CHAPTER 1
Introduction: Mapping the Terrain

I

Historiography of church history: early focus

The writing of the history of the church has been a long-standing tradition. The four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the Book of Acts, the first five books of the New Testament written within the first hundred years of Christianity are a testimony to this.¹ While the Gospels aimed at putting down in writing the ministry and teachings of Jesus, the Acts of the Apostles traced the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome and a large part of the Mediterranean world. This writing perhaps followed from an earlier Judaic tradition that considered its history sacred because of the belief of God’s special intervention in its past. Christ, for the early Jewish Christians was a culmination of the continuous revelation of God in their history. Consequently, the heritage of putting down in writing their past continued. The Gospel written by Luke ca. 60 A.D., considered the best of the Gospels in its literary style, to Theophilus, a convert begins by giving a statement of purpose for the writing of such a work.² "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us," wrote Luke, "...Therefore since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account...so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."³ Thus the writing of the life and times of Jesus was to prove the historicity and authenticity of the person concerned.

The Acts of the Apostles, (also written by Luke) on the other hand narrates the works, challenges, discords, progress and the transformation of individual members of

¹ The Disciples of Christ were first called Christians at Antioch/Antakya (s. Turkey) ca. 40 A.D
² Though the authorship of this Gospel is not clear, most Bible scholars are agreed that this Gospel was written by Luke, "the Doctor."
this new formed community and the community itself. The purpose of writing however was essentially to “inform, inspire and to encourage.”

The purposes of knowledge, motivation and encouragement continued to be the cause célèbre for the writing of church history through the ages. In the eighth century for example, Bede’s *History of the English Church and the people* was written within the same framework. Coelwulf, the king had ordered for a writing of “the doings and sayings of great men of the past and of our own nation in particular,” and Bede’s history was a response to that. The history of the church thus made people aware of their heritage, of god’s involvement in their past, a task that became vitally important considering that the church and Christianity in Europe had become an integral part of a nation’s identity.

In the light of church histories having been in the main, the preserve of ecclesiastics Eric Sharpe compares the development of the historiography of secular histories and church histories. According to him, until the post-war period the writing of church histories followed altogether different paths. The changes in the writing of history in the post-renaissance period enabled by the use of refined tools of research did not affect Christian missionary writing. While the necessity of writing these histories continued to be felt and was quantitatively impressive, “it did not stray beyond the family of faith.” Most of these histories were lopsided stories of spiritual battles won for god and his kingdom because “in a cosmos perceived as a battleground between god and the enemy, only one side of the story was worth telling.”

In the late 19th century, enlightenment notions of progress and Darwinian theories of evolution finally made common cause with missionary zeal and the underpinning idea in Christian thought was that progress was “an expression of the mind and will of God.” But it was used to show that civilisation could not move apart from religion. As a natural corollary to this, in the writing of church and missionary

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5 Ibid., p. 78.
history, it translated into an "awed pride in the past and hope in even greater things to come."6

The history of the church and Mission sees a change in the post-world war scenario even as the task was being taken up by a large number of secular and non-Christian apologists. The understanding that religion was bound with culture pervaded these writings (Christianity took along with it European culture) and such works came to characterise mission as alien, intrusive, destructive and morally wrong. The judgement which was passed was that Mission history was a failure and never did anything right.7 Its focus was on the manner in which the imposition of the Christian faith made indigenous societies lose their cultural individuality by a forceful adoption of the European, and the obliteration of local identities.

The writing of the history of the church has also been theorised by several others. According to Ian Clark there have been two paradigms of church history writing; the Church History framework as opposed to the History of the Church framework. In the former, the history "...is something to be used by Christians for a variety of purposes: to explain...failure, emphasise...successes, to give self-confidence or self-importance, to impress something on others."8 Thus according to him, Church History is an ideology, a history written with usefulness and apologetics as the rationale, based on two assumptions. The first postulation is that "the church is a community set over against the 'world', calling men and women out of 'secular' history into a community that has its own special history. Salvation consists not merely in 'joining the Church', but in identifying oneself with a different kind of history altogether, with a different goal."9 Thus what is important to the "Christian" is only "church history" and "(perhaps) those points where the hem of her garments touches the world." The second assumption drawing essentially from an Augustinian tradition according to Clark is the place of Providence in the history of mankind. Such

6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., p. 79.
9 Ibid., p. 96.
an interpretation leads to an “oversimplification of the problem of historical causation.”

In contradistinction to such an approach Clark proposes the history of the church framework by which he means an approach, which contributes to “the role of the church in history.” In his words, “A study of the ‘history of the Church’ in the context of surrounding cultures and societies may (conceivably) disclose certain juxtapositions, patterns and relationships and tensions which have significance for us Christians and for others too.”\textsuperscript{10} Thus he calls for an “openness,” which does not function on “a priori assumptions.”

**Modern Indian church historiography**

The writing of the history of the Christianity in India has had a longstanding tradition with various shifts in historiography. The writers of this history have engaged with various issues. These shifts in historiography can be explained by changing political contexts and thereby most historians of the Indian church history would consider the writings of the nineteenth century as distinct from those works undertaken in the twentieth century.

