Saints’ Seminary.

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128 De Melo, op. cit., p. 181.

129 Ibid.
College since it was on 1st November 1606 that Fr. Gaspar Soares, the rector, laid the foundation stone of the building. Later, after the canonisation of St. Ignatius, the name was changed to the College of St. Ignatius. Gradually, the college developed into a seminary, with classes of theology in the curriculum of studies. The study program was more or less the same as in St. Paul’s and consisted of the humanities, Latin, philosophy and finally morals and speculative theology. As early as in 1646 this seminary had the reputation of being the second best in India.

1.4.3 Dark Ages of Seminary Formation

With the Papal brief of Clement XIV suppressing the Society of Jesus in 1773, seminary formation had serious setbacks all over the world, and especially in the missions. As many as 1,275 mission stations the world over, staffed by 3,364 Jesuit missionaries, had to be closed down. In addition to this, 564 colleges and 148 seminaries in Europe, and 123 colleges and 48 seminaries in the missionary provinces of the Society, chiefly in South America and India were blotted out. The almost total destruction of such a world-wide system of education, especially the theological formation that had functioned with great success for more than a century and a half had serious repercussions on the whole of the Catholic Church. In India it was the beginning of a dark century of the theological formation of the native clergy.

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130 Ibid., 183.
131 Ibid.
132 Anathil., op. cit., 66.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid. p. 67.
After two years of improvisations, the seminary of Rachol was made the main theological training centre, with a subsidiary seminary at Chorao. These new seminaries were staffed by the Indian Oratorians. But their direction and management was reserved to two Portuguese Dominicans, Fr. Bechior Antonio Cabecas and Fr. Francisco Xavier who were appointed Rector and vice-rector, respectively. The reestablished Rachol Seminary was now called Seminary of Bom Pastor (Good Shepherd) by the royal decree of 4th April 1761. According to the royal order, both the seminaries had to train the students also in Western manners and customs and to foster the knowledge of the Portuguese language.

Sudden changes in the seminary staff and in the locality, the unhealthy intervention of the State in Church affairs, namely in the programme of studies and discipline to be followed in the seminary, could not but be fatal to the proper training of the seminarians. About the year 1781, one of the Lazarists sent to take charge of the seminary gave the following information to the Government of Lisbon regarding the Goan clergy: “As regards the state of the clergy here, if I am to judge from what I and my colleague have been able to observe and examine, I am compelled to say that they are buried and steeped in the darkness of ignorance, for having examined those sent to us by the Archbishop, we have found them very poorly instructed.”

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136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 De Melo., op. cit., p. 187.
By the end of the 17th century, the star of Portuguese supremacy in the East was declining. A century of splendour and greatness was all too soon followed by an age of decadence. The Dutch and the English would rival with the Portuguese, and eventually, oust them from the field. Even more disastrous was the annexation of Portugal to the Crown of Spain in 1580, which lasted for forty years. All these events had their repercussions on the missionary activities of the ‘Padroado’.

1.5 Propaganda de Fide and Priestly Formation

Pope Gregory XV erected the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith in 1622 by his Constitution *Insrutabili* of 22nd June of that year. Its establishment was the result of a slow evolution lasting for about a century during which many eminent personalities contributed their share towards its definitive organisation: for instance Popes Gregory XIII, Clement VIII and Pius V, Cardinal Vives, the Discalced Carmelites Domenico de Gesu Maria and Tommasco di Gesu, the Capuchin Fra Girolamo da Narni, the Theatine Michele Ghislieri, the General of the Society of Jesus, St. Francis Borgia and many others.140

1.5.1 Decline of the Portuguese in India

The founding of the new Congregation marked the beginning of a new era for the Indian missions and the Indian clergy. From then onwards the influence of the Padroado was more and more restricted. Propaganda became the official missionary organ of the

Church. It was through this instrument that the papacy took upon itself increasingly the work of the modern world mission and gave it its centralised character.¹⁴¹

The birth of the Propaganda also marked the turning point in the policy of the Popes concerning the native clergy. Pope Alexander VII gave in 1659 a policy statement concerning the attitude of the Holy See towards native vocations. He reminded the new Vicars Apostolic setting out for the kingdom of Tonkin, China and Cochin-China that “the principal reason of sending bishops into these regions was, that these should attend by all ways and means to the training of the (native) young men in such a wise that they might become fit for the priesthood, and might be ordained by them and stationed through these vast regions in places of their own in order to take care of Christian affairs there under their direction.”¹⁴²

1.5.2 Decree of 1630

Dom Mateus de Castro, the first native Vicar Apostolic took up the question of the native clergy in India. In 1625, he went to Rome to plead the cause of the native clergy with the Propaganda. He accused the Padroado authorities of obstructing the policy of the Church by denying the natives of India admission to the priesthood. His accusations, though exaggerated, convinced the authorities in the Propaganda that all was not well with the affairs of the training of native clergy in India. After five years of careful study and having been convinced that the affairs of the Church in India could not

¹⁴¹Anathil, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹⁴²Ibid.
be served any longer by the ‘Padroado’ alone, Mgr. Ingoli, Secretary of Propaganda stated the situation in India as follows:  

There existed no official prohibition against the ordinations of Indians either on the part of the king of Portugal or of the Pope. In fact, a number of natives had been ordained priests. However, the whole development for training an Indian clergy beyond the immediate needs of the ‘Padroado’ territory would deprive the European priests of their benefices and sources of income. Those few who had been ordained had, according to him, been trained with the view of keeping them in subordinate positions as assistants to European parish priests, rather than for holding responsible posts themselves.  

