CHAPTER III

WOMEN RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS IN KERALA:

SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL PROCESSES

Women religious congregations, which had no precedent in the church history of Kerala, have been part of the Western Christian tradition since the early Christian centuries. The people of Kerala had heard of men and women who practiced religious virtues, but they did not have any living examples of religious virginity, except that of men.¹ Women who desired to have a virginal life had no other choice but to marry.² The changing attitude towards women and their sphere of activity and the women’s earnest desire to cross the domestic space created an atmosphere congenial to take a deviation from the traditional course of womanhood. Traditional role ascribed to women were challenged by the Nazrani women and they began to enter the spiritual field from where they were alienated so far.³ The emergence of congregations and large number of

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¹ *Koonammavu Madam Nalagamam*, Vol.1, 1886-1870 (Chronicle of St. Teresa’s Convent Koonammavu; the manuscript is kept in Koonammavu convent archives. Hereafter *Koonammavu Nalagamam*), p.1.
³ They were not even permitted to attend the retreat conducted in their parishes, *CMI Sabha yude Charitra Samkshe pam, 1829-1969*, (Mal), (Anonymous), Trichur, 1970, p. 30.
convents in different parts of Kerala was the result of the collective efforts of the women religious. Framed on canonical patterns and influenced by the European ideals, and inspired by the indigenous spiritual tradition, women religious congregations soon became an integral part of the societal landscape of Kerala. Analysis of the first four indigenous women religious congregations is made in this chapter.

3.1 Understanding Religious Life

Religious life is a form of life within the Roman Catholic Church characterized by the lifelong profession of the evangelical counsels (vows), of poverty, chastity, and obedience according to the approved constitution of a particular order or congregation.4 The religious live in their special domiciles (convents) and are recognized inside and outside their institution by their distinctive dress (religious habit). Their lifestyle itself effectively separates the religious from the world outside the church and distinguishes the religious from the laity in the church. The Catholic community has the notion that, this is a special vocation or call. Religious Life is considered as a “way of perfection”, in “closer following of Jesus.” Although lay life is, in theory, normative and a fully salvific form of Christian life, Religious life is actually regarded by many Catholics, including some religious themselves, as a superior way to serve God.5

The Catholic Religious life whatever form it takes, eremitical or cenobitic, contemplative or ministerial, stable or mobile, is in fact, monastic, which means ‘aloneness’, of the religious. The aloneness or apartness of the religious means that she

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5 Ibid., p.12.
or he, either singly or with others, creates an alternative life form. The objective is the quest for the fullest possible realization of the true self in relation to reality conceived as a whole or as transcendent. It is a choice to go above and beyond those required by the Christian religious teachings.

Renunciation of the ‘world’ or keeping aloof from the world is an important feature of congregational life. Complete negation of the world was impossible because there was always dialectic between monasticism and the world the monk had abandoned. The religious impetus may have come from the need to institutionalise a way of life that is new or as a strategy for proselytising or as a means of crystallizing a popular religious ethos and providing it with status. The forms taken by religious institutions at different periods were conditioned by the demands and expectations of the society that supported them.

The purpose of women’s monastic life was union with God, but it offered another dimension too; for many, the convent provided an alternative to marriage and an escape from the prevailing misogynistic attitudes. Over the time, the decision to start a celibate

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6 Ibid., p. 9.
7 Ibid., p.8; Western society after the middle of the13th century produced a new kind of religious sentiment, which experienced the ascetical vocation as primarily a search for individual fulfilment. Their ‘cell’ was a means for self-knowledge and quest for personal identity; C.H. Lawrence, Medieval Monasticism, Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages, London, 1989, p. 287.
9 Ibid., pp.56-93. This paper discusses briefly the major group of Indian renouncers, in its historical background and analyses the social factors which lead to its rise as well as social changes due to it. It is concerned with the bi-polarity of renouncer and the householder as well as elements of social protest and concern among these renouncers; also see C.H. Lawrence., Op.cit, p. 287.
life as religious was for different purposes - to be free of men’s beliefs about them, which subjected their spirits and bodies to male domination.\textsuperscript{11} Convent life also provided them opportunity for education, expression of artistic, literary and philosophical talents. It also provided Christian women an opportunity to live together in an association that would be impossible in society because of the traditional dependence of women on man. This community gave them, support and creative energy to be independent and to develop a spirituality and ideology that was particularly female.\textsuperscript{12} Celibate communities also provided support system for a uniquely feminine spirituality and ideology in the face of androcentricism.\textsuperscript{13}

Monastic life in the Catholic Church, offered women certain opportunities of choice, freedom of participation in the activities of the church and society from which they were excluded so far. A woman, who sought an alternative life, was free from the burdens and responsibilities of family life, which distract one from religious practices and restrict one’s freedom to travel for purposes of begging, pilgrimage, teaching or seeking greater solitude. The risk of child bearing and living alone in a society can also be avoided.\textsuperscript{14} The decision to lead a chaste life was an autonomous one in a society that left little to the preference of women. Although the family did not objected to such a decision, many women experienced family pressures to conform to tradition and they

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 143. In a married life, a wife is tied with husband by rules. Right over her body is lost. She has no right over her body but the husband has. Her soul is also restricted. 

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p.144.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.

protested by appealing to the authority of God. The focus here is the social manifestation of religious congregations and their role in historical change rather than the ideational level or the philosophies which they may have generated.

3.2 Congregated Around Carmel: The Congregation of Mother of Carmel

The longing for a holy sanctum for women bore fruit when the first indigenous congregation for women in Kerala was started at Koonammavu on 13th February 1866. The desire of the women to lead a virgin life revealed through the pages of the *Koonammavu Nalagamam* explains that, “though the true Christian religion was in practice from very early days, there existed no monasteries or convents. The people had heard of men and women who practiced religious virtues but they did not have any living examples, except that the men who had the privilege of priesthood lived a life of chastity. As for women even those who desired to live a virginal life, had no way of embracing such a life-style. They had to accept marriage and live as worldly women. The people were living in this sad plight for a long time.” It further explains that, “for men the situation has changed with the foundation of Koonammavu monastery in 1831, but for women the situation has not changed.” The earnestness on the part of the men religious, to have a house of virtue for women is also explicitly revealed through Fr. Chavara Kuriakose who wrote in the Chronicle of Mannanam monastery that, “had

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16 Koonammavu is 16 kms away from Aluva, situated in between North Paravoor and Puthenpally and adjacent to Varappuzha.
17 *Koonammavu Nalagamam*, Vol.1, p.1; The first page of the *Koonammavu Nalagamam* is given in Appendix No.1.
long been praying and had not yet been granted…my desire to start a convent still unaccomplished.”19

In the above background, the initiative to start the Third Order Congregation for women, which is now known as the Congregation of Mother of Carmel, was taken by Rev. Fr. Chavara Kuriakose Elias, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Verapoly and the then Prior General of the CMI monasteries and Fr. Leopold Beccaro OCD, the Carmelite delegate in Kerala at that time.20 The presence of Carmelite missionaries and the Carmelite jurisdiction over the native Church as well as the establishment of Carmelite monastery for native men has been instrumental in establishing a Carmelite congregation for women in Kerala.

About the establishment of the congregation it is written in the *Nalagamam* that, the priests ‘came to know about a widow and her 14 year old daughter who owned half the property of her father and was unwilling to get married.’21 The widow named Eliswa and her only daughter Anna belonged to a respectable family of Vadakkan better known as Vakayil, in the Koonammavu Parish.22 As the spiritual daughters of Fr. Leopold Beccario, they were committed themselves to his protection and direction. ‘The widow offered her widowed chastity and the daughter her virginity to Almighty God for

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20 *CWC* Vol.1, *Op. cit.*, pp. 124-125; *Koonammavu Nalagamam* Vol.1, pp. 3-5. Fr. Leopold Beccaro was a Discalced Carmelite Missionary (1837-1914) who came to Kerala in 1859. He received the deaconate and priestly ordination in Kerala. He learned Malayalam within four or five months after his coming to Kerala and looked after the spiritual needs of the parishioners of Koonammavu. There are differences of opinion about the founder of the congregation. In the context of the death of Fr. Kuriakose in 1871, Fr. Leopold mentions Fr. Kuriakose as the founder of the congregation; Leopold Beccaro, *Life of the Servant of God*, trans. Postulator, St. Joseph’s Monastery, Mannanam, 1970, p. 80.
life…..”23 The unwillingness of the widow for remarriage24 and her daughter for married life, with the intention to dedicate completely to God was combined with the long cherished dream of Fr. Chavara and Fr. Leopold. The priests decided to construct a separate house for them, where they could occupy themselves in “teaching young girls about spiritual matters and training them in handicrafts, thus giving them a chance to live like sisters of a convent.”25 The matter was immediately intimated to the Msgr. Bernadine Baccinelli OCD, Vicar Apostolic of Varapuzha who gave them permission to start the convent.26 He also gave the women the constitution27 of the Third Order Regular of the Carmelites.28

With the blessing of Msgr. Bernadine, the convent was established in the property of Anna, one of the earlier members. The first house was made of bamboo mats. Eliswa Vakayil, a widow aged 35 and her daughter Anna and Thresia Vaipissery, sister of Eliswa Vakayil, aged 18, were the first members. Eliswa, an unmarried woman of 26 was appointed helper.29 As per the instructions of the priests, after attending the mass on 13th February, the aspirants went to the convent accompanied by their relatives. In the presence of Fr. Chavara and the relatives of the first members, Fr. Leopold blessed the

23 Ibid.
24 Widow Remarriage was possible to Christians. The Decrees of the Synod of Diamper refers to the traditional custom of remarriage, as one year after the death of the husband; see Scaria Zacharia, ASDS, Op.cit., Edamattom,1994, p.165.
26 Ibid., p.76; Koonammavu Nalagamam Vol.1, p. 5.
27 Koonammavu Nalagamam, Vol.1, p. 6, Vicar Apostolic of Varapuzha, Msgr. Bernadine and Fr.Leopold Beccaro was Carmelite missionaries to India. Third Order for lay people was started even before the convent was started.
28 Ibid., p. 6.
29 Ibid., pp. 8-10.
house in the name of St. Teresa of Avila and gave them small brown scapulars and necessary directions and advice needed for the new life. As this was a new venture and quite unfamiliar to them, everything needed for a convent was arranged there.\footnote{Ibid., pp.11-13.} One day after the inauguration of the convent, Elisa Puthenangady, a widow aged 24, joined the convent and accepted the name of Clara.

As the first house was a bamboo house and had only minimum facilities, decision to build a new house was taken. The foundation stone for the new building was laid on June 13, 1866.\footnote{Ibid., p. 20.} Along with that, the base for a boarding and school was laid. The expense for the construction of the convent was raised by contributions and donations from different parishes. The convent was completed in 1867 and Fr. Chavara wrote in the chronicle of Mannanam monastery that, “God has granted us a special blessing in the year 1867. Women who were made to stay in a bamboo house in March 1866 have been made to stay in the new convent on March 27, 1867 with the necessary infrastructure. All these have been achieved by us, without much burden, helped by people who contributed Rs.8000.”\footnote{CWC Vol. I, Op. cit., p.136; Koonmmavu Nalagamam Vol.1, pp. 44-50.} The blessing of the house and the vestition of the four pioneers were on 27 March 1867.

