INTRODUCTION

The essential role of the Lay people has been strikingly emphasized by the Vatican Council II.\(^1\) Since the Vatican Council II, the Catholic Church has called for a renewal in the life and role of the Lay people. The Lay people have a distinct and real role in the mission of the Church.\(^2\) They have been given a dignified place in the church. In the mission of the Church, the involvement of the Lay people is vital for the spiritual and social development of the society.\(^3\) And the Lay people are considered unique in the Catholic Church because they hold a special place in the function of human society. They can effect laws, cultural attitudes, and social systems in the places where they live and work. The Lay people have an influence that the Clergy do not have.\(^4\) The Lay people’s very involvement in secular activities such as the family, work and profession, trade and commerce, politics and government, mass media, science and culture, and national and international organizations can transform their ordinary work into mission work that touches the lives of people in the world. Before entering into the research subject, as a historical background to this study, a brief presentation follows on: Catholics in the World Context, View of Christianity from the Times of St.Thomas, Christianity in Tamil Nadu with different missions, Christianity in Kanyakumari District, and Lay people’s condition before and after the Second Vatican Council II.

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1 The Second Vatican Council Prolonged from 1962 to 1965 A.D. at Rome in Vatican City.
4 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican Council II, 1964, No: 11.
Catholics in the World context

The word, “Catholic” is derived from the Greek word *Katholikos*, originally meaning ‘Universal’. The Catholic Church is “Universal” meaning that it is intended for the whole world. The term ‘Catholic’ was first used to describe the original Christian Community by Ignatius of Antioch in his letter to the Christians. In today’s terms, the Catholic Church also refers to the institutional Church, the one that recognizes the Pope as its leader. The population of the world at present is about 700 crores. Approximately, 220 crores follow Christianity. More than half of the Christians, i.e., about 120 crores are Catholics. That makes Catholics, the largest denomination of any religion in the World. These words of Jesus, recorded in the Bible are considered to form the core of the Catholic Church’s claim to be one true Church founded by Jesus Christ. Church structures in the Catholic Church are attached with a mission to serve the Lay people in the area of their special interest. The Bishop is the chief of the Catholic Diocese that consists of several Parishes. The Parishes are headed by Priests. The link between the Catholics and Pope distinguishes the Catholics from other Christian denominations. The Catholic Church teaches that the Pope, who is also the Bishop of Rome and successor of Peter, is the visible source and foundation of the unity of all Catholics in the World level.

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6 *The Tenure of Ignatius of Antioch is from 35 to 107 A D.*
8 Peter was one among the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ and Considered the head among them.
For Catholics, the Seven Sacraments or Rituals are considered the centre of their life. Catholics believe that worthy participation in the Rituals provide them the help they need to follow Jesus Christ and to make progress through their life. It is believed that each Ritual was instituted by Jesus Christ during his life on earth.\footnote{Bernier, P., \textit{Ministry in the Church: A historical and Pastoral Approach}, Twenty Third Publications, Connecticut, 1992, p.75.} The seven Rituals are: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Confession, Marriage, Holy Orders\footnote{Holy Orders devote Priesthood of Bishopricm etc.} (Priesthood) and Anointing of the Sick.

The Catholic Church has 3834 Dioceses all over the world.\footnote{The Catholic Directory, Paulist Press, New York, 2013, p. 236.} Each Diocese is administered by a Bishop. Dioceses are divided into small communities called Parishes. Each Parish is administered by one or more Priests. Priests are assisted by Assistant Priests, Deacons and Lay people. The Lay people perform several activities of spiritual and social nature in the Parish. They obey the Church authorities and contribute financially to the maintenance of the Priests and the Parish activities. The Lay people’s involvement in the Parish is primarily directed and supervised by the Parish Priests.\footnote{Cook, B., \textit{Ministry in the Modern Church}, New York, Paulist Press, 1985, p.207.} The Lay people are in the Parish to help the Priests. In 1922, Pope Pius XI established ‘Catholic Action’ as the participation of the Lay people in the work of Clergy. Catholic action groups were formed to create a good atmosphere that would bring true, spiritual and moral solutions on the problems of the time in the world level.\footnote{Doohan, L., \textit{The Lay People Centered Church}, Minneapolis, Winston Press, 1984, p.32.}

\textbf{View of Christianity from the Time of St. Thomas}

There is a special relationship between Christian Community in India and Saint Thomas. Jesus Christ had a plan to send out all his disciples to preach his
message. Saint Thomas also went to preach the teachings and preaching of Jesus Christ. There is a community of Christians in India, which is holding that it had been to their ancestors that Saint Thomas preached the message of Jesus Christ, and brought Christianity to India.\textsuperscript{17} There is no other community in the world that has made a rival claim that would invalidate this special relationship between Christian Community in India and Saint Thomas.\textsuperscript{18}

St. Thomas founded seven Churches in India: They are at (1) Niranam (2) Chayal (3) Kollam (4) Parur (5) Kodungallur (6) Kokkamangalam (7) Kottakayal.\textsuperscript{19} The whole Christian tradition in India centers on the fact that Saint Thomas brought Christianity on the Malabar Coast, and during his subsequent mission on the Coromandel Coast he was massacred.\textsuperscript{20} Duarte Barbosa, a Portuguese writer and officer around 1500 A.D gives an account of his visit to the Tomb of Saint Thomas at Mylapore in 1515 A.D.

"...Here (in Mylapore) lies the body of the blessed Saint Thomas very modestly in the Church which his disciples and fellows build for him. The Moors and Heathen used to burn lights on it, each one claiming it as his own. Some Indian Christians go there on pilgrimage and carry away many relics, little earthen balls from the same tomb of the blessed Saint Thomas, and also give alms to the aforesaid Moor, telling him to repair the said house."\textsuperscript{21}

How this Christian community developed during the first centuries of the Christian era is known very little. Several travelers, who visited South India in the

\textsuperscript{17} Kuriakose, M.K., \textit{History of Christianity in India}, Oriental Publication, Delhi, 1982, p.15.
\textsuperscript{18} Vadakkara, Benedict, \textit{Origin of Christianity in India – A Historiographical Critique}, Delhi, 2007, p.115.
\textsuperscript{20} Panjikaran, Joseph, C., \textit{The Syrian Church in Malabar}, Bangalore, 1930, p.204.
course of centuries, have recorded some meager information about the scattered Christian communities in India. In the course of time, these scattered groups emerged into a single community inhabiting the Malabar Coast extending to Kanyakumari.\textsuperscript{22} The total numbers of the Saint Thomas Christians during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were about 80,000. These Christians lived in fifty large settlements. Some of the richer people lived in villas near the hills and far away from other people. It is stated that Saint Thomas Christians followed the Roman Catholic faith in general.\textsuperscript{23}

It is assumed that the initial converts were largely Jewish people, who are believed to have arrived in India around 562 B.C, after the destruction of the first Temple. Many of these Jews spoke Aramaic like Saint Thomas, who is credited by tradition with bringing Christianity to India.\textsuperscript{24} The world’s oldest existing Church structure, which is believed to be built by Saint Thomas in 57 A.D, called Thruvithancode Arappally or Thomaiyarkovil, is located at Thiruvithancode in Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu, India. It is now declared as international Saint Thomas Pilgrim center.\textsuperscript{25}

The French missionary, Jordanus Catalani was the first European to start conversion in India after the missionaries of St. Thomas. He arrived in Surat in 1320 A.D. After his ministry in Gujarat, he reached Quilon in 1323 A.D. He not only revived Christianity, but also brought thousands to the Christian community. As the first Bishop of India, he was also entrusted with the spiritual nourishment of the