In order to remedy the situation Ingoli prepared the famous Decree of November 1630, which ever since has served as a signpost for the modern mission policy of the Church. The decree commanded the bishops of India to guarantee by all means that qualified Indians after careful preparation and examination of their intellectual and moral qualities should be promoted to Holy Orders, including priesthood. The reasons given for this were as follows:

- The constant practice of the Church since the time of the Apostles and the bishops of the primitive Church.
- The great authority the native priests possessed with their racial brethren.

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\(^{143}\)De Melo, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-211.

\(^{144}\)Anathil, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
The better knowledge they have of the language, customs and disposition of their fellow countrymen.  

Propaganda earnestly requested the Pope to take all suitable measures to prepare the way for training indigenous priests and for appointing indigenous bishops in Asia. Pope Urban VIII, who was present at the final meeting of the Propaganda when the decree was passed, suggested the establishment of a seminary for training of Indian clergy along the pattern of the well-known seminary in Milan conducted by the Oblates of St. Charles. However, nothing was done to put this suggestion into practice.

1.5.3 Synod of Pondicherry and its Effects

The Synod of Pondicherry was an important milestone in the history of the Church in India and especially of the formation of clergy. It opened on 18th January 1844 and concluded on 13th February of the same year. It was attended by Mons. Bonnand and his coadjutor-elect Charbonneaux, and 26 priests of whom three were Tamilians and the Superior of the Madura Jesuit Mission, Fr. Joseph Betrand. The central question in the synod was the formation of an Indian clergy, which so far had been neglected or proved to be unsuccessful in the Propaganda territories. Broadening of the general basis of education would furnish a reasonable solution to the problem. This was the directive

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143 Ibid., p. 63
144 De Melo, op. cit., p. 211.
145 Anathil, op. cit., p. 64.
146 Ibid., pp. 94-95.
given to the first three Vicars Apostolic who went to China, Siam and Cochin-China. The Pope told them to establish as many schools as possible and to select one or the other more promising students as prospective candidates for priesthood. The Synod of Pondicherry, following the same directive decided to lay a firm ground for the future vocational policy by extending primary education as wide as possible.\textsuperscript{149}

The Synod resolved unanimously to put into practice immediately the prescriptions of the Council of Trent and three points were thoroughly discussed in view of the formation of the native priests:

- Schools
- Minor seminaries
- Major seminaries

\textit{Schools}

The existing schools were to be fostered and new ones to be established, both for native boys as well as for Europeans and Eurasians, with the hope of finding priestly vocations.

\textit{Minor Seminaries}

The minor seminary held the key position in the whole training plan of priestly vocations. The curriculum for the minor seminary was fixed as follows:

\cite{Ibid}
The candidates were to be given a twofold training, training in languages and training at least in the elements of the modern natural sciences. A four-language formula was agreed upon. Latin was the official language of the Church and therefore it would take the primary place. The second place was assigned to the vernacular, Tamil; and the third language was French and it was to serve as a medium of transmitting the best of cultural values from the West; and finally, the knowledge of English for the care of souls as well as for dealing with government officials. Elements of History, Geography, Arithmetic, Astronomy and Physics were to be taught. Until then the management, teaching and discipline in the Minor Seminary had remained in the hands of one man, and the Synod decreed that thenceforward there were to be at least three priests in charge of the seminarians: one Superior, looking after their temporal and spiritual needs; one Prefect of studies and Professor; and one Prefect (of discipline). The first two were to be Europeans; the Prefect should be an Indian priest of proven virtue and piety. The Synod also determined the qualities and conditions to be required in those who were to be admitted to the seminary.

The seminarians had spiritual reading every day for a quarter of an hour. Catechism was to be explained to them every Sunday and they were to give a written account of what they had learned in that class. They were not to attend funerals, as these might become for them an occasion of dissipation and loss of time. Two priests, strangers to the seminary, were to be assigned to them as ordinary confessors. Finally, an annual retreat was prescribed as indispensable for their proper formation.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 95-96.}
Major Seminaries

The major seminary was separated from the minor seminary and modeled according to the best institutions of the time in France. The Synod decided to set up a Major Seminary, as distinct from the Minor Seminary. Philosophy, Theology and Sacred Scripture would be taught in this seminary. It was found useful to introduce a sort of interstice between Philosophy and Theology, during which period the seminarians would stay with a missionary, assisting him according to his direction.\textsuperscript{151} The solemn closing of the Synod and the retreat that followed ended on 13\textsuperscript{th} February. The acts and decrees were sent to Rome for approbation.\textsuperscript{152}

1.5.4 Instruction of 1845 of Sacred Congregation of Propaganda

The Propaganda endorsed the policy adopted by the Synod of Pondicherry and its emphasis on the need of training and indigenous clergy for India. This was sent to all the Vicars Apostolic in the East as an instruction in 1845. Fr. Luquet, who had arrived in the mission only two years before, took an active part in the deliberations of the Synod concerning the formation of the Indian clergy. He was entrusted with a mission to bring the synodal decrees to the Propaganda in Rome and to obtain their approbation. Fr. Luquet, at the request of Propaganda, prepared a 213-page report about the actual condition of the native clergy in the missions. Starting with the basic fact that with the exception of a small coastal area from Quilon to Goa, there was no native clergy in India,

\textsuperscript{151}De Melo, \textit{op. cit.}, p 262.