Before looking into the historiography of church history in India, it would perhaps be appropriate to differentiate certain categories, very often used interchangeably, that of Mission, church and Christianity. Mission is the extended body of the church in Europe or elsewhere, the radiated church, which in course of time developed into a local church. Thus a study of Missions would necessarily constitute the study of the works, the individuals and organisation of the body that evangelised, whereas the study of the church would have to necessarily include the indigenous population. The study of the growth of Christianity would include both, the institutions, structures, ideas and relationships of the entire body of believers.

Until recently, the writing of this history had two broad divisions based on denominational differences, namely the Catholic and the Protestant traditions. One can safely say that it was essentially Protestant writers who took up the writing of this history in modern times, essentially because the evangelisation of India in this period

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. p. 104.
was then predominantly a Protestant endeavour. We will look into the concerns of Catholic historians, but let us first summarise briefly the concerns of 19th century church historians.

The Protestant contribution

Most church historians of the 19th century were Protestants and their works begin with the intention of bringing out Protestant-Catholic polemics. This was so, essentially because the Protestant missionaries were in a sense taking over from Catholic missions. One of the earliest works in English was that of James Hough.\textsuperscript{11} This work arose out of a felt need to give a fitting reply to the Catholic priest Abbé Dubois' \textit{Letters on the State of Christianity in India}.\textsuperscript{12} Hough believed that Dubois' work undermined the cause of Christianity and its propagation, as he was extremely critical of Christians and their lived Christianity in India. He had also not been very appreciative of Protestant Missions and considered their works, especially their translations as unsophisticated and primitive in comparison to Catholic efforts of the preceding centuries. Thus Hough's works focussed on missionary methods; the bottom line of his work was that it was improper methods of the Catholics, which had contributed to the fact that India had not turned to Christ.

Rev. Alex J. D. D’orsey’s\textsuperscript{13} work in English, on the Portuguese mission was an early Anglican attempt that carried on the bias against the Catholic missions of the preceding centuries. He traced the growth of the Catholic Church in India by the usual technique of the focus on personalities, and certain controversial issues to highlight this progress, but the overarching framework was to show how the Catholic missionaries had failed in their tasks. More importantly it was also a means to show the role that the Anglican Church could play; “… it is the duty of the Church of England to do her utmost to remedy the evil,” wrote D’orsey.\textsuperscript{14} The reason why India had not accepted Christianity was due to Portuguese \textit{padroado} methods. “The Indian

\textsuperscript{11} James Hough, \textit{The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era}, London, 1839.
\textsuperscript{12} J. A. Dubois, \textit{Letters on the State of Christianity in India}, London, 1823.
\textsuperscript{13} Rev. Alex J. D. D’orsey, B. D. \textit{Portuguese Discoveries, Dependencies and Missions in Asia and Africa}, London, 1893.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p. xiii
idolaters naturally refused to believe a religion introduced by men who abused their power, to violate the sacred laws of hospitality, to press them under the sceptre of tyranny, to deprive them of their legitimate sovereigns, to plunder them of their precious metals, and to dishonour by the scandalous immorality of their lives the sanctity of the doctrine which they proclaimed.”

What is interesting to note is that the debate carried out in Protestant-Catholic polemics did not include differences in doctrine, but rather a perception of methods, the attitude to proselytisation etc.

Sir John Kaye’s Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative, written in 1859 aimed at influencing the government on what should be its role vis-à-vis the Protestant Missions that were then taking part actively in various parts of the country. According to Webster, “He [Kaye] wrote as a Christian urging moderation upon other Christians and as a defender (and possible architect) of the particular policy of religious neutrality which was being adopted by the Government.”

Rev. M. A. Sherring’s, The History of Protestant Missions in India from their Commencement in 1706 to 1871 was a history primarily aimed at stimulating the zeal of the church. Thus it inevitably showed the progress of missions. Sherring in his attempt was less particularistic and his endeavour was to provide for the history of all missions. The final chapter thus focused on missionary methods and practices in order to give an overall assessment of the work of Missions in India during the concerned period. On similar lines was the work of Richter. The objective in writing A History of Missions in India was “How can Christianity overcome and supplant native forms of religion” Inextricably linked with this issue for Richter was to understand the Indian religious’ attitude to Christianity. His history therefore takes us through “(mostly Protestant) missions, missionaries, and missionary methods”

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15 Ibid., p. 87.
17 M. A. Sherring, The History of Protestant Missions in India, from their commencement in 1706 to 1871, London: 1875.
18 Webster, The History Of Christianity in India p. 97.
20 Webster, The History Of Christianity in India p. 99.
21 Ibid. p. 100.
According to Webster, most of these works have a common bias and focus. Firstly, they originated in the west, in terms of authorship and audience. Thus in a sense, “they ‘belonged’ to the West rather than to India”22 Secondly, rather than the study of the Indian Church, it was in a sense the study of the extension of western missions and missionaries. “They were not histories of the Indian Church but of western attempts to create one.” 23 Thirdly, in most of these works, since their audience was the Protestant Churches, none of the histories of the Roman Catholic or the Syrian church have a19th century history. Finally, Webster points out that in these histories for most of the writers, India is virtually non-existent. “The peoples of India had no history of their own in these accounts; they were not actors but simply acted upon.” 24 The reason for such an attitude was the source base; all these histories were essentially based on mission sources and they were generally treated uncritically.

In many ways the writing of such histories was very similar to the contemporary writings of secular history. The focus on “political, administrative and military history” had parallel developments in the writing of church histories and focussed on “missionary policies, campaigns and administrative measures.”