\subsection{3.2.1 Challenging the Tradition and Facing Realities}

The women who desired to lead a virgin life were placed within the congregation of Mother of Carmel with twin objectives: 1. Self-sanctification through contemplation and mortification of the senses. 2. Work for the salvation of the soul of others through
prayer and education of young girls. In other words charism of the congregation was both contemplative and apostolic.

Following the Western Christian tradition, Fr. Leopold meant a cloister, by which women detached from the world, could live in seclusion, like the women of the Second Order. For that a special room was constructed for the sisters on the side of the church to participate in the rituals without entering the church. Whenever they wanted to go outside the convent, they covered their face and no visitors were allowed in the convent except women and they spoke to them behind the curtain. But strict contemplation was not acceptable to Fr. Chavara since he wished that these women should do some apostolic activities like running schools, teaching handicrafts and giving right formation to girls through the boarding system so as to face the realities of everyday life. So the Carmelite tradition of strict cloister was rejected and a

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33 *Munnamsabha Kanyastrikalude Nyayapramanam*, 1875, p.1; (Constitution of the Sisters of Third Order; The term Constitution is used to denote the term Nyayapramanam, which means the rules and regulations of the congregation. The word constitution began to be used widely only after the II Vatican Council(1964) and the rules and regulations are not static but they are updated according to the needs of the time); This original Malayalam manuscript is kept in the Koonammavu Convent Archives and hereafter cited as CMC Nyayapramanam, 1875.

34 Contemplative orders have prayer as their main work. Usually but not always, these orders are enclosed or cloistered, which means they do not leave the monastery ground unnecessarily. Apostolic orders have some type of work outside of their conven or monastery. Often the community has a specific mission in which their sisters work, such as schools, parish, hospitals etc.

35 “Pope Bonifice VIII (1294-1303) ordained that in the monasteries of women the law of cloister be observed. By this law the nuns were required to stay within the walls of the monastery all their life and free ingress into the monastery was forbidden to all others. He ordered that this law be observed strictly and imposed on local bishops to enforce it punishing those who refused to abide by it. Consequently no religious institute of women could hope to be approved without the observance of this law”; B. Theodore, *The Ecclesiastical Approbation of a Religious Institute*, Rome, 1961, p. 34.

36 *Vajrajubilee Smarakam: Tressiayude Kanyakamadam*, (Mal), Koonammavu,1943, p. 133.


contemplative life combined with active apostolic life was promoted since it was the need of the time.

Being introduced to the Carmelite way of spirituality and congregational life, the sisters followed the routine life as per the instructions of the founding fathers. During the initial years they didn’t have any dress code or constitution or prayer books in order to recite common prayers. Books available in Tamil and Latin were translated and given to them in writing. Even when the religious habit was given to the first members for the first time, the complete order of the dress code was not included in their habit. It was given only after they had begun to live in the new convent. The first members took the perpetual religious vows of obedience, chastity and poverty on July 16, 1868 on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. A new congregational life style began to evolve among them with the beginning of their life in the new convent. In 1875 Fr. Leopold gave them the Nyayapramanam based on the Carmelite Discalced Third Order. This continued to be the guideline for the religious in Ernakulum and Changanacherry Vicariates till 1917 and up to 1939 in the Trichur diocese.

To sustain themselves and equip the lay women to face the challenges of the temporal world, arrangements were made in the convent for the self-employment of women. The founding fathers took efforts to train them in handiworks since learning

40 Ibid., p.132.
41 Books kept in the Koonammavu convent, listed in the Koonammavu Nalagamam Vol. I, pp.195-197 is given in the Appendix No.2
43 Ibid., p. 67.
44 Ibid., pp. 82-83.
and employment was necessary for their sustenance.\textsuperscript{47} For the Christian formation of girls, an \textit{edukumthath} or boarding was started, attached to the convent, on January 2, 1868. Fr. Leopold gave certain rules and regulations for the proper functioning of the boarding. Later, on October 16, 1872 a school was started to educate the girls. About the apostolate of education Fr. Leopold has said, “Now we are starting school, since you are called for that”\textsuperscript{48} and it is written in the \textit{Nalagamam} that “started class in the school outside the convent.”\textsuperscript{49} Though school was started; lack of sufficient number of students was the major problem they confronted with. The sisters, except the superior had been assigned the duty of teaching, but as they could not handle all subjects, they had to appoint qualified teachers from outside and that required additional expense. Another apostolate that was started in Koonammavu was the orphanage. On September 6, 1880, stone was laid for the construction of an orphanage and it was completed with the help of an Italian lady.\textsuperscript{50}

\textbf{3.2.2 Moving Towards New Horizons: Spatial and Temporal Dimensions}

Spatial expansion of the congregation following its foundation has some temporal dimensions also.\textsuperscript{51} Congregated around the Carmelite spirituality, women religious had the spiritual direction and support of Carmelite men religious. Their earnestness to start new convents in different places is clear in the death testament of Fr. Chavara, who

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\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{50} Koonammavu \textit{Nalagamam} gives details about the orphanage. A thanks giving letter written by Sr. Kathrina Manjooran on April 8, 1882, gives the real picture of the orphanage.. Josy, \textit{Atyunnathante Thanalil} (Mal), Aluva, 1991, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{51} Mutholy Madam \textit{Nalagamam}, Vol.1,1888-1912, p. 4; Also see Mary Angel (ed.), \textit{Sathabdhi Smaranika: St. Joseph’s Carmelite Convent Mutholy, 1888-1988} (Mal), Mutholy, 1988, p. 32.
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urged his colleagues and said that, “it is necessary that more monasteries and convents be opened in the south, that is, one monastery each to the east and west of Mannanam and some convents with boarding houses. It is very useful to have a convent of the sisters at Mutholy and another at Mannanam with boarding house attached. A little effort and diligence on your part would suffice to accomplish all these things.”

This spirit of the Carmelite monks and the desire of the women religious to stay with them were disrupted with the erection of the native vicariates under foreign bishops.

When the Vicariates of Trichur and Kottayam were established in 1887, in accordance with the papal bull, the convent of Koonammavu and the establishments connected with it came under the jurisdiction of the Vicar Apostolic of Trichur. In the mean time there was a marked increase in the vocation. However, it took another twenty two years to start a new convent and the second convent of the Carmelite Third Order was started at Mutholy in 1888. The construction of the Mutholy convent was initiated by the Carmelite fathers of the Mutholy monastery and completed with the support of the Nazrani parishes. Though built under the initiative of the monastery, the convent came under the jurisdiction of the Vicar Apostolic since 1887. Because of this division, Koonammavu was in the Vicariate of Trichur and Mutholy under Kottayam. Later all the sisters who belonged to Kottayam Vicariate, were asked to go to Mutholy in 1891.

Sisters of these convents wanted to function as a single unit and they were desirous of getting a confessor from the monastery. But the request of the sisters was denied by

53 Pope Leo issued the bull on 20th May 1887.
54 Mutholy Madam Nalagamam, Vol. 1, pp. 41-42.
Charles Lavigne saying, “You are under our jurisdiction. Holy Church does not permit you to be under the priests of Carmelite Discalced Third Order.”\textsuperscript{55} Delegate Apostolic Msgr. Andrews Ayuthi also wrote to them that, as per the canon law and rules and regulations, they are under the jurisdiction of the Vicar Apostolic and responsible to him alone.\textsuperscript{56} Simultaneously they were detached from the mother house as well as the spiritual care and protection of Carmelite Discalced Third Order for men.\textsuperscript{57} During this period new Carmelite convents arose in Vaikom (1892), Changanacherry (1893), Arakuzha (1895), and Ambazhakad (1897) and they grew up as independent convents under the local ordinaries. In 1896 when vicariates under native prelates were formed, these convents came under the juridical authority of three respective Vicariates viz, Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry.

With the reorganization of the vicariates, the Carmelite congregation for women was also divided into three, under the respective bishops and later on the convents developed independent of the motherhouse. The earlier convents like Koonammavu, Vaikom and Arakuzha came under the Ernakulam vicariate with this division. With the guidance and support of these convents, Carmelite convents were started in different parts of the vicariate. It is important to note that majority of the early branches were started at the initiative of the religious, and particularly sisters from the respective

\textsuperscript{55} Msgr. Levigne made this statement when he visited Mutholy convent in February 1889. Cited in \textit{Mutholy Madam Nalagamam}, Vol.1, pp. 32-33

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 32-33; In 1888 CMI fathers were separated from Latin jurisdiction of Varapuzha and placed them directly under the Pope and Msgr. Andrews Ayuthi was appointed as their Prior General.

parishes took interest to start convents in their native place.\(^{58}\) Mar Louis Pazheparambil, the first Bishop of Ernakulum, who was very much concerned about the Christian formation of children and women education, was also deliberate to start convents in his vicariate.\(^{59}\) Under the period of study, twenty two convents were started in different parts of the diocese. Each Carmelite convent, following the instructions of the founder fathers, was actively engaged in the formation of the Christian girls through, running schools, boarding, teaching handicrafts to women and children, teaching catechism and preparing the children for first Holy Communion.

Following the formation of independent indigenous vicariates, the Carmelite convent of Changanacherry, which was founded in the Kottayam Vicariate, came under the Changanacherry Vicariate in 1911. But before long Mutholy convent (1888-1895)\(^ {60}\) was founded and closed down due to the difference of opinion between the Vicar Apostolic and the religious. Mutholy was a mother institution for the Carmelites of Ernakulum and Changanacherry since most of the early convents branched out from here

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\(^{58}\) Any number of examples can be cited from Nalagamam. For instance, two sisters of Vaikom parish came from Mutholy to establish the convent in Vaikom; *Mutholy Madam Nalagamam*, Vol.I, p.10; The first superior of the St. Mary’s convent Ernakulam was a native of that place and she was eager to start a convent there, and sought the permission of the bishop. He permitted on condition that, they should not ask any help from him and could arrange on their own., *St.Mary’s Convent Nalagamam Ernakulam*, Vol.I, 1915-1941, pp.1-26; Kothamangalam convent also was started at the initiative of two sisters of Arakuzha convent who were the natives of Kothamangalam; *Kothamangalam Madathinte Nalagamam*, Vol.I, 1916-1968, p.1-10.

\(^{59}\) At the time of his administration 6 Carmelite convents were started. Permission of the bishop was necessary to start a convent.

or it was sisters from Mutholy who trained the candidates of the new convents. When it was closed, the sisters from these convents went to Vaikom, Changanacherry and Arakuzha. So at the time of the beginning of the native Vicariate of Changanacherry, the Carmelite convent in Changanacherry was the only existing convent in the vicariate. At first with the care and support of Rev. Charles Lavigne and later with the help of Mar Mathew Makil, the Carmelite sisters could establish themselves in Changanacherry. In Changanacherry, they began to live as per the charism of the congregation. Like that of Ernakulam, they began to give spiritual and secular education to children through schools and catechism classes. Other institutions like boarding, orphanages and training schools were started by them. Training in handiworks like making rosary, scapular, laces and *paski* and embroidery and stitching works were also done by them. In all the twenty three convents started in different parts of the diocese the sisters lived according to the original charism of the congregation.