\textsuperscript{152}Ibid., p. 263.
he outlined the difficulties that accounted for such a situation and suggested the means to remedy them.\textsuperscript{153}

Fr. Luquet's report modified some of the synodal decrees and added some more points of greater importance for the future policy of Propaganda. It was discussed in the plenary session of 22\textsuperscript{nd} September 1845, and Pope Gregory XVI approved its final version on 23\textsuperscript{rd} November of the same year. Addressed to all the Vicars Apostolic of the East, it recommended with special urgency the following policy in the training of the native clergy:\textsuperscript{154}

1) The heads of the missions were obliged to see to it that in all areas where there were no bishops, they should be appointed as soon as possible. This was considered to be of primary importance for the promotion and consolidation of the Catholic Church in the East. Ecclesiastical territories that were too vast and unwieldy were to be divided into manageable subdivisions. The number of bishops was to be increased so that finally the Church might be instituted in full hierarchical form in these mission territories.

2) The care for native vocations was stated as the principal duty of all the superiors of the missions. They were exhorted to select from the inhabitants of these territories suitable candidates to be trained and ordained priests through whose instrumentality the faith and the number of the faithful could grow, the discipline

\textsuperscript{153}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{154}Anathil, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 98.
become stronger and the stability of the Catholic religion be procured. The first condition for this was, of course, the establishment of seminaries where these candidates would receive the necessary training.

3) The training in these seminaries should be such that in accordance with the long-cherished wish of the Apostolic See, these candidates might become fit for the ecclesiastical offices, even that of governing the missions. Therefore the mission superiors should gradually give to those among the native clergy whom they considered more outstanding, important offices and should not refuse, when the opportunity would arise, to depute them as their own vicars.

4) Hence the custom of lowering the native priests to the status of clerical assistants, a custom so obnoxious to the interests of the Church, should be abrogated entirely. Eventually the order of preference in honor, office and promotions should be determined solely by the services they had rendered to the missions, irrespective of nationality.

5) The practice prevailing in some places of neglecting the formation of the native clergy and training only catechists as helpers in the apostolic work was rejected. Though such lay helpers would be necessary for the mission, great stress was to be laid on training native priests. It was once more commanded, as in the past, that the full attention of the mission superiors be given to the formation of a native clergy so that in the course of time young Levites and the clergy might take over the post from catechists and occupy them more faithfully.
1.5.5 The Apostolic Visitation

The Synod of Pondicherry and the instruction of Propaganda based upon it were of great importance for the further development of the Indian clergy in so far as they gave it a new impetus and a definite orientation. The jurisdictional struggle between Padroado and Propaganda continued to paralyse the training of the Indian clergy. The Holy See finally decided to establish a hierarchy independent of the Padroado for the formation of an adequate Indian clergy under Indian bishops. The first step towards this goal was the Apostolic Visitation of the Propaganda territories in India (1859-62). This task was entrusted to Mgr. Bonnand, Vicar Apostolic of Pondicherry, who was vested with the powers of a Delegate Apostolic.\footnote{De Melo, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 282-290.} After his untimely death in 1861, Mgr. L. Charbonneauxaux, Vicar Apostolic of Mysore, continued the visitation and completed it in 1862. The final report of the visitation reached Rome in 1886.\footnote{Anathil, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 99-100.}

According to the report, when the Visitation began, there were eighteen vicariates in India. Seven of these had not even a single \textit{native} priest. They were the vicariates of Vizagapatam, Hyderabad, East Bengal (Dacca), Central Bengal (Calcutta), Bombay, Patna and Agra. In the remaining vicariates, the number of native priests was distributed as follows:

- Alva-Pegu 1
- West Bengal 4
- Coimbatore 5
Jaffna 2
• Madras 6
• Madura 6
• Mangalore 14
• Mysore 3
• Pondicherry 14
• Quilon 16
• Verapoly (mostly Syrian Rite).  