\textsuperscript{22} Vadakkakara, Benedict, \textit{op.cit.}, p.140.
\textsuperscript{23} Burkitt, Crawford, \textit{Early Christianity outside the Roman Empire}, Cambridge, 1980, p.320.
\textsuperscript{24} Parasuram, T.V., \textit{India’s Jewish Heritage}, New Delhi, 1982, p.92.
\textsuperscript{25} Mundadam, Mathias, \textit{History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century}, Bangalore, 1984, pp. 105 – 106.
Christian community in Calicut, Mangalore, Thane and Broach, north of Thane.\textsuperscript{26} In the late 15 century, Portuguese missionaries came along with Portuguese long-distance maritime travellers who made contact with the Saint Thomas Christians in Kerala. The missionaries sought to introduce the Latin rituals among them and unify East Syrian Christians in India under the Vatican.\textsuperscript{27} Further, the Patronage for the Propagation of the Christian Faith in Asia was given to the Portuguese. The missionaries of the different religious groups such as Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits and Augustinians flocked out and began to build churches along the coastal regions, where the Portuguese power made itself felt.\textsuperscript{28}

Mangalore is another significant region on the West Coast, which has a huge Christian population. In 1321, the French Dominican Priest, Jordanus Catalani arrived in Bhatkal a place near Mangalore, and established a missionary station there. Many local people were converted to Christianity by Jordanus. The Mangalorean Catholics were not originally from Mangalore, but are descendants of Goa Catholics, who fled from Goa during the Portuguese-Maratha Periods.\textsuperscript{29} The origin of Christianity in North Konkan was due to the missionary activities of the Portuguese in the 16 Century. On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, the Christians of North Konkan in Maharashtra, who were known as Portuguese Christians, discarded that name and adopted the designation of East Indians.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{28} Geddes, Michael, \textit{The History of the Church of Malabar from the Time of its being First Discovered by the Portuguese in the Year 1501}, London, 1994, p.98.
\textsuperscript{29} John, K, J., \textit{The Road to Diampher. An Exhaustive Study of the Synod of Diampher and the Emergence of Roman Catholics in Kerala}, Cochin, 1999, pp.156 – 159.
\textsuperscript{30} Mundadan, Mathias, \textit{op.cit.}, p.190.
Marathi Christians are Protestants and are therefore distinct from East Indian Christians who are predominantly Roman Catholics, and inhabitants of the North Konkan region. They were converted through the efforts of the American Marathi Mission and Church Missionary Society of Church of England in the early 18th century.\(^\text{31}\)

Christianity progressed on a large scale and with great success along the Western Coast, and on the Eastern Coast at San Thome, Chennai, and as far as Bengal.\(^\text{32}\) In the Southern Districts, the Jesuit Mission in Madurai was the most famous. It extended to the Krishna River with a number of outlying stations beyond it.\(^\text{33}\) The Mission of Cochin, on the Malabar Coast, was also one of the most fruitful. Several Missions were also established in the region of Agra and Lahore in 1570.\(^\text{34}\) With the decline of the Portuguese power, other colonial powers such as the Dutch and the British gained influence. While Christians in India do not share one common culture, their culture for the most part tend to be a blend of Indian, Syrian and European cultures. The ancient Saint Thomas Christians of Kerala have a distinctively different culture, when compared to Christians in other parts of the country. Goan Christians have adopted a more western culture because it was colonized by the Portuguese in the 16th Century.\(^\text{35}\) Contemporary Goan Christian culture can be best described as an increasingly Anglicized Indo-Latin culture. Christianity in other parts of India spread under the colonial regimes of the Dutch,
Danish, French and most importantly the English, from the early 17 century to the time of Indian Independence in 1947.\(^{36}\)

Christianity as a religion plays a significant role in the daily life of Indian Christians. India ranks 15 among the countries, with highest Church attendance. Most Christians in India are Catholics of the Latin Church.\(^{37}\) The State of Kerala which was considered to be the home of the Saint Thomas Christian community is now divided into several different Churches and traditions. There are two Eastern Catholic Saint Thomas Christian Churches: the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, and the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. There are also several Oriental Orthodox and independent Churches including the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church and the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church.\(^{38}\) Since, the 19 century Protestant Churches have also been present; major such denominations include the Church of South India, the Church of North India, the Presbyterian Church of India, Baptists, Lutherans, Traditional Anglicans and other Evangelical groups. The Christian Church runs thousands of educational institutions and hospitals contributing to the development of the nation.\(^{39}\)

**Christianity in Tamil Nadu**

Christianity in the State of Tamil Nadu is believed to be 2000 years old. According to tradition, Christianity was introduced by Saint Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ.\(^{40}\) Today, these Saint Thomas Christians are found

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\(^{38}\) Daniel, David, *The Orthodox Church of India*, New Delhi, 1972, pp.72-75.


mainly in Kerala. The colonial age brought a large number of Portuguese, Dutch, British and Italian Christians to Tamil Nadu. Missionaries served not only the colonizers but also to spread the Christian faith among the millions of non-Christians in Tamil Nadu.\footnote{Farquhar, J.N., \textit{Apostle Thomas in South India}, Manchester, 1968, p.118.} Christians are a minority community comprising 6\% of the total population. They are predominately found in the southern Districts of Tamil Nadu – Kanyakumari, Thoothukudi and Tirunelveli.\footnote{Ayyar, P. V. Jagadisa, \textit{South Indian Shrines}, New Delhi, 1991, pp.75-77.}

The Roman Catholic Church (Latin Rite), the Church of South India, the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and other Evangelical denominations constitute the Christian population in Tamil Nadu.\footnote{Thekkedath, Joseph, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 201.} The Latin Rite of Roman Catholic Church is the oldest and largest among all. It has 18 Dioceses including the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Madras and Mylapore and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Madurai. The second largest Church by number of members is the Church of South India with 8 Dioceses in Tamil Nadu.\footnote{George, K.M., \textit{Church of South India, Life in Union} (1947-1997), Delhi, 1999, p.117.} Christian missionaries have contributed to the State’s development in the fields of education, healthcare and literature. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church created its first ‘Diocese of Thuckalay’ in Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu in 1996. In the same year, the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church has also newly established the ‘Diocese of Marthandam’ in Kanyakumari District.\footnote{Padmanabhan, S., \textit{Churches in Kanyakumari}, Nagercoil, 1978, pp. 25-30.}

San Thome Basilica is a Roman Catholic (Latin Rite) minor Basilica in San Thome, in the city of Chennai. It was built in the 16 century A.D. by the
Portuguese explorers, and rebuilt with the status of a Cathedral by the British in 1893. It was designed in Neo-Gothic style, favored by British architects in the late 19th century.\textsuperscript{46} Christian tradition holds that Saint Thomas was martyred at Saint Thomas Mount around 72 A.D. The Basilica is built over the site, where he was believed originally to be buried. San Thome Basilica is the Principal Church of the Madras-Mylapore Catholic Archdiocese.\textsuperscript{47} In 1956, Pope Pius XII raised the Church to the status of Minor Basilica. On February 11, 2006 it was declared a national shrine by the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. The San Thome Basilica is a pilgrimage center for Christians in India.\textsuperscript{48}

Christians of Tamil Nadu have made concrete contributions to Tamil language and Tamil literature. Some of the eminent persons are: Samuel Vedanayagam Pillai (1826-1889), Henry Albert Krishna Pillai (1827-1900), Dr. Abraham Pandithar and Xavier Thaninayagam.\textsuperscript{49} Christians who had been born in Europe, but adopted to Tamil culture have made major contributions to Tamil language. They are: Robert de Nobili, Constanzo Beschi (Veeramaa Munivar), and George Uglov Pope.\textsuperscript{50}

Robert de Nobili was born in 1577 at Tuscany. He arrived in Goa as an Italian Jesuit missionary. After a short stay in Cochin in Kerala, he went to Madurai in Tamil Nadu in 1606 and founded Madurai Mission. The following few

\textsuperscript{46} Hemlye, Edward, \textit{Saint Thomas and India}, The Clergy Monthly 16(1952), pp.363-375.