Soon after the reorganization of the vicariates, each bishop took the native candidates to the convents in their own vicariates. But there was no convent in the Trichur Vicariate at that time. Bishop Rev. John Menacherry wanted to get back, the sisters and candidates of the Trichur Vicariate from Koonammavu. In order to bring them to the native vicariate, he decided to construct a convent in Ambhazhakad

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61 *Vaikom Madam Nalagamam* Vol.1, 1892-1905, p. 9, records about the sisters who are the natives of Vaikom parish, came from Mutholy to establish a convent in Vaikom along with other sisters. Likewise it is recorded in the Changanacherry *Madam Nalagamam*, Vol.1, 1893-1918, p.14, about the sisters who have come from Mutholy. Similar notes are seen in *Arakuzha Madam Nalagamam*, Vol.1, 1891-1948, p. 2; that two sisters from Mutholy, who are the natives of Arakuzha were asked to send to Arakuzha in order to start the convent. Later it was also instructed that all the sisters who are the natives of Arakuzha must be send to the same convent.

62 *Mutholy Madam Nalagamam* Vol.1, P. 60; *Arakuzha Madam Nalagamam*, Vol.1, p. 20. It is written in the Nalagamam that Rev. Charles Lavigne asked them to shift to Arakuzha within ten days.
(Vynthala). On May 7th, 1897, a convent was started at Ambazhakad in the name of St. Joseph. All together fifteen members left Koonammavu and joined Ambazhakad. In the next day 9 candidates were given veil. In July itself a boarding was started and in 1910 a primary school also was started. After five months, another convent was started at Ollur, which he planned to be the major CMC house in the Vicariate of Trichur. The services of the sisters were utilized mostly in the sphere of women education. Majority of the convents had attached schools and boarding.

Since 1897, the Carmelite sisters of the Vicariate of Trichur do not seem to have any connection with the mother house at Koonammavu. Though they have copied down the regula and constitution at the time of their departure, they followed the regula and constitution given by Mar. John Menacherry from 1904 onwards. The constitution given by Mar. Louis Pazheparambil in 1917 bound together Ernakulum and Changanacherry Vicariates, but Trichur had a separate growth insisting on the Carmelite charism and tradition. In Trichur diocese CMC had twenty two convents.

As the first congregation, CMC spread to three dioceses and had similar growth. But the temporal activities of the congregation varied in three dioceses even though they concentrated mainly on education.

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63 A widow named Kunjamnam, daughter of Chakalamattath Kanichayi Kunjuvareeth was eager to see a CMC convent to be started in the Trichur Vicariate. For that she had approached Msgr. Medlycott, the Vicar Apostolic in 1894. As the terms and conditions put forward by the Apostolic was not acceptable to her, that it did not work out. But later in 1897, she gave her house for convent, cited in Josy, Op.cit., p.153 and Christopher, Nirmala Nalvazhiyile Nazhikakallikal: History of CMC Nirmala Province, Trissur (Mal), Trissur, 2003, p. 9.

3.3 Changing Concepts of Religious Life: Beginning of Franciscan Clarist Congregation

Twenty two years after the foundation of the first indigenous congregation in Kerala, Franciscan\textsuperscript{65} in spirit and mendicant in nature, the second congregation for women was established in Kerala. Franciscan Third Order for women, named and approved by the Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam, Rt. Rev. Dr. Charles Lavigne and popularly known as the Clarist Congregation, was founded on 14\textsuperscript{th} December 1888.\textsuperscript{66} A deep and intense prayer life, integrated with hard manual labour, care for the aged and the orphans and service of the poor, marked their way of life.\textsuperscript{67} Unlike the Carmelite sisters who followed a monastic type of life and contacted with the outside world through the apostolate of women education, Clarist sisters were out in the world, looking for the poor and the destitute. The Franciscan Third Order for women gave more mobility to women religious and a new perception of religious life. More than that this congregation was a response to the ‘elite’ Carmelite congregation, which was affordable to the rich only. Those who wanted to lead a ‘poor’ life, with less patrameny (Patrimony) opted for congregated life with Franciscan spirituality. This is evident from the constitution given by Mar Mathew Makil, that the congregation was founded, “As an abode of pious women and widows who are eager to renounce the world but unable to join the big orders and follow strict contemplative life and to save those pious souls who

\textsuperscript{65} St. Francis of Assisi was a saint of the 13th century Europe who revolutionised the church through his poor, humble, mendicant life and his first women-disciple was St. Clare.

\textsuperscript{66} Changanacherry Franciscan MoonnamSabhakaraya KanayakiludeNalagamam, Vol.1.1888-1914, (Hereafter Changanacherry FCC Nalagamam); p. 5.

\textsuperscript{67} Directory: Franciscan Clarist Congregation, Portiuncula, Aluva, 2005, p. 3.
are struggling amidst the lay and the poor people in the world and are desirous to follow a simple constitution rather than the rigorous monastic life and could not afford the patrimony of big congregations, a new congregation is established in low patrimony. Thus the establishment of this congregation is a relief to pious women and widows, who are desirous of holy life.”

The Franciscan spirit reached Kerala in the 2nd half of the 19th century. Thommachan Puthenparambil, who is now known as ‘Kerala Assisi’, born on 1836 at Edathua propagated the Franciscan Third Order in Kerala. As a lay man, in 1865, he took up a disciplined course and called together a few ‘similar minded’ friends and started living like a fraternity. The brotherhood wore a cord of coir around the waist to remind them of the self-imposed obligations. They followed the Rules of the Third Order of St. Francis. Many were attracted to their life style and several fraternities were formed all over Kerala through his untiring prayer and labour. The ‘Assemblies of the Roped’, as they were known, spread out in the dioceses of Changanacherry, Cochin, Quilon and Ernakulam and in 1875 a unit of it was started in the parish of Pala. Inspired by the Franciscan life of poverty and simplicity, eight pious women from Pala and around, became the members of the Third Order of St. Francis and started a kind of community life in a small house, in the property of a leading parishioner, Itty Joseph Pazhayakottaram in 1875. In 1883 Fr. John Punchakunnel, the Local Director of the

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Third Order, built a Chapel and a room, in Kannadiurumpu near Pala, in his own property, mainly for the meetings of the Third Order. Without delay he made a small building for the devout ladies in the same property. The donation of Pulickal Mariam and the money collected through their work and through begging were also used for the purpose. Women, living in community, visiting houses, helping the poor and caring the leprosy patients and begging alms were uncommon during that time. It was novel and at the same time revolutionary. But after the death of Fr. John in 1883, people misunderstood them and created problems.

In the meantime, hearing about the news of the visit of Msgr. Charles Lavigne, the Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam to Mutholy, the first Carmelite convent in his vicariate, the devout ladies from Kannadiurumpu along with Fr. Cherian Muppara, their spiritual director, went to meet the bishop. They expressed their desire to get their religious life regularized. He assured them that he would do what was needed for them, at the time of his visit to Pala.

When Msgr. Lavigne came to Pala on the 4th of July 1888, he visited them, in their poor house at Kannadiurumpu. On the occasion, the devout ladies requested him, to have a “Congregation of St. Clare” for them. The very same day, Msgr. Charles Lavigne, talked to the people gathered there and declared publicly that the chapel and the property were given to the devout ladies and that nobody should enter it without permission. But the people were not ready to abide by the order and they did not allow

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70 *Lalam Madam Nalagamam, Vol.1, p.17, (Hereafter Lalam Nalagamam).*
the ladies to enter the chapel. Because of the stiff resistance they could not even find a place in Pala.\footnote{Changanacherry FCC Nalagamam, Vol.1, p.3; Kannadiurumpu Franciscan Claramadathinte Charitram, pp. 5-6. (Manuscript kept in Kannadiurumbu Convent Archives, Pala. Only very few convents keep such manuscripts. These manuscripts are not dated nor do they have author. Usually it was written by someone who is in charge of scribe and the person may change frequently.)} Understanding the situation, Msgr. Lavigne searched for a residence in Changanacherry, another Catholic centre of his vicariate. There he found Mr. Mathew Cherukara, willing to give one of his buildings and property attached to it for a convent, on some conditions, in the bishop’s name. Thirteen years of life in Kannadiurumpu came to an end, when they left for Changanacherry at the orders of Msgr. Charles Lavigne.\footnote{Changanacherry FCC Nalagamam, Vol.1, p. 4.}

As per the order, they were to receive the religious habit on 14\textsuperscript{th} December 1888 and also to move to their house at Changanacherry. So the pious ladies who were selected for vestition started their journey in a country boat with all their household things and with their ‘precious treasure of seven orphans’ (six girls and one boy). They travelled through the Meenachil river and reached Kottayam.\footnote{At that time Vicar Apostolic was residing at Edackattupalli at Kottayam.} As a sign of their new life and dedication to it, they received the religious habit and accepted new names from the bishop on 14\textsuperscript{th} December 1888.\footnote{Changanacherry FCC Nalagamam, Vol.1, pp. 4-5.}

As members of the Franciscan Third Order, they were leading community life and so Msgr. Lavigne decided to give ‘\textit{Habitus Scapular et Vela}’. They were given white habit, scapular, a cord around with 5 knots showing the five wounds of Jesus, toque, veil and a rosary on the cord. A crucifix hanging from the neck and a Franciscan...
small scapular constituted their dress.\textsuperscript{76} As they had no patrimony of their own, the pioneer religious were vested with Franciscan religious habit by the bishop’s own money.

The pioneer women religious of FCC are Sr. Mariam Clara of Jesus, Pulikal Pala (45); Sr. Colletta of Jesus, Pazhayakottaram Pala (25); Sr. Anna of Jesus, Plathottam Pala (50); Sr. Agnes of Jesus, Plathottam Bharananganam (27); Sr. Margaritha of Jesus, Thykuttam Pala (20); Sr. Mariam Thresia of Jesus, Poovarani Naduakuvayalil, Pala (20); Sr. Marian of Jesus, Parajathu Punnattura (20); Sr. Magdelena of Jesus, Munduvayalil Kothanalloore(19). These women were not of poor families but belonged to rich, noble families of the Syrian Christian community. They were seeking self-fulfilment through devotion to God and caring for the sick and the poor.

After vestition they reached Changanacherry to start religious life in the new house arranged by the Vicar Apostolic on 15\textsuperscript{th} Dec.1888. Both the sisters and orphans resided in the same building. The bishop appointed Sr. Mariam Clara, the first superior of the community and assigned Fr. Chacko CMI as their spiritual director. Bishop Lavigne gave them a time table to be followed. He also gave clear details about their life style and apostolate.