There were only three places in all the Propaganda territories where real efforts were being made to train Indian priests. The first was the seminary of Pondicherry. With the division of the mission territory of the Paris Foreign Missionaries, this seminary was split into three, i.e., Pondicherry, Coimbatore and Mysore. Paris Foreign Mission Society conducted these three seminaries. Pondicherry was the only vicariate that had distinct minor and major seminaries, both run according to the norms fixed by the Synod of Pondicherry. Since the date of its functioning in 1850, it produced 14 priests, and there were 13 major seminarians in training. The seminary of Coimbatore had 17 students and had already given five priests to the mission. The seminary of Mysore had 42 students under two missionary professors. The second place that had a working seminary was Bombay, with three theologians and 12 minor seminarians. In Bombay, the Jesuits entered again in the field of theological formation in India. The third place was the

\[157\text{De Melo,} \text{ op. cit., p. 282.}\]

\[158\text{Anathil,} \text{ op. cit, p. 100.}\]
seminary of Verapoly, staffed and managed by the Discalced Carmelites. When the seminary was shifted from Verapoly to Puthenpally in 1866, there were nine students.

Thus the number of all the major seminarians in Propaganda India at that time was approximately 30-50. After two centuries of continuous exhortations of Propaganda to train an Indian clergy, this figure is far from impressive. The Visitor ascribed this regrettable absence of Indian clergy to the following reasons:¹⁵⁹

1) The deep-rooted prejudices against the Indian clergy had not been overcome in many places in spite of the exhortations of Propaganda. Thus, for instance, the Visitor ascribed the absence of native clergy in the vast Northern ecclesiastical territories of Agra and Patna to the positive neglect and opposition of the missionaries who neglected and even despised Indian priests.

2) The second reason resulting from the first was the ensuing reluctance of the Vicars Apostolic to foster and train native vocations. In spite of the admonitions received from Rome there was a widespread emotional opposition of the ecclesiastical superiors to the ordination of Indians, at least in certain concrete circumstances. To quote one example from the other side of India, the Vicar Apostolic of Colombo, Mgr. Bravi, O.S.B. declared: "As long as Bravi will be bishop, he will never impose his hands on a black head."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 101.
¹⁶⁰De Melo, op. cit., p. 283
1.5.6 Indian Clergy in Verapoly and Quilon

The Visitor Apostolic was most outspoken, and even severe, in his criticism of the condition of the native clergy in the Syro-Latin vicariates of Verapoly and Quilon. These two vicariates had about 90% of all the Indian clergy. Verapoly had about 400 priests. The Visitor found among them many good and excellent priests, but he stated that the majority of them were mediocre, devoid of piety and zeal, ignorant and disobedient. About 40 were under suspension. Going to the root of the malaise, the Visitor attributed this sad state of affairs to the following causes:

1) Absence of a real vocation to the priestly state. Priesthood was held in very high esteem by the Syrian Christians. Every family was therefore eager to have a priest. Not enough attention was paid to the qualities required for ordination.

2) Previous Vicars themselves had been rather too easy in admitting candidates to Holy Orders.

3) Humble antecedents of many priests of the Latin Rite.

4) Deficiencies in the training imparted in the seminary.

5) Ignorance prevalent among the clergy. The only books used by the Syrian priests were the Missal, the Breviary and the Bible (that too a Protestant edition), besides a few books of theology. Not much higher was the degree of learning of the Latin priests.

6) Lack of the means that foster spiritual fervour. The “spiritual exercises” at stated times were not practiced. The Blessed Sacrament was kept only in a few churches. Priests made their confession and celebrated mass rarely.

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\[161\] Ibid, pp. 285-86.
7) Severe ways in which the native priests were treated by the European missionaries.

1.5.7 Establishment of Hierarchy and Formation Training

The *concordat* of the Holy See with Portugal in 1886 settled the conflicting claims of the Padroado and the Propaganda; it also cleared the way for the establishment of hierarchy in India. The Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis Auctor* was published in 1887, establishing the Indian hierarchy and raising all the vicariates of India and Ceylon to the rank of diocese. This was an event of great importance for the Church in India and especially for the formation of the native clergy. The Constitution was published at the three synods of Allahabad, Bangalore and Colombo. These synods were convoked and presided over by the Delegate Apostolic Archbishop, Agliardi.

Six years after the synods had passed the general decree that obliged each diocese to make provision for the training of its clergy, India received definite orders from Rome to put this scheme into practice. The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in its plenary session of 31st July 1892 fixed the practical details which were published on 28th August 1893 by Card. Ledochowski, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation, at the express wish of the Holy Father himself. All the ordinaries of ecclesiastical provinces were asked to hold provincial councils under the presidency of the Apostolic Delegate Mgr. Zaleski between November 1893 and April 1894.\(^{162}\) Within the next six months, five provincial councils were held in Bombay, Agra, Calcutta, Ootacamund and Verapoly. Training of the Indian clergy took the first place on the agenda of these councils. The acts and decrees of the

\(^{162}\) Anathil, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
five provincial councils followed the same scheme. Part I gave the general principles and Part II applied to the local conditions.

The decrees of the provincial councils concerning the training of the native priests prescribed that the Indian priests should equal in aspects to the foreign clergy, and as far as the leadership in the Church in India was concerned, it should be transferred to Indian personnel as early as possible, and hence the best way was to copy the Western system of theological training as faithfully as possible. With regard to intellectual training, the preparatory studies, philosophy and theology developed in the West were to be applied to India. A full course in humanities, following either the French or the English system, was demanded. Examinations had to be conducted in all subjects.