**The Catholic contribution**

As far as the writing of the history of the Roman Catholic Church in India by Roman Catholics was concerned, one of the earliest works to be published in modern times, in English was that of Rev. M. D’Sa, two volumes published in 1910 and 1924.25 Written within a Portuguese and Padroadoist framework, the work appears like a justification of the Portuguese mission.

In the 50’s and the 60’s several Catholic writers attempted to put in place the history of the church These include the works of Rajaiah D. Paul (1952), P. Thomas (1954), Felix Alfred Plattner (1963), Soares, (1964), and D’ Costa (1965). These histories were in a sense the beginning of an attempt by Indian Christians to locate their pasts and place them in context. They essentially wrote from within the Christian

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
tradition. The attempt therefore was to understand their histories, and in a sense was a personal quest. The incorporation of Goa into the India Union in 1962 and events surrounding it did not play a minor role in the flourishing of such works in this period.

For Rajaiah Paul, the aim of his history was not to speak on behalf of the missionary enterprise, or for that matter comment on missionary enterprise, but rather "to assess the process and worth of the Christian enterprise in my country in the past and its position at present, with an even slighter attempt to indicate what conditions may be in the near future..." 26 For P. Thomas on the other hand the aim of writing his history is to put the history of Indian Christianity in its correct perspective. This he tries to do by attempting to understand the various contexts in which Christianity arrives at varying points of time. The attitude of the various missionary enterprises is also taken into consideration. While this does not prevent them from seeing the faults of their predecessors, there is an underlying attempt to justify actions done in the past in the name of religion. At times, this is done, by blaming the "context" or the "times" in which the priest was functioning, he was after all a child of his times. 27 More often we come across the justification of actions by focussing on the benefits of a particular type of action. Anthony D’Costa’s work, The Christianisation of the Goa Islands, 28 as the title suggests mainly looks into the conversions in Goa in the sixteenth century, a conversion in which he places great importance to the programme which later came to be called the Rigor of Mercy. (A high Portuguese treasury official Francisco Paes coined this term, writing in the late 16th century to describe Padroado methods. In practical terms it meant making it impossible for non-Christians to live in Goa by making it difficult for them to practice their religious observances.)

D’Costa recognises that the writing of the history of the church in India cannot simply be written from a European perspective. He therefore attempts to link the Portuguese arrival with the pre-Portuguese set-up but the attempt is feeble, even as the categories of association are not cogently co-related. Thus the outcome is that of an imposition from above in which threat was the determinant of conversion and

Christian charity a mere apologia for the compulsions that were enforced. Most histories of the church do not fail to mention the growth of the Institutions in and around the church and Christian activities. Thus the growth of Goa to the status of an archbishopric having under its spiritual governance the region parallel to that of the Estado da India, i.e. east of the Cape of Good Hope, besides the arrival of the various religious orders and their respective contributions to the growth of Christianity is often mentioned. There were other institutions that aided the growth of the church like the various lay confraternities, the Holy Inquisition, the office of the Pai dos Cristãos etc.

Anthony D'Costa's work is also interesting because it points out that the missionary movement was not a homogenous one. Much before Županov²⁹, who had brought to light the esoteric and demotic modes of cultural representation represented by de Nobili and Henri Henriques respectively, D'Costa had pointed out that missionary methods were not always unified. While it was felt by many that it was wiser to follow a policy of rigor there was opposition from viceroys and other administrative officials and also from within the church. There were debates as to whether the means employed were in the interests of Christianity and true to Christianity itself.

D'Costa is also interested in the convictions behind the conversions; whether the conversions were truly genuine or not. According to him, there was an "existence of a movement towards Jesus Christ out of genuine religious conviction"³⁰ Thus his writing is mainly a narration of the developments of Christianity, the problems that it faced from the state, from a pantheistic tradition, the methods that were employed to the conclusion that very often there was a voluntary aspect to conversions.

Aloysius Soares' Catholic Church in India, published in 1964 is essentially an attempt at understanding the position of the church in the mid-20th century.³¹ He traces the history of the church from a presentist perspective. The problems and the

general conditions of the present have to be understood in the light of the past. In 259 pages, Aloysius Soares attempts to trace the growth of Christianity in India right from the first century to the twentieth century. His writing hinges on key personalities, and the key debates at particular points of time. Considering the span of the time period Soares also attempts to trace the contribution of the Protestant missions, but since he himself comes from a Catholic tradition, his main attempt is to glorify the attempts of the Padroado over and above all the other missionary societies.

Taking into account the lacuna in the writings of those mentioned above, in 1974, the Church History Association of India brought out a scheme by which they would attempt to write a comprehensive History of Christianity in India. The step forward was that the history of the church was not going to be reduced to Catholic-Protestant polemics, as the Association itself was a joint initiative. According to their understanding the main flaw in the writing of most church histories was in its consideration as an "eastward extension of western ecclesiastical history." Such an approach, it was felt necessarily limited the understanding of the church because it inherently regards the church as a self-sufficient unit, which is being acted upon. Thus the recommendation was for an approach which regarded the history of Christianity as being an integral part of the socio-cultural history of the Indian people rather than as separate from it. It was also felt that this should be done in a regional and nationalistic perspective as well. More importantly, the need for ecumenical unity was felt and so the study would be related to the history of Christianity as a whole rather than any particular denomination or congregation. The outcome of the resolution was six volumes of the History of Christianity in India series tracing the growth of the church from apostolic times to the twentieth centuries in all parts of the country. It is debatable however if the volumes have succeeded in fulfilling its objectives.