The first part of the constitution of the Clarist congregation was given to them for trial on April 1889, by Msgr. Lavigne. He wrote, “to love God and the orphans: let this be your first rule; this is the spirit and soul of your congregation.”\textsuperscript{77} Later Bishop Mar Makil

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p. 5.
wrote a constitution for the religious and they observed it from 1901-1908.\textsuperscript{78} This constitution called as \textit{Chattangalum Niyamangalum} (Rules and Regulations) was based on the rules of the Third Order of St. Francis and the religious rules written by St. Augustine and St. Francis Sales. Meanwhile a copy of the constitution followed by the religious of the Franciscan Third Order of Oldenburg\textsuperscript{79} was collected by Fr. Stephen CMI and translated into Malayalam by the order of bishop. From 12\textsuperscript{th} August 1909 to 1944, the hand written copy of this constitution was followed by the members of the congregation.\textsuperscript{80} In 1944, Rt. Rev. Dr. James Kalacherry, the Bishop of Changanacherry printed and published the constitution, \textit{as Changanacherry Roopathayile Franciscan Moonnam Sabha Kanyakalude Chattangalum Niyamangalum}, and this has been followed up to 1970.

\textbf{3.3.1 Old Pastures and New Meanings}

Space of activity being the same for both congregations, they differed in mission. Religious life was becoming more active. The original spirit of FCC, based on hard labour and lowliness of the members was to serve the poor and the destitute. The instruction given to the members of the new congregation about the apostolic activity they had to follow reveals the changing meaning of the religious life. The following are the apostolic activities instructed by the bishop.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{78} Gorethy and Alphons, \textit{Ibid.}, pp.131-138.

\textsuperscript{79} This constitution was given by Pope Leo X11 to the Sisters of the Franciscan Third Order in 1521.

\textsuperscript{80} Changanacherry FCC Nalagamam, Vol.1, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.}, Vol.1, p. 5; Also described in the Claramadathinte Prarambha Charitram (History of the Beginning of the Clarist Convent), (A hand written unpaged manuscript kept in Kannadiurumpu Convent, Pala).
1. Sisters should go out, walk along the road and bring home all invalids and orphans whom they see on the road and give them tender loving care.

2. Sisters should go out in pair and beg like the early Franciscans, which was a means for their livelihood. They should also pray for those who cheerfully responded to their appeal and also for those who denied them, since begging was first of all an expression of perfect poverty and humility.

3. Teach catechism to new converts. Prepare them to receive the sacraments.

4. Should follow the Statutes, without fail.

5. Manual labour like washing clothes, stitching, making rosaries husking and making hosts were their normal routine.

Changes are clear. Instead of being shut inside the convent walls, they were asked to come out of it. Their priorities were also clear, when they took seven orphans to their new house at Changanacherry. The first convent of the congregation was also named after St. Germane, the patron of all orphans. People called their first convent Anadha Madam, since they looked after the orphans.\(^{82}\) The People of Changanacherry, attracted by their service to the poor and their way of life, supported them whenever necessary. The religious were active in the evangelization of the lower castes. The new converts\(^ {83}\) were taught catechism and were prepared them to receive the sacraments. The manual labour like stitching, making rosaries, husking and making hosts, made their routine life, since the congregation was meant for women having less patrimony when compared to

\(^{82}\) Ibid., p. 30.
\(^{83}\) The Third Order of the Franciscans was working among the Scheduled Castes like Pulayas and Parayas and were preaching Gospel to them. Such references can be seen in the chronicles of the every Congregation.
CMC. It was not only to engage themselves but also, to meet their livelihood. Rt. Rev. Dr. Charles Lavigne also insisted, ‘let the boys and girls be never lazy and idle. So after their (catechism) classes, let them do some manual work, by which they could have some means of living for the future. Can they not make (weave) baskets; can they not make ropes (threads)?' \(^{84}\) Necessary articles for making rosary were given by Rev. Charles Lavigne, which he received from Europe. \(^{85}\) He also appointed an Anglo-Indian lady to train them in stitching Holy Dress for the Chapel, the habit of the religious etc. \(^{86}\)

But the early apostolate of the FCC changed with the passage of time. The constitution of Oldenburg insisted on, educating the children, looking after the orphans and also working as per the instructions of the local bishop. \(^{87}\) Since women education was neglected so far, realizing the urgent need to educate the women, the Clarist sisters turned their attention to the apostolate of education. To fulfil the societal needs, they started with a nursery school. Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry gave them permission to run a primary school. CMI priests also handed over their grant-in-aid school with all furniture to the FCC sisters. Followed by it, the foundation stone was laid for St. Ann’s School. Under the supervision of the CMI priests and with the money collected from generous people, the first school of the congregation came into being with 49 students and 2 teachers on 19\(^{th}\) May 1913. \(^{88}\) With this initiative, education became the main stay of their

\(^{84}\) Charles Lavigne; Letter No. 3, dated April 1889, in Gorethy and Alphons (ed.), *Op.cit.*, p. 95

\(^{85}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{86}\) Gorethy, *FCC Charitrapadhithiloode* (Mal), Changanacherry, 2009, p. 106

\(^{87}\) James Kalacherry, *Changanacherry Roopathayile Franciscan Moonnam Sabha Kanyakalude Chattangganum Niyamangganum* (Mal), Changanacherry, 1944, p. 17

apostolate. However, as the objective of the congregation was to give primary education to girls, the sisters were not permitted to have higher education.\textsuperscript{89}

In the early days of their Religious life, they had to face difficulties due to the absence of a permanent house to dwell in. Along with their orphans, they had to wait for years, under utter inconveniences, to have a house of their own.\textsuperscript{90} In 1896, they began to construct a small building, in their own property, which was bought with the patrimony of the sisters. The construction of the building was permitted and supported by the first Vicar Apostolic of Changanacherry Vicariate, Mar Mathew Makil and financially supported by Rev. Charles Lavigne.\textsuperscript{91} On May 1\textsuperscript{st} 1897, the new building for the convent was blessed. Thus 22 years of uncertain and insecure life of the Franciscan sisters ended. Up to this period the orphans also lived along with them.\textsuperscript{92} Amidst the early struggles and difficulties the Clarist Convents, began to branch out in different parts of Kerala. They had a mission to fulfil. From the first branch Kayalpuram (1900), down to Moonnilavu (1950), there were 19 branches in the Vicariate of Changanacherry.

The Franciscan spirituality spread beyond the borders of Changanacherry and the Clarist Congregation in the Vicariate of Trichur was founded in the year 1910. The effort to start the congregation was taken by Rev. Fr. Antony Kavunkal with the permission of the bishop Rev. Dr. John Menacherry.\textsuperscript{93} But the idea to start the FCC emerged when a lady named Anna approached Fr. Kavunkal for permission to join the congregation at

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{90} Elisevus, \textit{Franciscan Clarasabha, 1888-1988 (Mal)}, Alwaye, 1988, p. 30.
\item \textsuperscript{91} He was then the Bishop of Tringomaly, Ceylon.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Karuvannur Madam Nalagamam, \textit{Thrissur}, Vol. 1, p.1.
\end{itemize}
Changanacherry in 1907. Immediately after another one-Anna Kandasankadavu also got permission from the bishop to join the congregation. Both of them got the veil on 3\textsuperscript{rd} February and 28\textsuperscript{th} April, 1908 respectively.\footnote{Ibid., p. 3.} Meanwhile preparations were made by Fr.Kavunkal to construct a convent in Karuvannur. Behind the construction of the convent, he had another intention; to solve the problem of education in the parish. After discussing the matter with the parish people, the foundation stone for the convent was laid on May 5\textsuperscript{th}, 1907. In order to collect money for the construction he went on begging in every parish with the order from bishop. When construction was over Fr. Kavunkal reached Changanacherry to bring them back to Karuvannur. Their junior mistress also came along with them to assist them in starting the convent. They started living in the new convent on June 21\textsuperscript{st} 1910 and after five days they had their final profession.\footnote{Ibid., p. 5.}

The FCC congregation in the Vicariate of Trichur was a diocesan congregation independent of the mother house. From 1910-1939, it functioned under the guidance of the bishop but from 1939 the congregation had a centralised administration. The constitution of the Clarist congregation in Changanacherry vicariate was adapted with slight modification in Trichur. According to the constitution the most important work of humility is imparting education to girl children\footnote{Constitution of Franciscan Third Order, 1910; The Franciscan spirit as well as the vision of the ecclesiastical authorities lead FCC in the initial years. But when the Constitution of Oldenburg was accepted by them, as per this constitution, priority was given to education of girls. The FCC in Trichur began to use 1910 constitution as well as the traditions.} and bringing them up in truth and morality. Immediately after the establishment of the convent, the parish L.P school was
handed over to the sisters. Schools became the thrust area of apostolic activity, along with the church related services and training of women in handicrafts.

The Franciscan Clarist Congregation spread to Ernakulam diocese only later. In 1928, at the initiative of Mother Mariam Thresia a new house was started at Angamaly. Sr. Kochuthresia and two other candidates accompanied her to Angamaly at the instruction of the bishop of Changanacherry. He wrote to the sisters, “You are permitted to go, to run a convent and a school at Angamaly, immediately after Easter. Bishop of Ernakulam has also requested me to send two sisters who have passed T.T.C. In Maniamkunnu three sisters have passed T.T.C and if the convent agrees, you can take them to Angamaly. In order to start the convent Sr. Mariam Thresia as well as Chakampillil sister should go immediately.”

The relentless efforts of Mariam Thresia of Vaikom parish in the Ernakulam diocese, to start a Clarist convent in her diocese bore fruit by 1928.

The Clarist convent started in Ernakulam was an independent diocesan community, affiliated to the mother congregation. The Rules and Regulations observed in the Changanacherry diocese were followed by them until 1941, when Rt. Rev. Dr. Augustin Kandathil, the Bishop of Ernakulam began to revise the rules for them. He introduced many new traditions to uphold the honour and dignity of the Religious life. Begging, which was a means of livelihood in the initial years as well as a Franciscan way of humility and simplicity, was stopped by the bishop, because, it was not good for the

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security and dignity of the Religious life. But at the same time house visits were made compulsory.

The first branch of Angamaly convent was started at Paingottoor in 1930. It was a newly migrated Christian centre, having no church, no school or convent. When a church was established in 1920, the Vicar as well as the devotees desired to have a convent in the parish. With the permission of the bishop as well as the consent of the sisters, a convent was constructed within a short time of two and a half months. Within few days after the blessing of the convent women came to join the convent. In 1930 itself, 17 candidates received the veil. Women who had already received the veil from the Carmelite and Adoration congregations also came back to join the convent in the native place. The only income of the convent at that time was the boarding fees of the candidates, which was not enough to meet the livelihood of the sisters. Soon a school was also started by them. Except Paingottoor, all other convents had their apostolate of education in the parish schools.

From the traditional Christian belt, convents spread to under developed and migrated settlements and the requirements of the parishes in the peripheries were met with. The growth of FCC varied in three dioceses.