The curriculum for the major seminary was fixed as follows: Two years of philosophy and four years (or a minimum of three years) of theology were required. The theology course comprised mainly dogma and morals with the additional subjects of Scripture, Church history and Canon Law, which were to be taught for two years sometime during the whole curriculum of higher studies, either partly in philosophy or entirely in theology. Training in the sacred ceremonies and ecclesiastical chant was left free to be fixed by the seminaries, and mostly distributed throughout the whole training course. Textbooks approved by the bishops had to be used.

A special feature of this projected training was that it should be missionary oriented. The seminaries, according to these decrees, should be the centres of missionary impulse, provide ample scope to foster the missionary zeal of the seminarians and give them a practical initiation into their future mission work. The reason for the very existence of the Indian seminaries was not to produce parish priests, as might be the case in Europe, but to train missionaries. For this purpose, first of all a study of the vernacular was strongly emphasised. Since it was essential for any fruitful contact with the non-Christian population, the seminarians were expected to take an active part in mission work, especially during holidays. They were expected to teach catechism in schools and churches and to visit non-Christians in the surroundings.

1.5.8 New Seminary Scheme for India

According to the decrees of the provincial councils, at least each of the five ecclesiastical provinces of India was to be provided with full seminary training facilities if the individual diocese was unable to do so. The following is a brief survey of the plans drawn up at the different provincial councils and the development of the various seminaries in India:

1.5.9 Agra

The Council of Agra decreed that the Minor Seminary that was going to be erected at Sardhana should be considered as the Metropolitan Minor Seminary. It would receive not only the candidates of the archdiocese of Agra but those of the whole

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164 Ibid, p. 106.
165 Ibid.
Province till each suffragan diocese had its own seminary. As for a major seminary, a separate institution for each diocese of the province was absolutely impossible. The Council suggested that the bishops endeavour to bring about the establishment of a Metropolitan Major Seminary at a suitable place. All the suffragans would send their candidates to the seminary.\footnote{De Melo, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 311.}

The curriculum comprised humanities to be taught according to modern methods as they were used in Europe. Great stress was laid on Hindustani, which was to be taught by a qualified native Christian pandit. Besides Latin and English, the other subjects to be taught included elements of geography, history, arithmetic, algebra, geometry and physics. A solid foundation in Christian doctrine was to be laid in the minor seminary and the students were to be introduced into the history of the Old Testament and the facts of the New Testament. It took twenty-six years before the projected major seminary was opened with two students at Kurji in 1919. After two years it was shifted to Allahabad.\footnote{cf. \textit{Souvenir of the Silver Jubilee, St. Joseph's Seminary, Allahabad.} (Allahabad, 1944).}

\textbf{1.5.10 Calcutta}

Calcutta, like other ecclesiastical provinces, decided to establish a seminary of its own with the minimum expenditure in finance and personnel. The metropolitan minor seminary was established in the already existing high school in Ranchi where one section of the building was separated for the purpose. For higher studies the seminarians were to be sent to the Jesuit scholasticate at Kurseong or to the newly established central
seminary at Kandy. In its letter of 21st June 1894, Propaganda objected to the plan of training the secular clergy in the scholasticate of the Jesuits in Kurseong and admonished the Archbishop, Mgr. Goethals, to start a diocesan seminary of his own for which preparations were made in Sunny Bank, Darjeeling. Two years later, the first student arrived to start philosophy course, and after two years a second student came, but he was the last one. By 1901, the first student had completed his studies and the second one was sent to Kandy and the seminary was closed down. After twelve years, in 1913, the seminary was reopened in Chota Nagpur, first in Bankuli near Ranchi, and later transferred to Ranchi city.168

1.5.11 Madras

The archdiocese of Madras had only to endorse the decrees of the diocesan synod of 1893 to comply with the decree. There existed already a major seminary in Nellore and only a minor seminary had to be opened in Madras. Mgr. T. Colgan and Fr. John Kleinschneider, of the Mill Hill Society of the Foreign Missions, founded the major seminary in 1882. In 1889, it had eight students who at the occasion of their receiving tonsure pleaded in vain for the appointment of one more professor to the seminary since their rector found it difficult to combine both jobs as rector and parish priest. The first two priests were ordained in 1893 and six more in 1896. In the following year, the seminary was closed down and the students were sent to the seminaries of Kandy and Pondicherry. It was reopened with 10 students 29 years later in 1926.169 Two suffragan dioceses, Vizakapatnam and Nagpur, both entrusted to the Missionaries of St. Francis de

168 Anathil, op. cit., p.108.

169 Ibid., p. 109.
Sales, decided to open an inter-diocesan minor seminary at Nagpur, attached to the St. Francis de Sales' high school. Latin was to be taught privately, and as to the rest the minor seminary should run on lines similar to the institutions of the Congregation in Europe. The already existing institution at Gopalpore in Orissa, started in 1890 with three students, would serve as major seminary for both dioceses. The curriculum comprised, besides philosophy and theology, language studies (English, Oriya and Telugu). Eight years after its foundation, the seminary was closed down in December 1898 and the seminarians transferred to the Cathedral at Vizakapatnam. Two years later, only five seminarians were left and they lived in St. Aloysius School where they completed their theology while teaching and minding the boys. The seminary was closed down for five years, and reopened in 1905 for seven years and then again closed down and the seminarians were finally sent to other seminaries.  