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33 Relevant for this study are Vols. II and I. A.M. Mundadan, History of Christianity in India Vol. 1 From the beginnings up to the middle of the sixteenth century; Joseph Thekkedath, History of Christianity in India, Vol. II, (1542-1700), Bangalore, 1988.
Recent writings

In recent times there have been researches on the growth of Indian Christianity by non-religious writers using various tools of the social sciences. I would like to take up the writings of Rowena Robinson, Patrick Roche and Susan Bayly. None of them are historians, the first two being sociologists and the Bayly an anthropologist. They have contributed to understanding Indian Christianity by bringing new issues into the debate.

Robinson engages with the issue of conversions. For her conversions cannot be understood "as a religious phenomenon alone, isolating it from its location within a specific set of politico-economic realities"34 While the empirical study is important one needs to place conversions within its *socio-historical context*. Religion offers the affiliate a world-view, which governs his/her relationship to society and the environment at large. Conversion would thereby mean a change of beliefs affecting even social relationships.35 It involves changes in the social, economic and political level.36 Thus it is important to study conversions within a socio-historical paradigm since conversion involves the confrontation of two belief systems. Thus when an entire group changes its belief system, simplistic explanations (as to use or non-use of force) seems inadequate.

An important work that has taken such aspects into consideration is that of Patrick A. Roche.37 Roche looks into the new-found identity that the Paravas adopt on accepting Roman Catholicism. They were a fishing community whose caste identity is further strengthened and enhanced due to their association with the Portuguese. The Portuguese reify their older caste political structure and through their various policies "...draw members of the *jati* cohesively together while increasing their distinctness, insularity and alienation from the contiguous populace."38 One of the ways in which

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38 Ibid., p. 47.
their distinctness was maintained was through the adoption of Roman Catholicism which was Latin in nature but came to be "Tamilized in practice". The reason for such a statement by the author is because of the constant efforts made by the priests to "transpose Catholic liturgy to an Indian matrix". One of the aims of Roche's study is thereby to prove that Roman Catholicism became the basis of identity for the Paravas besides their economic activity of fishing, and pearl and chank diving. Their identity was further cemented because of the competition they faced from the Muslim fishermen of the Coromandel coast. Roman Catholicism thus managed to sustain and bind various facets of Portuguese life and function.

"In each settlement, padres and sacristans and catechists played active roles, and the church both physically and ideologically became the focal point of Parava existence. Within the portals of the Catholic Church, the Portuguese were baptised, confirmed, educated, married and buried. Annual festivals had both religious and social significance. Delegation of specific chores in the celebration and organisation of the festivals not only entailed the participation of various Paravas, but also in turn provided elite participants the opportunity to affirm positions of power, status and honour. Roman Catholicism therefore emerged as a base of identity and affirmation in more senses than one: it contributed to distinctiveness vis-à-vis the contiguous Kayalar and Hindu castes, reinforcing both the corporate solidarity and insularity of the jati. Within the jati, it sustained distinctness, social segmentation and hierarchies based on power and status." Thus the outward expression made them distinct, but within the jati social mechanisms functioned as before.

Another work of theoretical import to us is Susan Bayly's *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*... She too agrees that the history of conversion movements cannot be studied merely in terms of a succession of events and therefore there is a need to place these movements within a broader social context. Another misconception that she perceives in the writing of conversion movements is the notion of the obliteration of

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39 Ibid., p. 48.
40 Ibid., p. 52.
41 Ibid., p. 56.
“pre-existing beliefs and ties” among the new affiliates. Taking her case study from among the convert groups –Islamic and Christian- in South India Bayly believes that conversion depends upon the capability of the missionaries to set up a viable relationship between their deity with that of the pre-existing one. The acceptance of a certain religious belief is aided by the recognition of certain analogous features in the other with those of one’s own. Thus, in the Malabar, Christian saints and prelates are seen in the same continuum as their power deities. Worshippers saw deities as beings that could protect and help them variously: alternate religious beings had to offer as much or more. Bayly goes on to say that since the adoption of a religion cannot be context free, the profession of the new is often circumscribed or even modified by the old.

The adoption of a religion also depends on the pre-existing social conditions. According to her, in pre-colonial South India, society was in a state of flux and was still establishing its hierarchies. Status was attributed to those with political power as well as those who performed status-enhancing functions like building of temples, endowing shrines etc. Caste groups were also being formalised through the adoption of a corporate deity. Corporate groups were thus expressing a willingness to “re-define their corporate solidarities around external forms of religious power which were being brought into the South.” Under such circumstances, Islam and Christianity could also stake their claims as independent forms of worship.

II
Objectives of the study and chapterisation

The attempt of the previous section was to locate the various historiographical approaches in the study of the growth of the church especially in the Indian context. With specific reference to the Portuguese missions in the 16th and 17th centuries in India the lacuna have been several. First and foremost is related to the unavailability of source material. Consequently, the study has been generally bereft of an

43 Ibid., pp. 69-70.
44 Ibid.
understanding of the Indian response in the centuries of concern. The indigene’s response has generally been relegated to the numbers that converted to the faith according to the more often than not inflated accounts of the priests.