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100 Ibid., p. 37.
3.4 Blue Belt and White Bread: Congregation of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

The third indigenous women religious congregation of Syro-Malabar Church known as Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was founded on 8th December 1908 at Champakulam in the Vicariate of Changanacherry.\textsuperscript{103} The congregation was founded by Fr. Thomas Kurialacherry (1873-1925), and Vallayil Philomena (1880-1972), the co-foundress.\textsuperscript{104} About the foundation of the congregation, she has written in her autobiography that, “in cooperation with the holy father, late Bishop Mar Thomas Kurialacherry, Sr. Mary Francisca the Chantal of Holy Cross, has caressed and toiled to bring up the congregation.”\textsuperscript{105} Foundation of the congregation was not an accident. It took years to establish the congregation.

Fr. Kurialacherry, a native of Champakulam met Vallayil Philomena, a widow and mother of a girl child, leading a pious life and desirous to start a community to adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus.\textsuperscript{106} When Philomena shared her desires with Fr. Kurialacherry, he was happy that he could fulfil his desire to start a congregation for the Adoration of the Eucharist as that of the one in Europe.\textsuperscript{107} From 1899 onwards Fr. Kurialacherry began to give spiritual advice to Philomena and this continued for two years.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{103} Divyakarunya Aradhana Sabhayeude Nalagamam, Vol.1, 1908-1925, (Hereafter SABS Nalagamam), kept in SABS Archives Rita Bhavan, Koothrapally, Changanacherry, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p. 5-11; also see Oru Sahanadasiyude Ormakurippukal: Autobiography of Mother Francisca the Chantal (Mal), (Hereafter Autobiography), Changanacherry, 2008.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., p. 11.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p. 30.


\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 36-44.
her parents began to compel her for remarriage she left home leaving the only daughter under the care of her mother.109

In January 1903, she was sent to the Franciscan Clarist convent, Changanacherry. Residing there, at the age of 22, she joined the vernacular primary school attached to the Carmelite convent, Changanacherry.110 After one year she left for Mutholy to study there. In the vacation she found out girls who were interested in the holy life and with the permission of Fr. Kurialacherry, took them to Mutholy,111 where they followed the rules and regulations of the boarding. In 1906, when Fr. Kurialacherry became the Vicar of Edathua church, Philomena, with the permission of the bishop Mar Mathew Makil, joined the Vernacular Middle School at Edathua112 along with other children.113

Philomena and the children under her care did not get any convenient place to reside at Edathua. In the end they got a manger, which was a little away from the church. The manger was blessed on January 29, 1908. They started living there. The responsibility of the children who had came for community life fell upon Philomena. After twelve days

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109 She has written about it in her Autobiography that, “I suffered a lot, yet putting all my trust in Our Lady, I knelt before my elder brother and requested this crying ‘I don’t wish to enter the worldly life again. Please don’t compel me for it again. Even if I have to die, I won’t agree to it. Kindly let me go where I wish to go. With that my brother’s heart was touched. Immediately he called the younger one and asked him to unlock the boat and make someone to give help. Still I didn’t get anything that I needed from home. I knelt before my mother for blessing and kissed her hand saying good bye. She fell down unconscious. To the child who ran to me smartly, I asked to collect two leaves from the jack tree. Then, I entered the country boat and closed its opening with palm umbrella”, p. 52.


111 Autobiography, p.71; in 1904-1905, 9 girls were send to Mutholy boarding, SABS Nalagamam, Vol.1, p.7


113 Journey to Mutholy was a tedious task and the expenses on journey, school and boarding was difficult to meet with.
they shifted their residence to a boat house near the school. During this period many children from the age of five onwards came to stay there. Those who had passed the exams started to teach and others continued their studies. When the number increased Fr. Kurialacherry quickened the efforts to establish the congregation. Among the boarders 6 were selected and on December 8, 1908 they were given the veil. On the occasion Fr. Kurialacherry gave to Philomena the name Mary Francisca the Chantal of the Eucharist. Rules were also given to them which were only temporary to follow.

As the congregation had officially started, those who entered the vocation were separated and send to Champakulam on 10th December 1908. Fr. Kurialacherry had planned Champakulam to be the centre of the new congregation. Boat house was made convenient for their residence. There they had to follow the routine given by Fr. Kurialacherry. Later on October 17, 1910 the new house was blessed and their residence was shifted from boat house to Orsalem permanently. Thus the first house of SABS was established at Champakulam.

Though they had received the veil, Bishop Mar Mathew Makil did not agree to the establishment of SABS. Meanwhile Fr. Thomas Kurialacherry became the Bishop of Changanacherry and on December 11, 1911 he blessed the vestition ceremony of the

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115 Ibid., p. 13.

116 Ibid., p. 23.

117 On many occasions Bishop Makil has expressed his opinion that “best thing is to foster and strengthen the existing congregation”, Bishop Makil’s letter to Mar. Kurialacherry, in Benjamin Mary and Josy (ed.), Op.cit., p. 49.
community which he had begun.\textsuperscript{118} Long white robe reminding the Immaculate Virgin, head dress, blue belt and black cape reminding the adorers of Europe were given to them. Thus the congregation of Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was officially established. In 1911, constitution for the new congregation was given to them.\textsuperscript{119} He also sent two Carmelite sisters to train them in religious discipline. They lived in Champakulam for 14 months and were trained in observing the religious discipline in the Chapel, refectory, bedroom etc. Canon prayers were introduced by these sisters. Duties of the Religious who held different posts were also made understood by the religious of the Carmelite congregation.\textsuperscript{120} The first members took their final profession on March 18, 1916.

According to the constitution, this congregation is to be a harmonious blend of both prayer and action.\textsuperscript{121} The first and primary duty of the religious is to adore God, the father in spirit and truth and lead a prayerful life that will help them grow in divine love to self sanctification. Eucharistic love is to be flamed in every religious so as to victimise oneself on the altar of sacrifice of life. For that they should do activities that would foster faith in others and liberate the people around.

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{SABS Nalagamam}, Vol. 1, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{119} He prepared the constitution without consulting the existing Adoration Congregations in Europe; \textit{Ibid.}, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Divyakarunya Aradhana sabhyude Paitrukam} (Mal), (Hereafter \textit{SABS Constitution 1917 in Paitrukam}) Superior General, Aluva, 1980, p. 20; The Constitution of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Holy Sacrament given by the founder Bishop Rev. Thomas Kurialacherry is published in this title. The constitution is based on the rules of St. Augustine. The constitution consists of three parts: 1. The nature and purpose of the constitution 2. Formation of the religious 3. Administration of the congregation.
3.4.1 Expansion from Rice Bowls to Hinterland

One of the purposes of the establishment of the congregation was to educate the illiterate girls around, which they considered as the outward expression of their love for the Eucharist. As soon as they reached Champakulam, Chantal, together with Fr. Kurialacherry, engaged in constructing a school. Among them only three aspirants were teaching in the school. All the rest were students. As there were no girl’s school in the neighbourhood, the construction of the school was a necessity. A long palm shed was made and started a vernacular middle school from 1-6 standards were started. As nobody showed interest in giving education to girls, they had to bring girls to this school. That responsibility was also entrusted to Chantal. She went around in the country boat and visited house after house and registered about sixty girls in the boarding. Since travel facilities were meagre many of them had to be accommodated in the school hall which itself was considered a boarding.

It took years to found the congregation of Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. But once the congregation started, it began to grow fast. Unlike the two earlier congregations which spread to three Syro-Malabar dioceses, the activities of SABS were centred in Changanacherry diocese, particularly the south western part of the diocese, the low lying paddy cultivating region. From here it spread to the northern-eastern parts of the diocese, and beyond that to Ernakulam diocese, but never crossed the border of Trichur. After the construction of the first convent in 1910, the second convent

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123 Ibid.
was constructed in 1917 at Thuruthy. In the same year another convent was also constructed at Vazhapally. Followed by this many convents were started and schools were constructed attached to each convent. All the schools had attached boarding since travel facilities were meagre in those days. Convents, schools and boarding were founded by Sr. Chantal with the support of Bishop Rev. Thomas Kurialacherry and the cooperation of the parish people. In order to coordinate the activities of the convents, spread in different parts of the Changanacherry Vicariate, Rev. Fr. Kattarath Gheevarghese was appointed in 1922. In 1924 for the administration of the congregation a General Chapter was also convened. In 1925, at the time of the death of the founder Bishop Rev. Thomas Kurialacherry, there were nine Adoration convents and 169 members including candidates. After the demise of the founder bishop they continued their Religious life under the guidance of Sr. Chantal. The apostolate of education was carried forth by the congregation all throughout the years. In between 1908 and 1950, twenty convents were established in the Changanacherry diocese.

The initiative for the establishment of an Adoration convent in the Archdiocese of Ernakulum was taken by the Archbishop of Ernakulum Mar Augustine Kandathil, a friend of Rev. Kurialacherry. The Archbishop wished to start an Adoration congregation in his Archdiocese and with the permission of Rev. James Kalacherry, five sisters were brought to Koratty. Thus on May 7th 1930, the tenth convent of the congregation was started at Koratty. As per the constitution of 1917, even if the congregation is founded in

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124 Champakulam, Thuruthy, Mallapally, Vazhapally, Athirampuzha, Mutholapuram, Edathua, Kanjiramatton and Kadanad.
125 Ibid., p. 181.
other dioceses, Superior General has the right to administer and look after the affairs of the congregation in all dioceses. According to this rule Mother General Sr. Chantal and others had the administrative charge of Koratty convent. Transfer and official visits were done with the consent of the respective bishop. In order to start the convent, a candidate from Vaikom, who had been in the Vazhapally convent was sent to Koratty in 1930. The vestition of the candidates of Koratty was in 1932. In 1940 the first members of the convent took the final profession. In 1942, the religious who had gone to Koratty to found the convent, returned to Changanacherry after fulfilling the task of building up the congregation in Ernakulum and training the candidates in Religious life.

When other parishes of Ernakulum Archdiocese came to know about this congregation, many convents were started in the diocese, though not numerous as in Changanacherry. These convents were started either at the old Christian settlements or at the newly migrated remote settlements.

3.5 Congregation for ‘Commons’: Establishment of Sacred Heart Congregation.

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the fourth indigenous congregation for women that took shape in the Syro-Malabar Church of Kerala. It was founded at Pala on January 1st 1911 at the initiative of Fr. Mathew Kadalikattil (1872-1935). Several devout women, both virgins and widows, in and

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128 In Marika (1948) and Kodikulam (1948), two remote places in the Ernakulam diocese, as per the request of the Vicar, the congregation decided to start convents., Divyakarunyathanalil, Op.cit., p.75.
129 Hereafter name of the congregation is used as SHC throughout the text.
around Pala, eager to lead a community life, had neither the required education nor the financial means to enter the established religious congregations.\textsuperscript{130} It was in this background that Fr. Mathew Kadalikattil, who was the vicar of the parish as well as the spiritual father of these women, wished to fulfil their desire and took initiative to start a new congregation to praise the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to serve the poor, destitute and orphans.\textsuperscript{131} He wanted to establish a convent, “Who will day and night work for the poor.”\textsuperscript{132} The Twin objectives of the congregation were 1) devotion to the Sacred Heart and 2) service to the sick, poor and the destitute.\textsuperscript{133} The felt feeling that existing congregations could not reach out to the service of the poor as they were concentrating on education,\textsuperscript{134} lead to the formation of the Congregation.\textsuperscript{135} Above all, this congregation was intended to accommodate all women, who were desirous of Religious life, irrespective of money, education or nobility.