In Nagpur, Bishop Pelvat, being very keen to foster Indian vocations, laid the foundation of St. Charles Seminary on 8th September 1896. In his ardent desire to train native vocations, he recruited 24 boys from Kamptee School, but not one of them persevered. Then he tried to recruit boys from Goa; 16 boys were enrolled, but none of them turned up in Nagpur. The seminary was finally opened on the 13th of April 1902. Within twelve years of its existence, 11 Europeans and five Indians studied there. In 1914, it was closed down; it was reopened in 1920 for two years and closed down again. The diocese of Hyderabad had no seminary, nor could it afford one. Its candidates, when there was any, were sent either to Nellore or Kandy.

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170 Ibid.
1.5.12 Bombay

The acts and decrees of the first Provincial Council of Bombay are the most extensive and elaborate of all. Bombay departed in some respect from the traditional pattern of other Indian seminaries. A strict separation between the minor and major seminary was introduced only after 1860. Minor seminarians lived with the boarders and orphans of the Bandra School and wore clerical dress. The whole experiment proved to be a failure and the minor seminary was closed down in 1886. Bombay remained without a separate minor seminary.

The major seminary that had been shifted five times between 1852 and 1869 was now housed in St. Xavier's College and had 13 students in 1882. From 1891 to 1900, the seminary was lodged in a dozen rooms of the upper floor of St. Xavier's High School. The seminarians were warned not to disturb the high school boys and they lived in a monastic retirement and discipline with hardly any relaxation at all. The German Jesuits who took over the seminary afterwards considered the whole institution worthless and closed it down in 1900. The six students then under training were sent to Kandy, Ceylon and the Bombay Seminary, after 130 years of existence, came to a temporary halt.172

1.5.13 Pondicherry

The archdiocese of Pondicherry had little to change in order to fall in line with the new regulations. Its theological training system had served as a pilot programme for the rest of India. With the division of the original Pondicherry mission, the new dioceses of

172 Anathil, op. cit., p. 110.
Coimbatore and Mysore had started their own seminaries. In 1899, with the separation of Kumbakonam, one more seminary had to be started there. But it was proposed that instead of establishing a fourth seminary, all the students of the four missions should be sent to one metropolitan seminary at Pondicherry. This would mean a substantial saving, both in expenses and staff. Consequently, the separate diocesan seminaries were reunited in the metropolitan seminary of Pondicherry. This seminary was finally transferred to Bangalore in 1935 where new buildings were erected to cope with the increasing number of vocations.173

1.5.14 Verapoly

In Malabar, the ecclesiastical training system underwent thorough changes in the second half of the 19th century that made it to flourish in the first half of the 20th. The vicar Apostolic of Malabar, Mgr. Bacinelli (Bernadine of Sta Tersa O.C.D.), abolished the age-old Syrian Malpanate system in 1850 and established five seminaries: one for Latins and Syrians together at Verapoly and four for the Syrians alone. This reform, radical as it appears, definitely established the Syro-Malabar Church, and its present prosperity may well be ascribed to the clear-sightedness as well as the courage of Mgr. Bacinelli.174

With the erection of the new Syrian vicariates of Trichur and Kottayam in 1887, the virtual separation of the Syrian community from the Latin archdiocese followed. The seminary of Puthenpally continued under Verapoly and therefore, soon the question

173 Ibid. op. cit. p. 111.
174 Ibid.
arose: Should the new dioceses establish their own seminaries or was it more advisable to concentrate the whole training of the clergy in one central seminary? The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, paying due attention to the peculiar circumstances of Malabar, departed from its usual policy and decided to establish a central seminary for the whole Malabar. Therefore, in 1889 the seminary of Puthenpally was taken over by the Holy See and on 21st November 1890 formally declared "Central Apostolic Seminary" for the whole of Malabar. It was placed under the immediate jurisdiction of Propaganda. The rectors and professors were to be appointed by the Sacred Congregation. With this arrangement of the Holy See, all the other clerical training institutions were suppressed and all candidates had to go through the Puthenpally seminary. A new problem arose, that of the knowledge of Latin and Syrian. The Apostolic Delegate consulted about these difficulties and gave the rector of the seminary the following directive: "No candidate who does not possess as much knowledge of Latin as will enable him to understand the lessons in the same language nor any one without the general notion in rhetoric, arithmetic, geography and history should be admitted to the major seminary.\(^{176}\)

1.5.15 Central Seminary of Kandy (Ceylon)

In 1866, Fr. Le Roux of the Paris Mission Society, in a long memorandum addressed to Propaganda had proposed the idea of starting a major seminary for the whole of India. Finally, it was the personal initiative of the great missionary Pope Leo XIII that gave reality to the idea. In 1884, the Pope sent L.M. Zaleski as secretary to the first Delegate Apostolic to India, Mgr. Agliardi, and charged him with the task of

\(^{175}\textit{Ibid.}\)

\(^{176}\textit{Ibid.},\ p. 112.\)
studying the possibilities of establishing a central seminary for India. After selecting Kandy as the place for the new seminary, the next question posed was to whom the seminary should be entrusted. Pope Leo XIII himself finally decided to entrust this great mission to the Belgian Jesuits and selected Fr. S. Grosjean, S.J., the superior of the West Bengal mission as the rector of the new seminary. The plans were finalised and approved in March 1892, and the seminary was actually started on the 18th of May 1893 with three seminarians and five Benedictines of the diocese of Kandy.177

The objectives of the Papal Seminary were clearly expressed by the Holy Father in his foundation brief Epistola ad extremas orientis oras, which gave the greatest emphasis to his mission policy concerning India, "India ab Indis evangelizetur."