\textsuperscript{50} Desmet, Richard, \textit{Dharma, Hindu and Christian according to Robert de Nobili}, Rome, 1986, pp. 76-78.
pages will present about the Missions. Xavier Mission was a prelude to Madurai Mission. The Madurai Mission paved the way for Portuguese Mission, Protestant Mission and the consequent British period.

**The Kumari Mission**

By the year 1540 the Portuguese had established themselves firmly on the west coast with their main Mission center at Goa, and stations at Cranganore (Kodungallur) and Cochin. The Indian Christians continued as before, and their relations with the Portuguese were still friendly. Under Portuguese influence there had been many conversions to Christianity resulting in the creation of an indo-Portuguese Christian community though of rather unsatisfactory quality. It was at this stage that the King of Portugal, always solicitous for the progress of Christian faith in his rapidly expanding dominions, appealed to the Pope and the newly formed Society of Jesus for Missionaries to go to India. The first man to be chosen was Francis Xavier (1506-1552). Francis Xavier was educated in Parish where he had come under the influence of Ignatius Loyola. In 1541 he set out for India with the object of reclaiming for Christ the ‘heathen’ population of the areas under Portuguese influence,\(^{51}\) or in other words ‘conquer the East for Christianity.’ Thus began the Xavier Mission in India, which really changed the face of Christianity in Asia.

Francis Xavier is justifiably called the pioneer of Missions in Asia, of which India had a share. He shines above all those who followed him by his sympathy for the poor and the lowly, by his energy and spirit, by his utter fearlessness in the face of dangers and his supreme faith in his Mission. His consuming desire was

to spread the message of Christ far and wide. He was dogmatic and intolerant, but it was the outcome of his blind faith. By starting various schools at important places, Xavier contributed also to the spread of education in India. The fact that he showed special concern for the sick and the poor, particularly the fisher folk, increased his popularity. His spirit has been an inspiration for generations of Christian workers in India. However, his main drawback, as it must be admitted, was that he knew very little about the genius and wealth of the Indian culture and religions. Actually his contacts with India were only through the coastal regions of the south-west and south-east and with the less or least educated people. Firth is right when he wrote: “He had been criticized for hasty and superficial methods never stopping to learn a language or really get to know the culture of a people.”

The Madurai Mission

The Xavier Mission that St. Francis Xavier established in India took up with enthusiasm the work of conversion. But progress was slow till Robert De Nobili a brilliantly gifted, highly educated, and zealous man came to be in charge of the Mission in Madurai in Tamilnadu. De Nobili, a man of remarkable insight came with desire to convert as many Hindus as possible to Christianity, after a short experience of life in Madurai. He reached the conclusion that Christianity would have little success in India if it kept to its western style and refused to understand the mind and thought of the people of the country. The problem before him was to make Christianity acceptable to Hindus without being imposed on them. He received the answer from St. Paul, who said that while preaching one has to get naturalized in the culture of the community for whom the message is meant. De Nobili obtained the

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approval of the Jesuit mission to undertake a serious study of Hinduism, and Madurai was especially suited for this purpose. Closely following the social habits of Brahmins, Nobili was able to obtain assistance from learned pundits in his study of Hindu religious thought. He hoped to win people of the higher castes by leaving the whole caste system untouched. After years of arduous work, in the course of which he acquired a fair mastery of Sanskrit, he met in argument the learned Brahmins of Madurai, in religious discussion. These were according to the ancient well-established practice of sastrathavada, debates on religious topics before a learned audience. There he tried to uphold Christian doctrines in terms of Upanishadice thought. He is said to have gained the respect of even the orthodox Brahmins of the court, but, as Richter says, Nobili’s system stood in sharp contrast to that of Xavier, which had prevailed hitherto, to the ordinary rule and practice of every monastic order in India.  

But the other Mission groups could not appreciate Nobili’s attempt to present Christianity in a Hindu style. Rome forced Nobili to abandon his methods and forbade him to baptize. He was accused of corrupting Christianity by admitting Hindu practices into it. Any compromise with Hindu life or religion was forbidden for example, the eating of beef was held to be necessary as it would put the convert altogether out of the pale of Hinduism.

**Portuguese Mission**

From the very beginning Christianity had grown up in Indian soil as a naturalized religion and was accepted as one among the Indian religions. The

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Christians were respected and honored by the rulers, leaders, and higher castes. The Rajas and the Emperors conferred up on them royal privileges and grants to be enjoyed forever. In a martial, commercial and cultural achievement the Christians also made their contribution. Most of the foreign Missionaries of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries particularly the Portuguese who imposed latinization on the Indian Christians, were to a large extent ignorant or ill informed of the social life and customs of India, and consequently failed to appreciate them. Indian Christians looked for an alternative structure to the Roman Catholic one, which had been imposed on them at the Synod of Diamper. The Coonen Cross Revolt in 1653 at Mattanchery near Kochi marked the final out break and split the Christian community into two groups. One remained in communion with the Pope and the other took an oath known as Coonen Cross Oath and decided to cut all communions with Rome and keep its identity and autonomy.

The Christian mission did not make many inroads into the world of the caste Hindus or Muslims in the sixteenth century. There was hardly a creative encounter between Christianity and Indian culture. The Missionary efforts of the Portuguese were mainly confined to small pockets in India where they held political power. Christianity spread mainly among the employees of the Portuguese and the depressed classes. Consequently caste Hindus developed the notion that Christianity was the religion of the depressed cases. Disappointingly the converts’ understanding of Christian faith was shallow, their moral and ethical character frivolous and their life-style uninspiring that they provided no impetus for the surrounding non-Christians to rethink their way of life. Christianity and their Missions were interpreted

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as means for the extension of western political control and aggressive imperialism. Many right thinking Indians had expressed their amazement at this dubious association. The words of Jawaharlal Nehru are illustrative: “The gospel of Jesus, the gently but relentless rebel against untruth and injustice could so easily be made a tool of imperialism, capitalism and political domination.”

Although, Portuguese Missionaries had been pioneers of Missionary work and services during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, their Mission was aggressive and not in the way Mission was envisaged by Jesus Christ. Their interest in Missionary and church progress began to die down the moment the temporal power of the Portuguese began to decay. The Dutch and the British who came after the Portuguese were interested solely in trade. Moreover they were Protestants and had no sympathy with the activities of the Catholic orders. So the first phase of evangelization came to a close in India by the middle of the seventeenth century with the decline of the political power of the Portuguese in the subcontinent.

The Portuguese Intervention

The second half of the fifteenth century is famous in the history of the world as the time of the great voyages of discovery undertaken by maritime nations of Western Europe, led to the founding of colonial empires in America, Africa and Asia. The pioneers in this enterprise were Spain and Portugal. One of the motives behind it was the desire to find out a new route to India for the purpose of trade. The famous traveler Marco Polo who travelled in the East from 1270 to 1295 was the first to bring a moderately trustworthy account of India, its people, its wealth in the ears of Europe.