At the same time, despite the fact that Catholic History in India has in the main focussed on the agents on conversion, the tendency is to see the institutional church as a monolithic establishment forcefully making its way to well-defined goals and ideas. It has been overwhelmingly been seen as a homogenous and homogenising body, which through means fair or foul sought not only to expand the faith but was also an instrument of the expansion of European culture.

The thesis in many ways has not been able to overcome the general focus on institutional Catholicism. However the attempt has been to give a reinterpretation of these institutions. Chapters four and five concentrate on the transfer of Catholicism to the west coast. While not doing away with empirical information, the main focus has been to show how the church did not operate in a static time wrap but evolved and adapted as the years progressed. The response of the church to an environment that was absolutely new at its best ranged from adaptationism and enlightened negotiation to bigotry and annihilation. Determining the variations in response was not only the religious upheavals that were overtaking Europe due to Protestant Reform and Catholic Renewal, but also the political and naval/military fluctuations of the Portuguese state in India under the aegis of which the church operated. Each chapter therefore in some way tries to highlight the changes in the dynamics-social, political, religious and economic in India and Portugal that determined the religious materializing. Cognisant of such a need, the first chapter therefore summarises the nature of the Portuguese presence.

In order to understand the nature of the Portuguese mission, it is also important to understand the society it confronted and the state that supported it. Though most writers are agreed on the fact that the sub-continental states were largely agrarian empires, the coastal states that concern this study were largely mercantile and looked overseas for trading partners and trading communities. Commerce that passed through their shores made them cosmopolitan and generally tolerant of foreign
cultures. The Portuguese on the other hand came with the idea to dominate. While this domination often appears complete and successful, it has been pointed out that this could not have happened without native collaborators at various levels. Moreover, though various historians have highlighted the official presence, yet it was the unofficial presence that in many ways extended the period of Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean. The unofficial participants were also crucial in the proliferation/retraction and propagation/curbing of Christianity as was also recognised by the priests.

The unity of the church and the state in the furtherance of Christianity is also more often than not a given in most writings. In Chapter three the attempt has been to understand the nature of this relationship based on the Padroado privileges that were granted to the Portuguese crown. The context and manner in which the state sought to support the church is highlighted. Yet it also attempts to trace the changing understanding of these privileges in Portugal and in India. The Padroado privileges were not a tabula rasa for the state to see to the expansion of Christianity. Its rights were often circumscribed by the conduct of various actors. The foot-dragging of many a viceroy who did not share the Crown’s interests, Portuguese personnel who had more worldly concerns, and eventually competition in missionising from the Holy See itself.

The inadequacy of sources in understanding the response of the western coastal societies is something that has not been surmounted in this study. Two kinds of sources are generally required, one that is written by locals and the other that flows from the writings of the western writers. Compounding the problem in the case of the first is the need to be proficient in at least four languages in order to be able to locate source material in local languages. Nonetheless an attempt has been made in the last chapter to put forward the different kinds of response there were to the Portuguese missionizing efforts. Moving away from studies that use the tools of anthropology and point to syncretism/acculturation in beliefs and cultural practices as a result of contact, the chapter on acceptance and resistance traces response on this line. It also looks into questions as to who converted and why they converted (of course mainly
through European voices), what forms did resistance and acceptance take and what was the role of Indian Christians in furthering the Christian faith. The main argument however is that acceptance is never total and complete, but rather negotiated on the converts own terms.

The constraints of source material therefore cannot fulfil what the title of the thesis purports to do. A study on the Impact of Goan Society would have entailed a sociological analysis of society for which the source materials of the 16th-17th centuries do not really shed light. Such a study would have involved taking a longer time period, (sources abound for a later period) which would yet again fall outside the purview of this work. Institutional requirements (of the University) have necessitated the addition of a title, which had been approved of while still in the early stages of one’s research. Yet at another level impact may be seen as the nature of contact that occurs and not necessarily the outcome of a contact. The study has I believe largely tried to understand this. Moreover, though not concentrating particularly on Goa, the sources have for the most part been taken from the Goan experience.

Another area that this work has not focussed on, but merely mentioned in passing is the whole area of the relationship of the Portuguese with the St. Thomas Christians.45 The Portuguese attempts to bring them to Roman obedience and the subsequent reaction and opposition to that are well-known and would have been an interesting point of enquiry in itself. Yet, the nature of the conflict considering that both emanate from a Christian tradition would have diverted the focus of the thesis.

Finally, there is also a need to place the Catholic society in perspective. Portuguese society acted the way it did in the 16th and 17th centuries because of a particular world-view. There were certain dynamics in society, which governed and directed their religiosity. The attempt of the next section is merely to give a broad

framework for the operations of the Portuguese expansionist society, in order to understand the dynamics of its functioning.

III

Understanding Medieval Christianity

Islam and medieval christendom

There are two aspects to be clearly borne in mind in order to understand the Portuguese society that initiated the discoveries. It is pertinent to know that the discoveries were part of a larger movement of conquest and nation building of the Portuguese in the context of a Moorish occupation for more than four centuries. Secondly, Portugal at the western rim of the Mediterranean and in many ways at the periphery of Roman Catholicism was very much a part of Latin religion and culture. The physical distance and the religious proximity had a unique influence on Portuguese religion and society in the background of the major religious development of 16th century Europe namely the Protestant quest for reform and the consequent phase of Catholic renewal through the Tridentine reforms.