The course of studies was organised according to the curriculum of the Gregorian University. Though intended only as a major seminary at the beginning, provision had to be made to make up for the gaps in the preparatory training of the candidates. Therefore, one to three years training in humanities, especially Latin and English and in the natural sciences, had to be introduced before the philosophy course. The philosophy course lasted for three years and theology for four years. The seminarians therefore remained in the seminary for seven to ten years.178

177 Tell the next Generation- Papal Seminary Centenary Souvenir, (Pune: 1893-1993).
178 Anathil., op.cit., 115.
1.6 Second Vatican Council and Priestly Formation in India

Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) announced his plan to convene the Church’s 21st Ecumenical Council on the 25th of January 1959. This was the first such council after the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), and considering the number of Fathers who participated, this was the largest council that ever took place in history. After a preparation of nearly four years, Pope John XXIII was able to open this Council on 11th October 1962. The discussions and teachings of the Church were deliberated upon during the years that followed, until Pope Paul VI closed the Council on the 8th of December 1965. The sixteen documents of the Council deal, among other things, with the changes in theology and all aspects of the recent progress of man, problems of the developing nations, and so on.

1.6.1 Priestly Formation in the Post-Vatican Era

The Second Vatican Council marked the end of a period of priestly training and ushered in a new epoch. The basic document of the Council, which provides the blueprint, is the “Decree on Priestly Training” (Optatum Totius), a collection of some twenty-two propositions and the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (Presbyterorum Ordinis).

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Adaptation and reform was overdue in the training of the priest. The curriculum and formation followed so far in the seminaries was established by the Council of Trent four hundred years ago. At that time of history, a highly centralized organisation was necessary. Clergy morale and often morality were at a low ebb. Institutionally, the Church was in the doldrums and was being torn apart by schism and separation. Often, priests were ordained with little or no theology; spiritual training too was equally lacking. Candidates for Holy Orders were taught by individuals in a priest’s home:

With the new insights of the Second Vatican Council, with the social and economic revolution of our age, with the Church’s new awareness of her mission, it was evident that the training of a priest must undergo change. His training must be at once doctrinal and pastoral. The decentralisation which marked other fields contemplated by the Council applied here too, as the local church was brought back into its full focus.181

Until the Second Vatican Council, priests were seen as persons linked with the celebration of the cult; but this image was changed in the Second Vatican Council; it is now more holistic and describes priestly office as one of proclaiming the word of God, of celebrating the sacraments for the community and of offering leadership to the community (Lumen Grantium No.28).

The theological discussions on priesthood challenged many traditional concepts hitherto held to be unassailable. The uniform formation programme laid down by the

Council of Trent was seen as outdated. The general priesthood of the faithful questioned the hierarchical priesthood. The importance of the Word of God and adaptation to the times and places in the theological formations were brought more into focus. The question of celibacy became more debated after the Council.\textsuperscript{182}

### 1.6.2 Revision and Renewal of Priestly Formation Programs

Like every other area in the Church, priestly training was also very much affected by the Council. The Council addressed the problem of formation and ministry in the documents, \textit{Optatum Totius} and \textit{Presbyterorum Ordinis}, on the training of priests, ministry and the life of priests. Seen in the light of other Council documents, such as \textit{Gaudium et Spes}, \textit{Lumen Gentium}, \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium}, etc., the formation of priests seemed to be in urgent need of revision. After the Council, a serious crisis resulted in the priestly and religious life, especially in Europe and America. There was an exodus of a record number of priests and religious, during the years following the Council.\textsuperscript{183}

There was a strong feeling that priests and priestly training had lost touch with the day-to-day world. The working class, the poor and marginalised groups needed more attention; more democracy was needed in the Church. Seminaries pleaded for the revision of the system of priestly formation.

### 1.6.3 Episcopal Conference and Seminary Formation

The Council gave freedom to the episcopal conferences to draw up their own programme of formation “so that priestly training will always answer the pastoral

\textsuperscript{182}cf. Padinjarekuttu, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 90.

\textsuperscript{183}\textit{Ibid}, p. 91
requirements of the particular area in which the ministry is to be exercised" *(Optatum Totius* 1).

The *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* of 6th January 1970 encouraged bishops to pursue this matter further. The 1990 Synod of bishops dealt with the topic "The Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day." The preparatory document of the Synod pointed out that humanity was going through a cultural and spiritual crisis and absolute norms and references to the past as the source of wisdom had to be rejected. More sensitive issues—such as married clergy, ordination of married men to the priesthood, non-stipendiary priesthood, women priests, the possibility of a time-bound priestly ministry, etc.—were not taken up.