The first and foremost purpose of the congregation is to honour and praise the Sacred Heart of Jesus.\textsuperscript{136} Fr. Mathew wrote to the religious that, ‘our veneration to the Sacred Heart in thoughts, words and deeds should be much more than that of other congregations.’\textsuperscript{137} This congregation was started for the protection and holy life of

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\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Thiruhridaya Sabhayude Nalagamam, Pala}, p. 1-2 (Hereafter \textit{SHC Nalagamam, Pala})
\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{132} Xavier Koodappuzha, \textit{Bharata Sabha Charitram}, Kottayam 1980, p. 553.
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{SHC Nalagamam Pala}, p. 2; See Mary Panthapillil, \textit{Thiruhrudaya Sanyasini Samoohathinte Sidhi} (Mal), Kottayam, 1985, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{137} Letter written by Fr. Mathew Kadalikattil to Ramapuram SH Convent dated. 21 August 1931, in Mary Magdalin, \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 126-128.
ordinary women, orphans and poor virgins. Again and again he reminds that asceticism, holy life of ordinary women and protection of orphans are our objectives. As the congregation is formed for the poor and the ordinary it is instructed that patrimony should not be fixed. He also remarks that this type of congregation is the need of the time. Holy life and salvation of the souls, being the third major purpose, was intended for the missionary activities also.

Patrimony and education needed to join the existing congregations were not necessary to join this congregation since it was founded for the poor, the disabled, and the educationally and economically backward ladies. However some of the early members got patrimony and some others got help from their home, in kind. This was an attempt by a parish priest in poverty, without capital and uncertain future. The sisters sought their food and holy life by hard work and alms and by the sweat of their forehead. Due to the lack of money, they had to face so many challenges in their day to day life. Their main income came from begging alms. While begging they got pepper, paddy, rice and money. They also had small income from stitching, pounding paddy, crafts and from making baskets, rosary and scapular. They also did agricultural works. Cooking and washing clothes were also done by themselves.

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140 *SHC Nalagamam*, Pala, Vol.1, p. 2.


142 *SHC Nalagamam*, Pala, p. 3; Mary Magdalin, *Op.cit.*, p. 35

Sacred Heart Congregation was founded in a small house owned by Njaralakattil Mathew Nellikunnel. This temporary house was ½ Km away from St. Thomas Church Pala. On January 1\textsuperscript{st} 1911, Fr. Mathew blessed the house and consecrated it to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the presence of the first members, Pulickal Thresia, Puthuparambil Brigitha, Poothanickal Rosa and Thekkemuriyil Aley. Many priests and nuns from the neighbourhood witnessed the new event. Later on 14\textsuperscript{th} January, 6 more women joined with them.\textsuperscript{144} On 14\textsuperscript{th} July Fr. Mathew purchased a plot called ‘Vazhel’.\textsuperscript{145} By the continuous effort of Fr. Mathew and the co-operation of the local people, a building was completed and blessed on 21\textsuperscript{st} September 1912.\textsuperscript{146} They started their community life as per the code of living prepared by Fr. Mathew Kadalikattil.\textsuperscript{147}

Three years later, in 1914, having built a better house and being assured of stability, Fr. Mathew applied for official recognition of the community as a religious congregation. This however was not immediately granted, for the want of stable means of support and personnel for guidance. Mar Thomas Kurialacherry, Bishop of Changanacherry, suggested that, he would approve the new community only as a Third Order section of the Clarist congregation started a few years back.\textsuperscript{148} This was quite a different proposal. Two Clarist sisters were assigned to train the candidates for the new community\textsuperscript{149} and they were entrusted with the formation of the community, thus enabling them to manage the community themselves. Even six years after the founding

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{SHC Nalagamam}, Pala, p. 3; Also see Mary Magdal, \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{145} The convent constructed in this plot came to be known as \textit{Vazhemadam}.
\textsuperscript{146} Mary Magdal, \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{147} \textit{SHC Nalagamam}, Pala, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{SHC Directory}, 2005, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{149} \textit{SHC Nalagamam}, Pala, p. 10.
of the congregation, they didn’t get the veil, which was a preliminary step for the devoted life. So the members were in confusion, whether to return home or to join other convents. But later these ladies visited the bishop and requested him to give them veil. As a result they were given veil in 1917\(^{150}\) and later ten of the postulants were given religious habit on September 21, 1918 and two among them were admitted to religious profession on June 11, 1920.\(^{151}\) Sr. Evuprasia was made superior of the convent and Sr. Jettrude, the mistress. In 1922, 8 other members also took permanent profession. Gradually ladies from far and near came to join the convent and the congregation was expanding.

Fr. Mathew Kadalikattil gave the members of the new congregation, a hand written *regula* where in, the purpose and objectives of the foundation of the congregation had been laid down. It was written that, “to praise the Sacred Heart of Jesus and also to lead holy life for women, who are poor, destitute and orphans in order to protect their soul, a congregation is established in this region on January 1st, 1911. Until the bishop recognizes the rules and regulations of this congregation, you should follow the following *regula*.“\(^{152}\) Though frequent requests were made by Fr. Mathew Kadalikattil to recognize this community as a new congregation, the request was not taken into


\(^{152}\) Kadalikattil Mathai Kathanar, *Pradhama Regulayum Kramachattavum* (Mal), (Hereafter *Pradhama Regula*), p. 51; The manuscript is kept in SHC archives, Pala, The constitution was given to them, in between 1914 and 1917. The index given in the first part, and the last part of the *regula* is written by Fr. Mathew Kadalikattil and the mid portion is copied from the Constitution of Clarist sisters, who were in Pala for two years (1915-1917), as per the instruction of Mar Thomas Kurialacherry. Fr. Mathew has clearly stated that it is copied from the Constitution of the Clarist congregation given by Mar Mathew Makil.
consideration by the bishop. On the other hand they were considered as a minimized form of FCC sisters and slight changes were made to their religions habits. They were given white gown, a middling knot and veil and were also given the constitution of FCC.\textsuperscript{153} But when the bishop came to Ramapuram in 1931, he understood how far they had grown and recognized them as an independent congregation and assigned to them the religious habit of the Sacred Heart Congregation.\textsuperscript{154} In 1935 the Pope also approved the new congregation. In the same year itself bishop Mar James Kalacherry, along with the superiors of the three convents,\textsuperscript{155} prepared the law code for the congregation. The constitution that came in to being in 1936 has the following objectives:\textsuperscript{156}:

1. Holy life of the ladies observing the rules and celibacy.
2. To do penance for the insult caused to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
3. Protection of all women orphans, Christian education, care for patients; and also fulfill the duties assigned to them by the bishop from time to time, self sacrifices and to love others.

3.5.1 New Vision and New Mission: Expanding Borders

Quite different from other congregations, this congregation was, for the ‘poor’, by the ‘ordinary’. The records of the founding father speak about the virtuous deeds and the life, the religious had to pursue. The most important apostolic activity of the Congregation according to the regula was “protection of aged widows and girls, poor

\textsuperscript{153} SHC Nalagamam, Pala, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., p. 35.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., p. 54; The three convents are Pala, Punnathura and Ramapuram.
\textsuperscript{156}Isoyude Thiruhrudaya Sanyasinisamooham: Sthapanapadhathi (Mal), Kottayam,2006, P, 51
spinsters and destitutes who were abandoned by their husbands and wish to be under the care and protection of the congregation, shall be admitted with the permission of the bishop. The services may be done to them as the situation permits. Their livelihood should be met by begging alms.”¹⁵⁷ The second instruction given to the members of the congregation was ‘to take care of the orphans’. They should be given food and shelter, brought up virtuous and their spiritual life strengthened. Also educate them and train them in arts and crafts.¹⁵⁸ They are to be treated alike. Same food was to be served for the orphans and the sisters.¹⁵⁹ It was the bounden duty of the SH sisters to bring up the orphans as good Christians through teaching catechism and prayers. This purpose was fulfilled when they started orphanages along with early convents, first being in 1914. Third important virtue they had to follow was, ‘with the permission of the bishop, go and visit patients in the hospital and do service to them.’¹⁶⁰ Christian education to the poor and the destitute was the major objective of the congregation. Though the mission was to look after the poor and the destitute, they started to teach in the part time Harijan School at Punnathura and thus started their educational services.

The Sacred Heart Congregation, founded at Pala was under the jurisdiction of the Changanacherry Vicariate, at the time of its foundation. After the establishment of the first convent in 1911, it took 15 years to start another convent. The second convent was started at Punnathura in 1926. Begging alms in order to run the convent and orphanage

¹⁵⁷ Pradhama Regula, p. 52.
¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 53: In a letter written to Punnathura SH Convent on 2 October 1933, Fr. Mathew reminds them about the orphanage and orphans., See Mary Magdalin, Op.cit., p.130.
¹⁵⁹ SHC Nalagamam Pala, p.49; also see Maria Celin, ‘Anusmaranakal’, in Mary Magdalin, Op.cit., p.163.
¹⁶⁰ Pradhama Regula, p. 53.
was the most important cause behind the spread of the SH congregation. Activities of the Sacred Heart congregation attracted the attention of many and they were eager to start convents in their locality. Thus the convent started for the ordinary women began to spread to different parts of the diocese, especially in and around Pala. Majority of the convents were established in the peripheries of the diocese.

The forth branch of the Sacred Heart Congregation, founded at Pynkulam on 24th June 1938, was the first Sacred Heart convent in the Archdiocese of Ernakulam. The efforts to start the convent were taken up by Fr. Francis Thekkekara, the Vicar of Mailacompu parish. He came to know about this congregation, when two sisters of Ramapuram convent reached Mailacompu to receive donation. He was impressed by the humility and dedication of the sisters to the poor and the destitute. Inspired by the support of Mar Augustine Kandathil,161 the bishop of Ernakulum Archdiocese, Fr. Francis Thekkekara and Fr. George Kochupurackal, Vicar of Nagapuzha visited the convent at Pala and met mother Margareetha, one of the founding members. Three sisters were sent to open a new house at Pynkulam, a place between Mailacompu and Nagapuzha and the construction of the house which was under taken by both the Parishes.162 The convent that was started at Pynkulam later grew as the Jyothi Province, Kothamangalam.

161 *SHC Nalagamam Pynkulam*, Vol. 1, p.1; It is written in the Nalagamam that, when Fr. Francis, placed an application to the Bishop Mar Augustine Kandathil for the reconstruction of the ancient church at Mailacompu, the bishop responded “The Church building can be completed at any time. Try to start a charitable institution that is useful for the public”. 