The rise of Islam in the 7th century and its expansion as a religion and political force is well known. The conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by Arab Muslims, which began in 711 A. D., was complete within a few years. Portuguese efforts at reconquest, more popularly known as the reconquista began from the mid-8th century under D. Henrique. But this process, which had begun in the North, was slow and had to go through the vagaries of several victories and defeats. Only with the conquest of Ceuta in 1415 on the Moroccan coast could the reconquista be considered complete. The re-conquest also served other purposes. Among others it re-fashioned Portuguese society, aided the formation of feudal elites and the chivalric society associated with it and created institutions like the Military Orders, which sought to protect Portuguese interests against the Moors. More importantly for purposes of this study, it helped in sharing with Europe the anathema for Islam, more intense perhaps because of the direct associations it had with it.
According to R.W. Southern, "The Middle Ages were the golden age of the Islamic problem [for medieval Christendom]. During the centuries between about 650 and 1570 it rose and fell."46 And several were the reasons for this animosity. Essentially, Christendom was not sure as to how to deal with a system, which was so close to its belief system, but yet claimed difference and superiority. "But what was to be made of a doctrine that denied the divinity of Christ and the fact of his crucifixion, but acknowledged his virgin birth and his special privileges as a prophet of God, but gave sole authority to a volume which intermingled confusingly the teachings of both Testaments; that accepted the philosophically accepted respectable doctrine of future rewards and punishments but affronted philosophy by suggesting that sexual enjoyment would form the chief delight of paradise?"47

It is interesting to note that despite this anathema for the Moor, the Portuguese and the Moors held much more in common than those people the Portuguese were to encounter in the lands of Asia. According to Maria Augusta Lima Cruz "North Africans [Muslims] and the Iberian Christians were, in fact, people who spoke the same language of war, with similar rules of the game.... Under those circumstances, misunderstandings of communication did not occur as they did with those of other cultures, which were only partially (or not at all) understood."48

The contribution of Augustine

While medieval Christian spirituality defined itself vis-à-vis the other by having a definite anti-Islamic focus, it had its own self-motivation too. Bosch has identified this as the medieval paradigm of Mission. In his book Transforming Mission,49 David Bosch highlights six theological paradigm shifts that have occurred in the history of the church which have had its implications on the understanding of "mission." He sets aside the first hundred years since the resurrection event as the

47 Ibid., p. 6.
period of primitive Christianity during which period the Gospels and other letters that constitute the New Testament were written. He considers this period the high point of the development of Christian thought and ministry, from which other models have emerged.50

The study of the implantation of Christianity necessitates the understanding of the medieval paradigm to be able to understand the dynamics of the society that came to establish its religion. Summarising the "medieval Roman Catholic paradigm" as highlighted by Bosch will perhaps facilitate this. This framework could be seen to be effective from the seventh century or from the papacy of Gregory the great to the mid-15th century, around the time of the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The rise of Protestantism in the 16th century helped usher in a new model of understanding.

The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm was shaped entirely by the interpretation that Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) brought to theological understanding. Through his monumental work De Civitate Dei or City of God and others like his Instructing the Unlearned he set out to explain the theology behind the Christian faith, which left its indelible mark on the Western Christian world. Augustine's writings have in turn to be understood in the backdrop of the fall of Rome in 410 and the rise of Pelagianism in Rome, as well as the Donatists in North Africa towards the end of the fourth century. His personal background also contributed to the shaping of a particular theology.

Rome had always been the symbol of permanence and stability in the Western world, and continued to be so after the conversion of Roman Emperors. The confusion that ensued in the Christian world, with its fall required a response and Augustine rose to the occasion. What followed from Augustine's work was the Individualization and Ecclesiasticization of Salvation, a new framework for the understanding of the relations of the church and state and their respective roles towards each other. The Individualisation of Salvation occurred in response to Pelagius, an English monk active in Rome in the late fourth century. Pelagius'
theology was based on the understanding that humanity did not “need redemption only inspiration.” He was optimistic about human nature and its capacity to achieve perfection. From this followed his understanding that Christ was essentially a model to be emulated and hence underplayed his role as Saviour. What was implied was a “pedagogical process of salvation.” Augustine responded to this interpretation with the doctrine of “Original Sin” and “Predestination.” Original Sin implied human depravity and the need for an “encounter with the grace of God.” In other words an individualised conversion experience was required; yet it was only god who had saved humankind through Christ. Redemption was also otherworldly. For those who had done Good the reward was that of heaven.

The “spiritualization and introversion which began with Augustine paradoxically paved the way for large-scale externalisation.” It was during the medieval period that refined and extended penitential practices were innovated. “The cultic-institutional smothered the personal-ethical, since it was the official church which not only sanctioned the penitential practice, but also defined exactly which human thoughts and actions were sins.” To the sins thus defined only the church, through its ministrations could guarantee restitution so that “soteriology tended to get divorced from Christology and to be subordinated to ecclesiology.” What Augustine was proposing was therefore the primacy of the institution of the church as represented by the Papacy for the individual’s salvation.

The Donatists on the other hand emerged in the North African context perpetuating a schism from the Catholic Church around the 4th century. Their main concern was with the growing worldliness of the church and therefore they sought to separate themselves from the world. The true church was to be perfect and unblemished. What they insisted on the most was the separation of the church and the state. Augustine’s response led to the insistence on the divine authority of the Catholic Church. Those who left the church were equated with severing their relationship with

52 Ibid., p. 217.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
god. To the Institutional church was ascribed holiness and authority though the
office-bearers of the church were not always free from sin.