1.6.4 CBCI and Charter of Priestly Formation for India

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) prepared a Programme of Priestly Formation for India in 1971. After its Nagpur Meeting of 1984, the Conference decided to revise the existing Programme and to write it in the form of a charter. The first Charter of Priestly Formation for India was approved by the CBCI in April 1988.

Apostolic visitations of the major seminaries and the institutes of priestly formation were conducted throughout the world for nearly two decades at the request of Rome. The purpose of these visitations was to closely examine how seminaries had been

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reformed and renewed in line with the Apostolic Decree *Optatum Totius* and other post-council documents and to improve and renew the priestly formation offered to the future priests.

The apostolic visitation in India was held from 1997 to 1999. It was a joint effort of four congregations—Catholic Education, Evangelization of Peoples, Oriental Churches and Institutes of Consecrated Life. In the apostolic visitation, all aspects regarding the formation of seminaries were taken into consideration, following the criteria outlined in the *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. The revised and final version of the Charter was approved by the ‘Congregation for the Evangelization of Nations’ dated 10th April 2004, and the same was released on the occasion of the meeting of the CBCI in Trichy (15-19 January 2003).

The ‘Charter of Priestly Formation for India’ revised on the basis of the Apostolic Visitation and prepared by the CBCI (Commission for Vocations, Seminary, Clergy and Religious) is the *Magna Carta* for the formation of the clergy in India. The Charter is divided into six chapters: (1) Priestly formation in India (2) Minor Seminaries (3) Major Seminary Formation (4) Agents of Formation (5) Structures of Formation (6) Ongoing Formation of Priests. The document gives detailed instructions for the formation of clergy at various levels. The Charter is a great gift of the CBCI to the Church India in the new millennium.
Summary

Formation of Christian priests began with Jesus Christ’s call of his disciples from among whom he selected twelve as apostles, ordained them as priests during the Last Supper, and commissioned them to continue his work till the end of time. The apostles in their turn, after the Pentecost, went out to preach the gospel, established Christian communities and ordained priests and bishops to perpetuate the Apostolic Ministry. The formation of ministers of early centuries is divided into three stages: catechetical schools, monastic schools and episcopal schools.

The Council of Trent (1546-63), among other renewal programs, was a major step forward in the reorganisation, updating and systematisation of priestly formation in the Church. The formation of the clergy in the Church for four centuries following the Council was according to the legislations and teaching of this Council. This continued until the Second Vatican Council.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), called by Pope John XXIII, marked a distinctive juncture in the history of the Church. Through the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (Lumen Gentium), the Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life (Perfectae Caritatis) and the Decree on Priestly Formation (Optatum Totius), the Council updated and restructured the guidelines for priestly and religious formation in the Church.

In India, the formation of priests existed from the first century onwards as tradition holds that St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, came to India and
preached the gospel, established churches and ordained priests and bishops. The Syrian (St. Thomas) Christians of Malabar had the formation of their priests by a system called Malpanate. This system resembled the traditional Indian gurukulavasam (living with the teacher) where disciples lived with a guru (teacher) and studied under his care. This system was deeply rooted in the culture of the country. After the arrival of the Portuguese and the gradual Latinisation of the Indian Church, this age-old and time tested system faded away in due course of time. The seminary formation in India, therefore, could be divided mainly into two phases: pre-Portuguese period and post-Portuguese period. The Portuguese arrived in India in 1498 and established the first seminary in Goa—Santa Fe (St. Paul’s College) in 1541.

The formation of the clergy in India was blurred by the influence of Padroado until the Congregatio de Propaganda took charge of the Church’s missionary activities together with the formation of the clergy. Seminary formation for four centuries until the Second Vatican Council was ‘Tredentine’ and this brought uniformity and catholicity in the priestly formation programmes also in India in par with the universal Church. An empirical study made by Paul Parathazam makes some startling revelations:

Perhaps no other organization invests so much in terms of human and financial resources in the formation of its personnel as the Church does. Few other professions require so many long years of formation as the Catholic priesthood. Today a candidate to the priesthood spends in addition to regular school and college education, anywhere between 10 to 15 years in formation before he is ordained....In spite of this long and expensive formation
programme the priestly formation in India today fails to deliver the goods, at least quality goods.\textsuperscript{186}

There is an urgent need to improve the selection method for inducting candidates to priesthood and religious life. Aptitude and motivation of the candidates must be carefully considered according to modern scientific techniques. As Parathazham rightly observed, "Unless stringent quality control measures are introduced in the selection of candidates at all levels, the Church may soon find itself with a leadership that has lost its credibility."\textsuperscript{187}

Several studies and surveys show the urgent need for competent and qualified formators in the formation houses. Any delay or negligence from the authorities may have serious consequences. Another area neglected in the formation programme is contextualised and inculturised formation. Even after forty years of the Second Vatican Council, the formation in seminaries is very much structured and westernised with a colonial colour. Decolonisation and 'Indianisation' in the seminary formation is very essential for the future of the Church in India.


\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, p.39.