Permission was granted to start the convent on July 7th 1937, with candidates having education of 4th standard and patrimony of Rs.500. The U.P School for girls was opened prior to the beginning of the convent in May 1938, not only to impart education to girls but also to engage the sisters in apostolic activities. Sisters began to teach catechism in both the parishes. It was also instructed that, they should visit the sick and the dying within the Parish and prepare them for death. Though they continued to do stitching and other handworks, the authorities realized that begging alms or doing other activities were insufficient to meet the livelihood. Gradually when the society demanded more participation in their spiritual and secular needs, more convents were established in the neighbourhood. From Pynkulam, Sacred Heart convents branched out to other parts of the diocese and engaged in various apostolic activities.

Having discussed the spatial expansion and development of the congregations, the following table gives an exact figure of the progression of the four congregations in three dioceses, in decades:

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163 Ibid., p. 5.
164 Ibid., p. 15.
165 Ancy (ed.), Thiruhridaya Sannyasini Samooha Charitram (Mal), Kottayam, 2000, p. 67.
Table 1: Growth of Congregations in Three Dioceses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Changanacherry</th>
<th>Ernakulam</th>
<th>Trichur</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CMC</td>
<td>FCC</td>
<td>SABS</td>
<td>SH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1860-1870</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1870-1880</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1880-1890</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1890-1900</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1900-1910</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1910-1920</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1920-1930</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1930-1940</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1940-1950</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from the tables given in the Appendix No.3

Based on the table given above, a graph representing the growth of the congregations in dioceses are given below:

Graph 1: Cumulative Growth of Convents in Three Dioceses

Cumulative Growth in the Number of Convents in Changanacherry, Ernakulam and Trichur dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church from 1860 AD to 1950 AD
Women religious congregations starting from Koonammavu, spread to different centres of Syrian Christian concentration. Though Mutholy was the second convent of CMC, it became the first convent in the Syrian Christian belt, from where congregated life spread far and wide. Other than CMC, the Vicariate of Changanacherry became the place of birth of latter three congregations. CMC had the highest number of convents and FCC was the second largest in number. Only these two congregations had branches in all the three dioceses. The other two congregations, originated in the twentieth century were mainly diocesan congregations, to cater to the needs of the community. Similar congregations were started in Ernakulam and Trichur dioceses also but later than SABS and SHC. The emergence of such congregations actually prevented or delayed their entry into the other two dioceses.

The growth and development of the religious congregations were highest in Changanacherry, when compared to the growth in the other two dioceses. All the four congregations had highest number of convents in the Changanacherry diocese. out of the total 149 convents or 48% of the established convents were in Changanacherry. It is true that Changanacherry had the highest Christian population but the highest number

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166 Koonammavu was a Latin centre. Before shifting to Varappuzha, Latin Bishop’s House was in Koonammavu. More than that Latin Seminari was in Koonammavu and when Fr. Chavara was appointed as the Vicar General, he stayed in Koonammavu.

167 Congregation of Holy Family was started in 1914 at Puthenchira in the diocese of Trichur. In between 1914 and 1950, 7 convents were started in different parts of Trichur diocese; Sisters of Destitute was established in 1927 at Aluva in the Archdiocese of Ernakulam. Up to 1950, this congregation has started 8 more branches. Medical Mission Sisters of St. Joseph (1944); Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth (1948) and Sisters of St. Martha (1948) are some other convents started in these Vicariates. George Appassery (ed.), Catholic Directory of Kerala, Ernakulam, 1986, pp. 355-360 and 424-428.

of convents in the diocese cannot be attributed in proportion to population alone. But rather it denotes the socio-economic position of the community in Kerala.  

Representation of the growth as well as cumulative growth of the convents in Kerala in graph (2) could explain the facts behind the growth of convents other than spiritual aspirations of the community:

**Graph 2 Growth of Convents**

![Graph 2 Growth of Convents](image)

Though the number of convents in Kerala was increasing as understood from the cumulative growth of the convents, the above graph shows variations in the growth of the convents over the period under study. The highest growth increase was in 1920-1930 and in the next decade there was a sharp decline in the growth of the convents. Again in the 1940’s a leap in the growth of convents can be seen. When considering the cumulative growth of the congregations a major shift in the growth occurred in 1930’s.

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This shift when analysed indicates the economic influences on the growth of congregations. As mentioned in the first chapter, the Nazranies were increasing in wealth and by 1930 they had become powerful enough to claim their civil rights. The increase in the economic power of the Catholics was helpful in the establishment, growth and development of the convents. The patrimony they received and the amount they collected through begging reflect the financial status of the community. The economic progress of the community was mainly due to the increase in the prices of commodities. But the trend changed with the great depression of 1929. The Census Report of 1931 reported that, “the prices of industrial articles, like those of agricultural products, were quite well till the economic depression set in. The prices of coconut oil, for e.g., fluctuated between Rs.150 and Rs.180 per candy till about the end 1929 and only in 1930 it fell to Rs.115. Since then there has been a sharper fall.”\(^{170}\) This crisis affected the Nazranies which in turn affected the growth of convents. Though the Second World War created untold misery to the people it did not affect the growth of convents.

The export earnings of crops like ginger, pepper, tea, cardamom, lemon grass, rubber and cashew nut were exceptionally high. Though these crops were cultivated throughout Travancore, the midlands enjoyed more favourable topographical condition for their cultivation. Earnings from these products increased from 13.18% in 1899-1900 to 28.19% in 1929-30. Needless to say the income of the peasant farmers of the midland region increased to unprecedented levels as a result of the increase in the export

earnings. Top 10 Taluks with total wealth and average wealth per earner in 1931 census included Christian majority areas of Kerala, like Meenachil, Ettumanur, Changanacherry and Kottayam and this in fact explains why Changanacherry had more convents than other dioceses.

In this context, it is pertinent to take into account the opinion of Romila Thapar that “the appearance of renouncers as an organised section of the society occurs historically at periods of change when there emerge within society not only religious but socio-economic sanctions to maintain such groups.” Considering the opinion of Thapar, if the changing social scenario of Kerala in the wake of colonial modernity gave social sanction to the establishment of congregations, the changing material condition of the Catholic-Nazrani gave economic sanction to the foundation of the convents and attached institutions. More over the emerging political economy as well as the social mobility of the classes in Travancore and Cochin had been influential in producing these changes among the Nazranies. Thus women religious congregations established in Kerala at a particular social juncture had been instrumental in bringing about social change in the community which had the socio-religious backing of the period.

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172 As per the Economic Suvey of 1931, the per capita income of the people was highest in the Meenachil Taluk (Rs 3259). Behind Meenachil stood Kottayam, Thodupuzha, Ambalapuzha, Thiruvalla, Changanacherry and Muvattupuzha, which were all Christian majority area, Report on the Census of India, Travancore 1931, Part 1, Appendix 1V, Economic conditions of the people, p. 474.
173 Romila Thapar has used the term renouncer, as a person who has opted out of society and renounced social mores but joins a group of renouncers, Romila Thapar, ‘Renunciation: The Making of a Counter-Culture?’, Romila Thapar, (ed.), Ancient Indian Social History, New Delhi, 2003, p. 57.
3.6 Different in Charism and Similar in Mission: Fulfilling Societal Aspirations

Different in charism but similar in mission, these congregations were fulfilling the societal needs of the time. The four indigenous congregations, when established, had been different in spirit and mission, but soon their priorities in the apostolic activities changed and importance was given to women education. Likewise when latter congregations emerged, it was intended to meet the societal need, to accommodate women of all categories.

When the first congregation was established, the founders foresaw what was necessary for the community. The Carmelite vision of life was extended through their mission; Christian formation of children, particularly education of women. Along with the convents, they started schools and boarding. Koonammavu (1866), Mutholy (1888), Vaikom (1892), Changanacherry (1893), Arakuzha (1895), Ambazhakad (1897), Pulincunnu (1898), Karukutty (1899) and Ollur (1900) were the 19th century Carmelite convents and all these convents had primary schools and boarding attached to them. In Changanacherry, they started a Malayalam middle school too. The following table shows the temporal activities of CMC over a period of 90 years.

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174 The word charism comes from a Greek term Charisma, which means gift of God’s grace. Charism is a free gift of God. It is the spiritual experience of the founders; and is handed over to the followers, in order to live, preserve, deepen and bring up. Being in union with the mystical body of Jesus, they live in constant process of growth. Because of this itself, each institute has its special nature, special ways of proceeding to holiness, and fields of activities; CMC Plan of Formation, Aluva, 2007, p. 20

175 See Appendix, No.3, tables -1, 2, & 3

176 Ibid.
Table. 2 Activities of the CMC, 1866-1950

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<tr>
<th>Diocese</th>
<th>No of Convents</th>
<th>LP Mal.</th>
<th>LP Eng.</th>
<th>UP Mal.</th>
<th>UP Eng.</th>
<th>HS Mal.</th>
<th>HS Eng.</th>
<th>Collage</th>
<th>Boarding</th>
<th>Orphanage</th>
<th>Tech School</th>
<th>Others</th>
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<td>Ernakulam</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>7 C</td>
<td>7 C</td>
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<td>16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11 C</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>8 C</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Convent School; ** Parish school

With the dawn of the twentieth century, CMC congregation began to branch out in all the three vicariates of Kerala. Up to 1950, CMC had altogether 67 branches and out of these 58 convents were established after 1900. In all the three dioceses the Carmelites had similar developments. The table shows that CMC congregation had 35 Lower Primary Schools, 23 Malayalam Middle Schools, 14 English Middle Schools, 18 Malayalam High schools, 3 English High schools and 1 College before 1950. They also had 34 Boardings, 18 Orphanages, 8 Technical Schools and 8 other institutions. Apart from their institutions, they worked in parish schools such as: 14 Lower Primary Schools, 1 Malayalam Middle School, 3 English Middle Schools and 1 Malayalam High School. CMC had more convent schools and institutions to work with than the parish schools. The efforts taken by the religious in the initial years to have their own
educational institution, if possible within their own property attached to the convent, in order to facilitate their contemplative life are visible here. The early branches of the congregation in all the three dioceses had many institutions attached to them. Their temporal activities extended not only to schools but also orphanages, old age homes, rescue homes, children’s home, borma, bakery and weaving centres.

The founding spirit of the Franciscan Clarist congregation was to look after the poor and the orphans, though they had later switched over to the field of education. FCC had two convents in the 19th century, Changanacherry (1888) and Kayalpuram (1900). Drawn by the Franciscan lowliness and humble life, in Changanacherry, they had an orphanage from the beginning but in 1913 a school was started there and at Kayalpuram also a school was started in 1914. The temporal activities engaged in by the sisters of FCC are given in the following table:

\[\text{See Appendix No.3, Table 1, 2 & 3}\]
Table. 3 Activities of the FCC, 1888-1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diocese</th>
<th>No of Convents</th>
<th>LP</th>
<th>UP</th>
<th>HS</th>
<th>Boarding</th>
<th>Orphanage</th>
<th>Ind. School</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1 C*</td>
<td>1 P</td>
<td>2P</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 P**</td>
<td>2 P</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>2 C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5 C</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>2 C</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changanacherry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5 C</td>
<td>1 C</td>
<td>4 C</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trichur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11 C</td>
<td>1 C</td>
<td>6 C</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Convent school, ** Parish School

In the case of FCC, 43 convents were established in different parts of Kerala in this particular time frame. Out of these 41 convents were started in between 1900 and 1950. Growth of the Franciscan congregation was greater in Changanacherry diocese where the congregation was born. In Trichur also the congregation had almost similar development. But in Ernakulam diocese the congregation has only 8 convents. FCC also had a number of educational institutions like 18 convent Lower Primary Schools, 11 Malayalam Middle Schools, 1 English Middle School and 6 Malayalam High Schools. They also worked in 22 Parish Lower Primary Schools, 2 Malayalam Middle Schools, 1 English Middle School and 2 Parish High Schools. Compared to the Carmelites, FCC had more parish institutions to work with and the total participation in the educational
sector was less compared to the CMC. Other than the services in the educational sector they had orphanages, weaving centres, boarding and industrial schools. Unlike the CMC, they had to visit houses and to take care of the sick and the poor.