What followed from the above assumptions was the understanding among
Catholics that mission essentially meant “self-realisation of the church,” and its
hierarchical structure. Since salvation lay not so much in Christ, but rather in the
institution that represented him, the church had to be propagated. While Augustine,
himself stressed on the need of careful instruction prior to baptism of the convert, in
later church practice, the actual performance of the baptismal rite became more
important than the individual’s appropriation of the faith itself. What was more
important was the understanding that “since the act of baptism conferred a character
indelibilis, no one could undo his/her baptism.” Thus, to Augustine, the Donatists
could be compelled to come back to the Catholic fold with the help of the state. This
“compel them to come in” syndrome was soon appropriated and applied in relation to
other peoples as well.

It was Augustine’s City of God, which clearly influenced medieval thought
especially concerning relations between state and church. The outcome of his work
along with that of Thomas Aquinas, a fifteenth century Dominican who redefined
Catholicism to a great extent saw to the subordination of the state and the supremacy
and independence of the spiritual world. Augustine clearly demarcated two cities
inhabited by two kinds of people. Those obeying the will of god, destined for eternal
rule and those outside the will doomed to eternal damnation. While Augustine himself
did not identify the kingdom of god with that of the empirical church, it was the
tendency in subsequent centuries to do so. Consequently, the extension of the Catholic
Church was the extension of the kingdom of god. The contribution of Aquinas was to
further strengthen the position of the church by pointing out “reason was lower than
faith, nature than grace, philosophy than theology, and the state (emperor or king)
than the church (pope).”

55 Ibid., p. 218.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., p. 221.
While such theological views seemed to bolster the position of the church, in practice, the standing of the church came to be compromised and the relationship between the church and the state was never at ease. While a church would bless a regime, the state guaranteed to protect and support the church. Yet there was a contest for supremacy. The understanding of Mission also changed drastically. The close relationship between the church and the state made the former "a privileged organisation, the bulwark of culture and civilisation, and extremely influential in public affairs."\(^{58}\) Thus the expansion of state meant the expansion of a particular religion and culture. On the other had it also meant a lumping together of enemies. The enemy of the state was the enemy of the church and vice-versa.

Augustine also contributed toward a particular method by which *heathens* were to be converted. The understanding that came about in the fifteenth century vastly differed from what he had propounded, yet he had left his mark. Augustine had distinguished between pagans and apostates, especially in his attitude toward the Donatists. The latter were to be compelled to return. Initially this did not apply to the pagans. But by the fifth century, he had come to the conclusion that even the pagans were to be compelled to come in. He justified this by saying that they were being led away from eternal damnation and thus it was for their "own good." The "own good" argument was strengthened by the fact that those who converted were also given political rights. Coercive methods according to Augustine of course included fines, confiscation of property etc.

According to Erdmann, these developments paved the way for the *indirect and direct missionary wars* of the later period. Despite violence being abhorrent to the early Christians it became a marked feature of Western Christianity (unlike Eastern Christianity, which under the influence of St. Basil thought war to be shameful) essentially taking from the writings of Augustine yet again. Augustine’s pessimism permeated his understanding and therefore he reconciled himself to an evil world, wherein the Christian endeavour was to come to terms with it. Thus Christianity in his understanding was not to change an evil world, but to reconcile itself as best as it 58 Ibid.
could. Thus, in the arena of war, wars had always been fought and would continue to
be fought. Therefore it could find a place in Christian behaviour, provided god had
ordered it. Thus the idea of a “just war” came to being. This was the war that was
fought in self-defence, for the defence of Christendom.

“What made the Augustine teaching even more corrupting was the association
in his mind between ‘war by divine command’ and the related effort to convert the
heathen, and destroy the heretic-his ‘compel them to come in’ syndrome. Not only
could violence be justified: it was particularly meritorious when directed against those
who held other religious beliefs (or none).” 59 According to Johnson, the universalising
spirit of Christianity in the Middle Ages was propagated through violence 60 “The idea
that Europe was a Christian entity, which had acquired certain inherent rights over the
rest of the world by virtue of its duty to spread it…” 61 an impetus for proselytisation
in the Middle Ages continued to be the driving force in the 15th century. Thus from
Augustine’s understanding of a just war, the crusading mentality was not far behind,
and the next step could only be the links between colonialism and missionary activity.
The discoveries led to an unparalleled era of mission. This had emerged from the
Pope’s self-proclaimed authority over the globe whereby he could confer the right of
patronage to rulers who sought to extend their territories. Meanwhile the
understanding that had emerged from Augustine’s hypothesis of a just war had come
to its logical conclusion that the right to colonise carried with it the right and the duty
to mission. Besides, the missionary legitimacy came from the fact that they were
representatives of an institution that had the right to confer salvation to those who
accepted and believed in the tenets of the faith.

The influence of the Council of Trent.