In 1498 Vasco de Gama reached India and landed near Calicut in search of Christians and spices. For the Christians of Malabar it was the beginning of a new epoch of tremendous importance, entering into a new world of existence. As Julius Richter says; the landing of the Portuguese marks the advent of a new epoch, an epoch of Roman Catholic Mission in India.57

The Portuguese Kings also viewed it as their sacred duty to render all support to spread the gospel. Panikkar says:

“With the Portuguese Christianization was a state enterprise. The king paid for the entire ecclesiastical establishment of the East. The doctrine of Padroado (jus patronatus established by the Papal Bull of 1514) vested the authority for missionary work effectively in the hands of the Portuguese crown in areas where Portugal claimed political rights”58

Portuguese – St. Thomas Christians interact

The Portuguese considered the Indian Christians’ life inferior in many ways. Their attitude to Indian Christians or St. Thomas Christians was motivated by a sense of superiority about their form of Christianity, which according to them was the true form, to which all Christians should conform in order to be perfect Christians. Their aim always was to make the Indian Christians conform to the Portuguese ways and usages, which were of Latin derivation. On the other hand, St. Thomas Christians held a different view. They could never imagine that only the Latin form of Christianity was the true form of Christianity. According to them:

57 Richter, Julius, *op.cit.*, p.44.
“... both the Portuguese and they were Christians and both belong to the universal church. But each local community has their customs and usages probably going back to the time of the Apostles themselves. They could never entertain the idea of giving up their customs and practices. They were ready to accept from the Latin missionaries what they lack in instruction, a better discipline, but not those missionaries."

The general impression in the west about the eastern Christians was that they were heretics and schismatic. The conflict began when the Portuguese tried to bring St. Thomas Christians under their church jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{60} There were some fundamental differences between the Portuguese and the St. Thomas Christians. Though both were motivated by the same principle of Christian unity, the Indian Christians were conscious of their communal identity, local culture, and naturally there were reservations in their social relations with the Portuguese. On the Portuguese side there were no restrictions or reservations. The St. Thomas Christians were not ready for a compromise on their communal life, which was culturally governed by local customs. Though Christians, they did not like to mingle with Portuguese freely because they were alien to Indian culture. In this sense the high caste people of Malabar were less strangers to them than the Portuguese.\textsuperscript{61} Also the Indian Christians are said to have held the view that each one can be saved through one’s own faith and all faiths are, in that sense, right. Portuguese considered this a serious ‘error’, bordering on heresy.

\textsuperscript{59} Perumalil, H.C. and Hambye, E.R., \textit{op.cit.}, p.86.

\textsuperscript{60} Koodapuzha, Xavier, \textit{Faith and Communion of the Indian Church of the Saint Thomas} (Vadavathur: Institute of Religious studies, 1982) p.25.

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.}
In its relation with the Portuguese Christians the St. Thomas Christians wanted their community to remain unimpaired in any way, each independent of the other but with full cooperation for the benefit of both. But the Portuguese naturally tried to persuade the local Christians to accept the Pope as their leader, which they were not easily prepared to do, though at the same time they did not want to alienate the good will of the Portuguese and endanger their pepper trade.\(^{62}\) Portuguese Missions were against any sort of indianisation or integration of Christianity with Indian culture. They did not practice religious tolerance. Many of their moves were meant to destroy the customs of the indigenized Christians and to Europeanize them. The Portuguese and the Missionaries indulged in conversion but asked the new converts to give up their caste and as a sign of it they asked them to eat beef and drink wine, so abominable to the Indian high castes. (Eating beef and drinking liquor were the customs of the lowest castes and the outcastes in India). Thus they made Christianity a hated and untenable religion for the higher castes. Firth Says:

“\textit{In the eyes of the Hindus Christianity was the religion of the }\textit{franks or parangis} \textit{the term used to denote especially the Portuguese but also any kind of European. It was not a complimentary term, it suggested meat-eating, wine-drinking, loose-living, arrogant persons, whose manners were so far removed from Indian propriety that social intercourse with them was unthinkable.}”\(^{63}\)

Thus the Portuguese- St. Thomas Christian encounter became a turning point in the history of the Christians of the Malabar Coast.

\(^{62}\) C.P. Mathew and M.M. Thomas, \textit{The Indian Churches of Saint Thomas}, New Delhi, ISPCK, 1967, p.27.

\(^{63}\) Firth, C.B., \textit{op.cit.}, p.111.
The Protestant Mission

It is true to that the Protestant Missions in the nineteenth century like the Roman Catholic Mission in the sixteenth century largely followed the colonial flag. Colonialism and Christian Mission went hand-in-hand since the arrival of the Portuguese in India. The extent and the nature of the relationship between the Missions and Colonialism varied from one colonial power to another. Nevertheless, there was an alliance and for many in India during this period Christianity was a western religion and a means used by the western powers to establish their political control. And Missionary enterprise was interwoven with commerce and cultural imperialism. The attitude and feelings of the educated Indians towards Christian Missions are reflected in the following statement of the great social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy:

“In Bengal, where the English are rulers, and where the mere name of English man is sufficient to frighten people, an encroachment upon the rights of her poor, timid and humble inhabitants and upon their religion, cannot be viewed in the eyes of God or the public as a justifiable act.”

Chakkaria, a Tamil Christian convert and a prominent lawyer was voicing the attitude of Hindus when he asked; why should the Hindus who yielded in politics and commerce allow the sanctity of their souls to be violated by the intrusion of a foreign religious denomination?

64 Philip, T.V., Christianity in India during Western Colonization: Conflict, Reconciliation or Adjustment, ICHR, Vol.XXI, No.1 June, 1987, p.16.
Most of the Missionaries and some historians of eighteenth and nineteenth century Missions believed that British rule in India was an opportunity provided by God to lift India from ignorance about God and superstitions. In European Mission histories, the colonized were termed as ‘barbarous’, ‘savages’, ‘pagan’ and ‘superstitious’. Hence the Mission goal was not only Christianizing heathens, but also civilizing them under superior European culture and Christian spirituality. Further the Missionary work in eighteenth-nineteenth century India was grounded in the binary distinctions of European and Indian, white and brown, civilized and primitive, and Christian and pagan. This binary division gave the colonizers grounds for justifying the European project of colonization of India and conversion of the Indians. William Wilberforce, leader of Evangelical group in the House of Commons said in 1793 that the Indian natives were idolatrous and superstitious with a “feeble knowledge of God”. The people themselves were barbarous and low measured in the scale of European civilization. The natives must be taught a better religion at a time and in a manner that will not inspire them with passion for political change. 66 Hence the British, the patrons of the Christianizing scheme, had a simple goal of raising the people to a higher and superior culture. It was the hope of the colonizers that if the higher classes in the Hindu social order were converted it would eventually lead to the dissolution of Hindu culture.

The First Protestant Mission

The first Protestant Mission to India came from Denmark. King Frederick IV was an ardent follower of the Lutheran teachings. He believed that is

one of the duties devolving upon monarchs to make provision for Christianizing their non-Christian subjects. A Mission was founded in the Danish settlement of Tranquebar in South India. The first Protestant Missionaries to arrive on Indian soil were two German Missionaries Ziegenbalg and Plutschau sent by the King. They landed on July 9th 1706 in Tranquebar a Danish trade post. Julius Richter says that this marked the birthday of Protestant Missions in India.\(^67\) Since the Danish trade post never crossed boundary of Tamil kingdom, their Missionary work was confined mainly to Tamil Nadu region. The Protestant Missionary work gained momentum only after the arrival and the expansion of Anglican power.