The next important event, which re-defined the catholic world-view, the
overflow of religious developments already taking place was the Tridentine reforms
of the 16th century. The process of initiating reforms itself was long and arduous. The
Council of Trent, which began its meetings on 13 December 1545, met for 25 sessions

59 Paul Johnson, p. 242.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., p. 244.
spanning a period of 18 years. While Martin Luther’s movement was the spark that ignited such a meeting, it was not merely theology that was discussed. Much was at stake at the meeting. church-state relations were unwittingly re-defined, even as the Holy Roman Empire could not sustain its attempts at leading the way in church reform. Dogma was addressed and the most important point of discussion was the response to Luther’s *sola fides* or the doctrine of justification by faith alone. 62

However, more related to this study was the entire area of ecclesiastical reform. This need had been felt in many quarters. In Portugal for instance the close association between the Crown and religion had in fact led to the secularisation of religion itself. By the 14th century the masters-ship of the religious-military orders were entrusted to the nobility. And in fact, in the late 15th century, the three leading masters-ship of Avis, Santiago and Christ were all vested in the Crown. The King was thus the governor of purely religious institutions and by virtue of the wealth of these Orders provided him with a large patrimony and religious responsibilities. The Portuguese Church thus displayed a royal-noble character as a great majority of the ecclesial positions were in the hands of the nobility. This was especially true of the bishoprics and the Cardinalship. Afonso (1509-40) son of D. Manuel was cardinal at the age of 8, while his brother Henry (later King) was appointed one at the age of 33. 63 The reforms helped in greatly reducing these links but between 1550-1670, out of a total of 135 bishops appointed in Portugal, 115 of them were still aristocrats (85%). 64

The extent to which Military Orders controlled ecclesiastical patronage was greater in Portugal than it was in Spain. This “assertion of royal supremacy had practical implications for pastoral care of whole parishes, of large numbers of laity, and not just for the corporate life of the Military Orders...” 65

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64 Ibid., p. 284.  
The Military Orders were not the only institutions that denied true pastoral care. The secular priests were far from being good examples of clerical life. The need for ecclesiastical reform therefore also encompassed the education of priests, laws that would prevent absenteeism from dioceses etc. Religious life had also seen a general decline with monasteries declining in revenues and numbers and the "increasing relaxation of its customs." 66

According to Da Silva, the characteristics of the Trent Council were "cathechetic theologisation, liturgical uniformisation and authoritative centralisation." 67 In other words, the reform of the church was to take place through a centralisation of the church, which would be brought about by ecclesiastical reform, the re-definition of dogma as well as the popularisation of beliefs. The attitude that governed the Tridentine movement was thus "a Roman purifying tendency, with a retractive, reforming and defensive attitude in face of Protestant attacks and of the interference of the temporal affairs..." 68

The Tridentine reforms as Silva has remarked were essentially concerned with the Mediterranean space and in the context of expanding missions did not have much to offer the Portuguese Church. Portugal was in fact barely represented at Trent. However, the lack of political stakes at Trent in fact led Portugal to be one of the first nations to accept it during the reign of D. Sebastião, while states like France who actually played an active role waited till the 17th century.

The Portuguese Church also benefited from the general mood of reform. The effects of Trent were felt in two ways: firstly, it led to the rise of a "more independent" and self-conscious clergy, "less participatory in the economic and social elements of the other classes", that sought to live up to their vocation. In actual terms, it meant that "ecclesiastical dignities were not allowed to accumulate benefices; it forced prelates to live in their dioceses and parishes, it established age limits for priests and bishops and also the formation of seminaries for future clerics." 69

67 A. Da Silva, S.I. Trent's impact on the Portuguese Patronage Missions, Lisboa, 1969, p. 61
68 Ibid.
Secondly reformation also involved the monastic orders. There was a spate in the development of new orders as well as the reform of the old. Orders like the Society of Jesus and the Theatines were essentially the creation of these reforming tendencies.\textsuperscript{70} In Portugal the number of religious foundations (monasteries) saw a substantial increase during the period. Between 1550 and 1668, a period of a little over hundred years, 166 houses were set up, mostly of the Franciscan, Jesuit, Carmelite and Arrabidos orders. \textsuperscript{71} In the development of monastic Orders female religious Orders were not far behind, and the Iberian Peninsula was especially well known for the Barefoot Carmelites of St. Teresa of Avila. The aspect of reform that affected female spirituality was its development into fully cloistered enclosures, with no contact with the outside world. The need for this kind of reform had arisen from the fact that these convents had become mere extensions of the social life of the elites. Moreover, it was also an attempt by the male ecclesiastics to control female spirituality, considering that on many occasions women could rally great devotion.\textsuperscript{72}

Many of these developments in Portugal affected the Portuguese mission in India in many ways. While the Council did not offer direction on the confrontation of cultures, it gave direction on the manner in which the church itself was to function. The calling of the First Ecclesiastical Council in Goa was in fact a response to the reforming policy of the Catholic Church. The arrival of the Jesuits did much for the spread of the faith. The movement towards purification had its repercussions on the relationship with the St. Thomas Christians, the New Christians as well as the neo-converts, through institutions like the Inquisition. The general invigorating mood of the Catholic Church caused by the spirit of reform in Europe was thus felt in many ways in India.

The attempt of this introductory chapter had been in a sense to set the ball rolling to understand the developments and dynamics in the coastal societies of western India during the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries with the arrival of the Portuguese. In the review of the medieval paradigm of mission it attempts to locate the Portuguese

\textsuperscript{72} R. Po-chia Hsia, \textit{The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770}, pp. 33-34.
missionary methods to Christian understanding and growth in Europe of a particular period. The chapter also reviewed the broad historiographical trends that have attempted to understand the encounter so as to understand the strengths and limitations of prior works.