**The British Period**

The British Government had three roles in India, first that of a trader, second that of ruler, and then that of a Christian preacher. British rulers held and professed Christianity. Consequently British rule was equated with Christian domination. In the early years of its rule the Company had taken a position of neutrality with regard to the religious and social affairs of its subject. The East India Company decided not to interfere with the traditional cultures of the people by supporting Missionary work. The company’s policy was non-interference in Indian education but favoring traditional Hindu or oriental learning. The non-interference probably was based on the fear that Missionaries through English education expecting to aid conversions might offend the Hindu subject of the company and create unrest.\(^68\)

\(^{67}\) Richter, Julius, *op.cit.*, p.103.

This policy of non-interference with the customs and traditions of the natives and lack of support for Missionary work were reviewed after the Company Charter was reviewed in 1813. Finally in 1833, the policy of the company was changed under pressure from the Evangelicals in England. This marked the first decisive step of Missionary work in India. A spokesman of the Evangelicals declared: “The true cure of darkness is the introduction of light. The Hindus err because they were ignorant and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their disorders.”69

The Charter of 1833 approved the permanent presence of Missionaries in India and made provision for Anglican hierarchy at Calcutta. With the expansion of the British Empire Missionaries began to arrive and Christianity began to spread by establishing diocese at Madras and Bombay. Since then there existed a renewed cooperation between the Missionaries and the colonial power, in helping one another in their Missions.70

By the end of the eighteenth century a new wave of the spirit of evangelization permeated Protestant Churches. In 1792 the English Baptists organized the first Anglican Mission Baptist Missionary Society. Later Protestant Missionary preparations were undertaken on a large scale by LMS and CMS. Alongside the older societies there have come into the field a bewildering number of Missionary organizations. The characteristic feature of nineteenth century Missions was the enthusiasm for the multiplication of Missionary efforts. The priority of the

69 Ibid.

70 Jacob, S. Dharmaraj, op.cit., p.19.
colonial Missions was conversion. Conversion of individual souls was considered the sole end of Mission. To a European Missionary non-Christian religions and Eastern cultures were non-salvific and that Christianity alone would redeem them. The British rule had provided favorable atmosphere and necessary infrastructure for the Missions to work even in the remotest mountain villages without confronting much opposition. Julius Richter says that, it would be hard to find any land possessing so great an attraction for the Missionary societies.\textsuperscript{71} The mood of Mission societies and Missionaries were summarized in the following words:

\textit{“The content of their (missionaries) hope was not merely a success of individual conversions but a comprehensive revolution in heathen Society in which every aspect of that society would be praised from the grip of satanic domination and submitted to the liberating lordship of Christ”}\textsuperscript{72}

After the Charter of 1833 was renewed, Missionaries were allowed freely to come to India. Missionary teams became powerful and their style of work changed. By this time a new set of Missionaries rooted in the ‘iconoclastic zeal of extreme Protestantism’\textsuperscript{73} began to arrive. These Missionaries, soon through letters, reports and stories, created a much distorted image about the people and culture in India. They were imbued with the western ‘imperial sentiments’ and the sense of cultural superiority and agreed with Charles Grant, the spokesman of the Evangelicals in England, that it was not any inborn weakness that made Hindu degenerate but the nature of their religion. For the Evangelicals India was in darkness and would need

\textsuperscript{71} Richter, Julius, \textit{op.cit.}, p.221.
\textsuperscript{72} Jacob, S.Dharmaraj, \textit{op.cit.}, p.58.
\textsuperscript{73} Mathew, C.P. and Thomas, M.M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.48.
the light present in the western world. Claudius Buchanan another spokesman of the Evangelicals who had been a Missionary in India said:

“The missionaries asserted that since God laid upon Britain the solemn duty of evangelizing India, the Government should not hesitate to throw its weight into the struggle. They demanded above all open Government patronage of Christian education and vigorous welfare upon the abuses associated with Hindu religion.”

The Evangelicals and other Mission societies made a combined attempt to change the policy of the British Government and demanded the introduction of legal and social reforms in India. It was thus that William Bentick in March 1835 issued his resolution intended mainly to promote European literature and science and utilize funds mainly for English education. The study of Indian literature and oriental works was admitted to be of little intrinsic value and the opinion was that these literatures inculcate the most serious errors on the subjects. Also the customs and traditions and the religious beliefs of the subject people were considered by the Missionary educators and their societies in England as a sign of depravity and futility. The remedy was the introduction of English education.

Alexander Duff, Scottish Missionary and leading educator whose ideas can be considered representative of the majority of Missionaries in the nineteenth century, thought that though Hindu philosophical discourse contained lofty terms in its religious vocabulary what they conveyed were only vain, foolish and wicked conceptions. According to Duff, Hinduism spread like a dark universe where all life

75 Immanuel, David, op.cit., p.27.
76 Stephen, Neill, Builders of the Indian Church, Kottayam, CMS Press, 1940, pp.106-123.
dies and death lives. The Christian task for him was to do everything possible to demolish such a gigantic fabric of idolatry and superstition. Needless to say, such an attitude prevented any positive encounter between Christianity and Indian culture. Duff, Buchanan, Trevelyan, Macaulay and others had great influence on the Missionary thinking. The Missionaries and civil servants who came to India were so prejudiced that they did not see anything good in India society.

The Missionaries and their societies subscribed to the view that civilizing the Indian people would prepare the primitive religious people to embrace Christianity. Nineteenth century Protestant missiology could be understood against the background of Christianization and civilizing as two sides of the same coin. Missions were unwilling to understand the complexities of Indian cultural variants. Deeply entrenched in them was a sense a superiority of European civilization and that coloured their approach to people of other cultures and religious faiths. The Missions and colonial administrators asserted that Hinduism would die away soon and the whole nation could be civilized and Christianized. English education was a means towards this goal. That is to facilitate change from exterior to interior, from trade to religion, a cultural revolution for the betterment of the natives by disseminating knowledge of Christianity and make them loyal to the British. The comment of Arthur Mayhew is worth mentioning: “The evangelical supporters of Anglican Mission were far more interested in the dissemination of the Bible and baptismal statistics than in any measure for the general enlightenment of India.” The primary interest of the Raj was to keep control over India. The dominant interest of Missions

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was to work for the conversion of Indians of Christianity. But in the colonial situation they found themselves in need of one another and so mutual support was but natural.

Although the Missionaries worked hard and suffered a lot for bringing education and awareness of social justice to the people living in the rural areas of India, as they were associated with the colonial imperial powers, the significance of their selfless service was either overlooked or misunderstood.

Constanzo Beschi known as Virama Munivar was born in Mantora, Italy. He got permission from his Superior to go as a missionary to Madurai in South India. He reached Goa in 1710 and proceeded to South India and arrived in Madurai in 1711. He worked in Elakurichy and built Churches in Thanjavur. He visited important centers such as Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram and Madurai to learn Tamil language. Inspired by Hindu Temples, he built Christian Churches with elements of Hinduism. He is said to have converted 12,000 people to Christianity. He worked in the Thanjavur area till 1738 and settled in on the Coromandel Coast in 1740, where he remained till the end of his life. He died at Manappadu, near Tiruchendur.\(^81\)

George Uglow Pope, popularly known as G.U. Pope was a Protestant Churchmissionary. He spent many years in Tamil Nadu and translated Tamil texts to English. He was born in Canada in 1820. He left for South India in 1839 and arrived at Sawyerpuram near Tuticorin. Pope became a scholar in Tamil, Sanskrit and Telugu. He set up several schools and taught Latin, English, Hebrew, Mathematics and Philosophy. He completed his translation of Thirukkural in 1886. His sacred Kural contains introduction, grammar and notes. He also translated Tiruvasagam, which appeared in 1900. He died in 1908 and was buried in Central Oxford, England.\(^82\)

\(^{81}\) Dubois, A., *Letters on the State of Christianity in India*, London, Longmans, 1973, p.120.

\(^{82}\) Kuriakose, M.K., *op.cit.*, p.52.
Districts in Tamil Nadu with Significant percentage of Christians as per 2011 census:\footnote{1}{The Official 2011 Census for Tamil Nadu.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Christian (%)</th>
<th>Christian (numbers)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kanyakumari</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thoothukudi</td>
<td>16.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Nilgiris</td>
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<td>Tirunelveli</td>
<td>10.88</td>
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<td>Tiruchirappalli</td>
<td>09.01</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>07.62</td>
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<tr>
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<td>00.80</td>
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Christianity in Kanyakumari District

Kanyakumari District is located at the southern tip of Peninsular India. It is bordered on the west by Trivandrum District of Kerala State and by Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu in the north and east. The south-eastern boundary is coast and comprises of Gulf of Mannar (Bay of Bengal) while on the south and south-west the boundaries are the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea.84

Kanyakumari District consists of four Taluks namely Thovalai, Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode. It has nine Blocks: Agastheeswaram, Rajakkamangalam, Thovalai, Kurunthancode, Thuckalay, Thiruvattar, Killiyur, Munchirai and Melpuram. It has the following four municipalities: Nagercoil, Padmanabhapuram, Colachel and Kuzhithurai.85 Kanyakumari District was part of the Princely State of Travancore until India’s independence, and later it formed a part of Trivancore Cochin Presidency, before the State of Kerala was formed. Subsequently, the above said four Taluks were separated from Trivandrum District to form the new District of Kanyakumari. The newly formed Kanyakumari District was made a part of the Madras Presidency under the recommendations of the States’ Reorganization Commission in 1956. The Presidency was later renamed as Tamil Nadu.86 According to the 2011 census, Kanyakumari District has a population of 1,963,174, and 82.47 percent of the District is urbanized. The literacy rate of Kanyakumari District is 90.25 percent, which is high in Tamil Nadu. The distribution of population on religion is

84 National Informatics Centre, Collectorate, Kanyakumari District.
86 Virendra, Kumar, Committees and Commissions in India, Delhi, 1976, p.30.
51.27 percent Hindus, 44.47 percent Christians, 4.20 percent Muslims and 0.057 percent professing other beliefs.\(^87\)

Farming and Fishing are the traditional occupations of the people in Kanyakumari District. It has a special advantage of the rainfall both during the southwest and northwest monsoons. Cool sea breeze, moderate heat and the abundance of rainfall maintain a consistent temperature throughout the year.\(^88\) Kanyakumari District is known for wet and dry cultivation. Its nearness to the equator, topography and climatic factors support the cultivation of varied crops. Besides, this District is well known for valuable timber trees, palms, bamboos, and medicinal plants.\(^89\) Large and small scale industries thrive in the District due to the substantial availability of fresh materials like rubber, tapioca, palmara and wood of diverse kinds.

According to tradition, Saint Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus is said to have come to India in 52 A.D.\(^90\) During this period, there was trade between Kottayam in Travancore and San Thome in the Tamil country. And the ancient highway between the two regions passed through Pandya Nadu.\(^91\) It is maintained that Saint Thomas preached Christianity in the East Coast, where he had to escape the anger of the Brahmins, who tried to kill him, and finally attained martyrdom on 21 December 68 A.D in Saint Thomas Mount, Madras.\(^92\) As a result of the work of the

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early Missionaries, there appeared the Saint Thomas Christians. Various traditions about Saint Thomas are outlined as follows: Saint Thomas died near the ancient town of Mylapore, and his mortal remains were buried. It was the burial place that was excavated in 1523A.D by the Portuguese. Christian as well as non-Christian pilgrims and travelers had been told of the Mylapore tomb even before the sixteenth century.

The Catholic Church in India is said to be produced by three parts of Missionaries. The first part consisted of Churches of the Oriental rites which trace their origin to Saint Thomas. The second part consists of Churches founded mostly in the sixteenth century by the Portuguese missionaries known as Padroado. The third part consists of all the Churches founded from the seventeenth century by the Catholic missionaries sponsored by the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples in Rome. All these three parts of Missionaries had their influence that subsequently led to the establishment of the Diocese of Kottar in Kanyakumari District.

Catholic Mission existed in the area of Kanyakumari District before western extension took place in the sixteenth century. Quilon in the south was a prominent centre of Saint Thomas Christians. The early Missionaries could move southward to Kanyakumari and work among the local people. Father Givanni Maria Campori writes in 1604 about the Christians at the court of Travancore at

Thiruvithancode in Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{98} He mentions that they were called as Trajakal that they were bankers of the Kings and that they did not associate themselves with Christians of lower status and their Missionaries.\textsuperscript{99} This statement points out that Christians existed in this area. Even when Thiruvithancode ceased to be the Kingdom’s capital, it has retained some traces of ancient Christianity such as a small community of Syrian Orthodox Catholics and a chapel with a tabernacle bearing the Portuguese inscription. This Portuguese inscription highlights the continuity of Christianity within Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{100}

Kottar in Kanyakumari District is a town more ancient than Nagercoil. It was once significantly situated between two kingdoms, namely one of the Cheras and the other of the Pandyas. Diego Consalves, who arrived in Malabar in 1600 A.D., and wrote the first history of Malabar, mentions the existence of Saint Thomas Christians in Kottar as merchants.\textsuperscript{101} Baltasar Nunnes, a Jesuit missionary who worked along the coastal region of the present Diocese of Kottar, wrote in 1552 A.D that:

\textit{“Within the interior there are no Christians with the exception of those who have remained from the time of Saint Thomas. In any case, the Christians were living in Kottar long before Saint Francis Xavier appeared on the scene. By religion, they were Christians while by profession they were merchants.”}\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{\textit{98} Mackenzie, G.T., \textit{Christianity in Travancore}, Trivandrum, 1901, p.76.  
\textsuperscript{100} Agur, C.M., \textit{Church History of Travancore}, Madras, 1903, p.78.  
\textsuperscript{101} Mundadan, A.M., \textit{op. cit.}, p.106.  
Durate Barbosa, who was a Portuguese writer and officer came to India around 1500 and remained there for 16 years wrote around the year 1517:

“Near this Cape Comorin is an old Church of Christians which was founded by Armenians, who still have it and celebrate Christian Masses within it and have crosses on the altars. All voyagers pay tribute to it, and the Portuguese offer Mass in it, when they pass through here.”

From what has been said earlier, one can certify that the elements of ancient Christianity flourished in Kanyakumari District long before the Portuguese set out to convert the people of South India in the sixteenth century. And the presence of Saint Thomas Christians in places like Thiruvithamcode and Kottar has been supported by several Missionaries under the Portuguese Mission. With the coming of the Portuguese Missionaries in these areas in the sixteenth century, a section of the people known as Paravas, who were fishermen became Christians. About seven years after their conversion in December, 1544 over ten thousand fisher-people known as Mukkuvas were made Christians by one of the greatest Missionaries, Saint Francis Xavier. He was born on 7 April 1506 at Navarre in Spain and educated himself in Philosophy and Theology.

In response to the demands of the Pope and of King John III of Portugal, Saint Francis Xavier was sent to the East and entrusted with the Cape Comorin Mission. He landed at the Cape in October 1542 via Goa. He went to

108 Narchison, J.R., *op cit*; p.16.
Trivandrum by land and met with the Maharaja, who received him with honors, treated him with kindness and gave him permission to preach Christianity in his kingdom and to baptize those of his subjects, who would desire to become Christians.\textsuperscript{109}

After his visit to the Maharaja, Saint Francis Xavier concentrated his activity in South Travancore at the present Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{110} He limited his missionary work to the sea coast between Cape Comorin and Quilon. He spent more than a year going from village to village instructing, baptizing, establishing Churches and providing Lay people to carry on the work in his absence.\textsuperscript{111} Kottar was his principal residence. Tradition points out to a small chapel of the Blessed Mother Mary in the Cathedral at Kottar, where Saint Francis Xavier used to celebrate Mass during his stay in Kottar.\textsuperscript{112} Wherever he passed through, he reformed the life of the Christians, and gained more people to the Catholic belief. Because of his great work, the Catholic religion came as a popular one in Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{113}

\textbf{Condition of the Lay People before the Vatican Council II}

There are estimated to be over one billion Roman Catholics in the World. The majority of them are Lay People, otherwise known as the ‘laity’. The word ‘laity’ comes from the Greek word \textit{Laikos}, which means that one is ordinary, not consecrated.\textsuperscript{114} The concept of describing something ‘in layman’s terms’ has come

\textsuperscript{110} Ladislaos, Michael, \textit{Saint Francis Xavier}, Kandi, 1910, p.22.
\textsuperscript{111} Villavarayan, J.M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.15.
\textsuperscript{113} Ladislas, Michael, \textit{op.cit.}, p.349.
into wide use in the English speaking world. To put something in Lay man’s terms is to describe a complex or technical issue using words that the average person (someone without professional training in the subject) can understand.\footnote{Mitchell, N., \textit{Ministry Today: Problems and Prospectus}, Paulist Press, New York, 1974, p.36.}

The word ‘laity’ began to appear around the third century in Christian writings. Clement of Alexandria used the term \textit{Laikos} for Christians, who were not priests or deacons. Laity soon came to identify the group of believers who were not among the sacred elite.\footnote{Castelli, J. and Gremillion, J., \textit{The Emerging Parish}, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1987, p.75.} Thus the term laity seems from its beginning to mean people who are worldly and outside the center of interest. ‘Lay’ often implied untrained and inexperienced, in sacraments and religious performance. This negative usage of the term was subsequently sustained by the following factors in the early Christian Community: (1) Gnosticism, a Greek religious Philosophy penetrated Church thinking. Gnosticism promoted a dualism which separated into opposites or greater or lesser. Thus the secular and evil world was opposed to the Holy and good Church. Clergy who devoted their lives to the Church were sacred persons with a vocation, while laity worked in the world and were secular; (2) The growth of monasticism, by which the religious life or monastic lifestyle became ‘the model of holiness’. By this, the laity already considered as secular was now depicted as ‘having chosen the less perfect way than the monks; (3) The development of the clerical dimension of the Church.\footnote{Fichter, J., “Restructuring Catholicism” Sociological Analysis 38, 1992, No.2, pp.154 – 164.} The negative identification of laity excluded the Lay people from speaking and acting publicly for the Church. It looked as if there were two classes in the Church. The first class ran the Church, decided the doctrine,
administered the rituals, preached the sermons and set first class example. Second class members did not have quite the same status or responsibilities. Such a distinction suited the Lay people who were content with a lower standard for Christian life. In the meantime, the term Clergy came to mean competence, ministry, power and celebrant. The Lay people delegated the tasks almost exclusively to the Clergy and the laity extended supporting role.\textsuperscript{118} However, from the perspective of Judaism, Christianity is seen largely as a Lay movement. The founder of Christianity, Jesus, did not set up a structured Church. Rather, he gathered his followers and believers do his preaching’s, who were to continue his work on earth.\textsuperscript{119} Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus pointed out to the Lay people.

“\textit{You, however, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he claims for his own to proclaim the glorious works of the one who called you from darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God’s people.}”\textsuperscript{120}

The Lay People of the early Church stressed community life and service to others. They saw themselves as the new people of God with a mission to build justice, love and peace. The mission was carried out through domestic servants and small shopkeepers, who witnessed through their work. It was often the wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the uneducated men and women who carried out the mission with the backward of society and were always ready for a martyr’s death.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{121} Gerald, F., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 49.
By the end of the third century, the Church was a small community that was scattered throughout the empire.\textsuperscript{122} Christianity was regarded less as an organization than as a way of life under the blessings of God. By the third century, Bishops were governing the Church, and the ritual of ordination set aside Clergy to administrate the rituals. The Lay people were accepted as the need of the Church community for the Clergy. The Lay people could still influence the outlook and practice of the Church, but they were in subordinate position in Church Government and worship services.\textsuperscript{123}

A turning point occurred, when the Emperor Constantine, became a Christian in 313A.D. After the Edict of Milan, that ended Christian persecutions and martyrdom, large numbers became nominal Christians. Christianity became the religion of the empire.\textsuperscript{124} There was now a union of Church and State, with the emperor as head. Everything was Church. The leadership roles became the right of civil leaders, while most of the laity became dutifully obedient to the Clergy. In the fourth and fifth centuries, a new opposition evolved between monastic life and the life of the Christians remaining in the world. The religious monks and Priests began to look down upon the Lay people who lived their life in the ‘world.’\textsuperscript{125} From the fourth to the ninth centuries, there was a continual effort to banish women from the sanctuary. Laity was no longer allowed to touch the sacred vessels or the consecrated bread. They were separated from the holy persons and expected to sit quietly in their places during the ritual celebrations. After the barbarian invasions in

\textsuperscript{125} Mckenzie, J.L., \textit{The Roman Catholic Church}, Reuters University Press, 1969, p. 268.
the fifth to seventh centuries, a clear shift occurred in education. The Catholic Church began to set up schools when the state system of schools failed with the fall of the empire. The state schools became Church Schools. The Church was the center of culture. But, only the socially elite Lay people had much chance for education. Clergy became synonymous with the elite. Lay persons, by contrast, were illiterate. This further divided the Clergy and Laity.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries marked a major turning point in Europe. Pope Gregory VII reduced the influence of civil authorities in Church affairs. Standards of education increased among the Higher Clergy while the Lay People were still uneducated. Therefore the medieval period Church saw Clergy and Laity as very different in status and function. In many ways the Church was identified with the clerical order. Clergy were shepherds, Laity the sheep. The Church was in fact divided between those members who had active power (Clergy) and passive power (Laity). As a consequence, feelings against Clergy grew. The Lay People protested the clerical privileges, which they thought were stealing the people. Pope Boniface VIII responded in 1296 with his document ‘Clericus Laicos’ in which he said that “it is a well-known fact that the Laity has always been hostile to the Clergy”. The strong call for reform was reaction against clericalism and the power of the authority. Clericalism was very strong in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The eighteenth century was a disappointing time in the history of the Church. Educated Lay People continued to dispute the lavish privileges of the

Clergy. The Church was facing problems with increasing disbelief, growing poverty of the lower classes, and increasing wealth of the Religious Clergy. Educated Lay People wanted a liberal faith that is open to knowledge and progress. Some Lay People fought against the social and cultural backwardness of the Church. Laity was looking for what they did not find in the Clergy and Religious.\textsuperscript{129}

France was a center for Lay People’s efforts to free themselves from the Church. It was a century of awakening for Lay People. They made their voices heard in the Church and in public life. As the power of the Clergy diminished, lay movements began to increase. In the 19th century, German Catholic Assemblies were popular gatherings with deep concern for social problems. In 1890 Pope Leo XIII wrote a letter by name ‘\textit{Rerum Novarum}’ which stressed the rights of Lay people to property, to form associations, and to just wage for the workers.\textsuperscript{130}

After 1890, Lay people took a more active role in the life of the whole Church and began to approach the world in a spirit of friendly encounter rather than hostility. Pope Pius XI promoted ‘Catholic Action’ as a movement that gave power to the Lay people to share in the work of the Clergy. In 1945 Pope Pius XII wrote a letter that encouraged a new look at the Lay vocation. For a long time the Church was identified with Christian society. When the people reflected on the meaning of the world, they understood that the Church no longer controlled society. Lay People began to see themselves and their world in terms of the Political, as well as the Religious dimensions. A reflection of what it meant to be Lay People, and how the Church related to the world began to develop.\textsuperscript{131}

In brief, the condition of the Lay people in the Catholic Church was as those who kneel before the altar and pray those who sit below the pulpit to listen to the sermons of priests, and those who put their hands in their purse to donate money to the Church. As the saying goes, the Laypersons in the Catholic Church were to pray, pay and obey. This saying captures the sense in which the Catholic Church considers the role and mission of the Lay persons as passive members of the Church. And those who had the power and authority were considered the Church. This basic understanding of the role of the Lay people in the Church was the result of the particular self-understanding of the Church based on the teachings of Council of Trent (1545-1563) and Vatican Council I (1869-1870). In this teaching, the Church is presented as a perfect yet unequal society. The power and functions of the Church were divided into three: teaching, sanctifying and governing. This leads to the distinctions between: The Church teaching and the Church taught; the Church sanctifying and the Church sanctified; the Church governing and the Church governed. In these distinctions, Lay persons were considered in the lower, inferior and inactive roles before the Vatican Council II.

Review of Literature

C. Mc. Dannell’s ‘The Spirit of Vatican Council II. A History of Catholic Reform’ and J. Hough’s ‘The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian era’ are source books that give the historical perspective of Christianity in the world level and India level. R. Broon’s ‘The Churches the Apostles Left Behind’, D. Broholm’s ‘Empowering Laity for Their Full Ministry’, B.cook’s ‘Ministry in the Modern Church’, J. Coriden’s ‘The Parish in

**Objective of the Study**

The Lay People are increasingly involved in the Church activities in the Diocesan structures, Commissions and Associations as well as in the Parish structures. The objective of this research is to study this phenomenon of the Lay involvement in Church activities especially after the Vatican Council II, 1962-1965. In order to achieve the objective, following questions are pursued: What is the status of the Lay People in the Diocese of Kottar? What is the relationship of the Lay People with the Catholic Authorities? What are the roles and positions of the Lay People in the Diocese of Kottar? What are the activities performed by the Lay People through Commissions and Associations? What are the Lay People structures in the Parish and Diocesan levels? What are the Lay Specialist’s roles on Parish people? What are the impacts of Lay specialists on Parish people? These questions guided to formulate the following hypothesis.
Hypothesis

The Lay People involvement in the Church activities in Kanyakumari District touches the core of the Parish and Diocesan organizations. Such involvement produces the following results:

1. A democratic trend as contrasted to an authoritarian trend by Clergy,
2. A shared responsibility as compared to an isolated accountability,
3. A better relationship in the families,
4. An increase in teaching Catholic moral values and Catholic identity,
5. A good spiritual experience for Parish people to develop strong attachment to the Parishes and
6. An increase in Parish people’s involvement and financial contributions.

Methodology

The Lay people involvements in the Church activities are in two areas:

1. Organizational
2. Relational. In the organizational realm, they are in positions such as President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Director of various administrative systems in Parish and Diocesan Levels. They attend meetings on a regular basis and take collaborative decisions. In the Relational realm, they prepare young people for marriages, counsel on human problems, and involve in several social programmes. Therefore the research methodology used here is both documentation and empirical method to bring about a complete and truthful account of the Lay people involvement in Church activities in the Catholic diocese of Kottar which is coextensive with Kanyakumari District.
Sources for the Study

Primary Sources have been the bedrock to conduct this study. The essential primary sources are the Circulars and Pastoral Letters of the Bishop, Diocesan Records, Reports of Christian Life and Ministry, and the Reports from Commissions and Associations. Vatican Council II documents, in particular Decrees on the Apostolate of Lay people, have been the fundamentals for this study. The primary sources are available in the Diocesan Archives at Nagercoil, Trivandrum, Chennai and Madurai. Such archival records helped the researcher to highlight certain development of Lay people involvement in Church activities from historical perspective. To bridge the gap caused by non-availability of archival materials, the researcher has interviewed some persons, who are involved in the Church activities. Along with the Primary Sources published books as Secondary Sources are also referred. These Secondary Sources shed much light on the nature, dignity, and skills of the Lay people in the Catholic Church. D. Broholm’s ‘Empowering Laity for Their Full Ministry’, L. Doohan’s ‘The Lay-people Centered Church’, G.Foley’s ‘Empowering the Laity’, T. Sweeter’s, ‘Leadership in a Successful Parish’, E. Whitehead’s, ‘The Parish in Community and Ministry’, bestow a lot of information about the possible role of Lay people in the Parishes. Making use of the available resources, much care has been taken to keep the work as much as possible an objective one and an original contribution to the knowledge of history.

Chapterization

The thesis is classified into six chapters in addition to an introduction and conclusion. Introduction presents a historical background to the study, as to
understand the Catholics in the World context and view of Christianity from the Time of St. Thomas, Christianity in Tamil Nadu and Kanyakumari District. The Lay people’s condition before the Second Vatican Council is also analyzed in the Introduction.

First Chapter presents "Christianity through the Ages in India". The Church in India is as old as the Universal Church. This Chapter explains the Developmental Stages of the Lay People from the Beginning of the Diocese of Kottar. Besides an attempt is made to analyze the authority structures of the Catholic Church which are established for the service of the Lay People.

Second Chapter deals with the "Lay People Structure after the Vatican Council II". It also explains the establishment of the Vatican Council II and its important major documents that are dealing with the Lay people. This chapter vividly analyses the present Lay people structures in the Basic Christian Community, Parish and Diocesan levels.

The Third Chapter present "The Lay Specialists and their role in the parishes". It presents a descriptive definition of the Lay Specialists from three perspectives: specialization, recognition and remuneration. The life examples from the Lay Specialists highlight some of the special characteristics of the Parish Lay people.

Fourth Chapter presents the "Social Involvement of the Lay Specialists". Social forces affect every population, and Catholic Lay people are not exempted. They share in the human problems of the society. This Chapter explains how the Lay Specialists are involved in solving the social problems of the people in the Parishes.
Fifth Chapter explains the "Participation of Lay Specialists in the Parish Pastoral Council". Historically in Kanyakumari District Ur Committee has been the first step towards the formation of Parish councils. Today the Parish Council is involved in all the pastoral activities of the Parish life.

Sixth Chapter examines "The influence of Lay Specialists on the Parish Parishioners". Lay Specialists are fully involved in the developmental services of the Parishes. This involvement increases the level of participation of Parish people by co-operation and financial contribution to the Parishes.