SABS and SHC established in the first two decades of the twentieth century, different in charism and mission, took years to establish their first house. The great demand for women education and the insufficient means to meet the needs of the society compelled the founders to start a congregation for women education. Like the Carmelites, education of women was taken up as the mission of SABS. The societal need of educating the girls in the Changanacherry Vicariate was given thrust by the founders. The following table shows the apostolic activities taken up by SABS:

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178 Preparations had begun to start the SABS congregation from 1902, when Philomena was sent to study at the Changanacherry convent. In 1908 though the first members were given the veil, they had to wait till 1911 to have a permanent house. In the case of SHC, they had a permanent house within two years, but for the branches, it took years to start branches and have permanent houses.

179 Fr. Thomas Kurialacherry wanted to establish congregation and school for the betterment of his native place. For that first of all he constructed a church in Champakulam, the place which is to be the centre of his future congregation. Later on the convent, boarding and school was constructed attached to it. It was from Champakulam SABS spread to other places. Access to Champakulam and nearby places helped both Sr. Chantal and Fr. Kurialacherry to start new convents in these regions. More than that Fr. Kurialacherry became the first native bishop of Changanacherry. This actually helped the spread of SABS in Changanacherry, SABS Nalagamam. Vol.1, pp. 6-32.
Table: 4 Activities of the SABS, 1908-1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 C*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1 C</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changanacherry</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9 C 5 P**</td>
<td>5 C 1 P</td>
<td>1 P</td>
<td>1 C 1 P</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10 C 5 P</td>
<td>5 C 1 P</td>
<td>1 P</td>
<td>2 C</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Convent School; **Parish School

Source: Compiled from the Table given in the Appendix No.3, Table 7 & 8

As said above, this congregation focused in the Changanacherry diocese had 20 convents as its branches and there were only five convents in Ernakulam. This congregation had 10 Lower Primary Schools, 5 Malayalam Middle Schools and 2 High Schools. They also worked in 5 Parish Lower Primary Schools, 1 Parish Malayalam Middle School and 1 Parish English Middle School, apart from teaching Sunday catechism. They also run teachers training school, boarding and orphanage.

SHC was specific to take care of the sick, aged and orphans, though they had to do the apostolate of education in the parish schools. FCC and SHC had their beginning in Pala and the founder of SHC had close relations with FCC and he knew the unfulfilled task of FCC. The following table shows the activities of the Sacred Heart congregation in Changanacherry and Ernakulam Dioceses:
Table 5: Activities of the SHC, 1911-1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diocese</th>
<th>No of Convents</th>
<th>LP</th>
<th>UP</th>
<th>HS</th>
<th>Boarding</th>
<th>Orphanage/Dispensary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 P*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1 P</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changanacherry</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3 P</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7 P</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1 P</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Parish School; Source: Compiled from the table given in the Appendix No.3, Table 9&10

The delay to get their congregation sanctioned and also the lack of resources and deficiency of educated sisters hindered the growth of the institutions for apostolic activities. But even then the parish and the community got their services through house visits, caring the sick and poor, leading prayers in the church, teaching catechism and preparing the children for first communion. The presence of a convent in a parish was cherished by the community, for the spiritual enhancement of the community and the congregation began to spread fast.

It is interesting to note that, no two congregations had convents in the same place except at Changanacherry, Ernakulam and Ramapuram. The first place being the centre of the vicariate had CMC and FCC convents. Likewise Carmelites had two convents in Ernakulam where the second had begun for administrative purpose. Exception can be
seen in Ramapuram where CMC and SHC had convents. In this context the attitude of the bishops to the foundation of the new congregation has to be taken into consideration. When attempts were made to start new congregations, the concerned bishops delayed the cause saying that, “you join with the existing congregation as it was started for educating the girls and running orphanages.” However, they never allowed starting two convents in the same place. All the four congregations together had 149 branches within three vicariates, which means, out of the total of 413 parishes, 149 parishes had attached convents with schools, orphanages, tailoring centres and technical or industrial schools. Thus more than one third of the parishes had convents in their vicinity. Even if they did not own their own institution, they worked in parish schools. To get maximum service to maximum number of parishes was the motive when the religious were directed to parishes where they were in need of.

In the present scenario 149 branches for four congregations may not be a very large number. But when we take into consideration the number of institutions attached to them, it reveals the entrepreneurship of the women who were so far shut inside the

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180 Bishop was reluctant to give permission to start another convent in Ramapuram. But under the pressure of the people and as all arrangements were done by them, he had to give the permission to start the convent, *Ramapuram Thiruhradayam Madathinte Nalagamam*, Vol.1, pp. 6-7.

181 Fr. Kurialacherry was eager to start a new congregation. But the then Bishop Mar Mathew Makil was reluctant to start a new congregation and he has made it clear in a letter to Fr. Kurialacherry., letter cited in *Autobiography*, p.142. SHC also had the same fate. Though they began to live as a community from 1911 onwards, Mar Thomas Kurialacherry, the then Bishop of Changanacherry informed them that he will approve the community only as the branch of the Third Order of the Clarist congregation. It was only in 1931 they got the official recognition to be named as ‘Sacred Heart Congregation’ as it is desired by the founder.


183 Address of the 149 convents with its nearest important place is given in the Appendix No.4
house. Compared to the Carmelites, FCC had more parish institutions to work with and the total participation in the educational sector was less compared to the first one. This has to be seen in the context of the restrictions on the mobility of the religious. Compared to CMC, FCC had more freedom to move about since theirs was a congregation of mendicant spirit. Coming to the third and fourth congregations, though their activities started in a later period, they had almost the same number of convents as CMC and FCC in Ernakulam and Changanacherry by 1940-1950. Regarding the educational services of the later congregations SABS had more convent owned institutions and SHC had no schools of their own. But when analysed it could be seen that the earlier branches of each congregation had their own institutions and the latter ones those of the parish. One possible reason behind this trend may be, as the demand for convents in the parishes increased, the religious could not afford the building of convent and school together. Secondly, the earlier parish primary schools which were in a state of collapse were handed over to the sisters to be run efficiently. Thirdly, people who were desirous of girls’ schools to be run by sisters constructed schools and invited them to come and take up the schools. Or sisters began to be employed in the parish schools. Another trend noticeable in the 1940’s is that many convents started during this period had no attached institutions.184 School first and convent second became the attitude of the Nazrani in the later years. That is why the parish along with the support of the laity constructed schools and after that they approached the convents in their vicinity or got the approval of the sisters, even before they made arrangements for the same. For all these the priest either took the initiative or supported the laity. All these point to the fact

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184 FCC Pattanakad, FCC Neyyserry and FCC Kizhakambalam.
that the education imparted to Nazrani girls through the convent was the main reason behind the increase of convents in Kerala.

More convents mean more vocation, which needs large resources to survive. It is true that over 90 years the four congregations had 149 branches within three vicariates. But the question is how these congregations could manage with the establishment of its branches which hardly had any assets with them? The answer to the question lies in fact in the mechanisms through which the religious mobilised resources in order to meet their livelihood challenges. One cannot deny the reciprocity between the religious and society. Though the religious were shut behind the walls, cut off from the relatives and society, they thrived on the material support of the lay people. The sisters, who belonged to the noble families, got their patrimony in the form money or land. Salary from the schools, boarding fees, income from handicrafts and other small enterprises also added the income of the convents. The donation in the form of land and money even though rare and alms received at times of need; all became the base for many convents.

Regarding the spread of the congregation three trends can be noticed on the basis of the initiative taken to start the convent in other places. The initiative came from three groups mainly, the sisters, ecclesiastical authorities and the people. Analysis of the interest taken by the last two groups would reveal the actual cause and the reciprocity between the religious and the laity.
Conscious about the inadequate social development of the community, economically improved Nazranies wanted to educate their children but they did not have their own institutions to educate their children. In this context the Nazranies sent their daughters to schools and boarding, far away from the native place. Aware of the need for more and more schools and the religious to teach with, they began to support the construction of the schools and convents. Here lies the reciprocity between the religious and the laity. The laity who wanted to educate their daughters helped the construction of schools and convents in the form of money, material, and the religious in turn gave secular and religious education to the girls. They were trained to be good religious or good wives. Thus the urgent need to educate the Nazrani women fell upon those women who opted out of the society to lead a secluded life. This is clear from the table that whenever and wherever the convents were started, along with it was started schools either by the religious or by the parish, for which the religious got the support of the community. Sometimes two or three parishes shared the service of one convent. It is evident that the sisters were fulfilling the societal aspirations. Nowhere in the document can be seen any compulsion or persuasion on the part of ecclesiastical authorities to start convents in any particular place. From the initial years onwards the idea to start new

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185 *Nazrani Jathyaikya Sangham* started at Mannanam, near Kottayam, in 1886 is the best illustration of the consciousness they had about the inadequate social development of the community. V.C George, *Nidhirickal Mani Kathanar*, Thevara, 1976, pp. 184-91.

186 See tables given in the Appendix No.2

187 SH convent at Pynkulam (1938), in the Ernakulam vicariate was constructed at the centre of Mailacompu and Nagapuzha parish and the expenses of the construction of the convent was met with equally. The sisters had to attend the services in both the churches, *SH Nalagamam*, Vol.1, pp. 4-14; FCC convent at Karapuram has to attend the services of three churches namely, Kunnumpuram, Kavil and Uzhuva and convent was established in the centre of the three parishes; *FCC Ernakulam Athirupathayil*, Vol.1, *Op.cit.*, p. 217.
convents was precipitated by the religious themselves. Having led a contemplative life the Carmelites sought the possibilities of the founding of the congregations in the nearby places or native places, when they got a chance to speak with outsiders, especially to family members, relatives, the parents of the boarders and priests as well as the bishop. But later in the twentieth century, when SABS was founded, a direct involvement of the foundress in the foundation of the convents as well as the schools can be seen. While preparing for the foundation of the congregation and after Sr. Chantal enthusiastically collected girls for the school and boarding¹⁸⁸ and within twenty years she could start 8 more convents, though they had the advantage that the founder itself was the ecclesiastical authority, the Bishop of Changanacherry.¹⁸⁹

Each bishop was eager to start these congregations in their own bishoprics. Even if the Carmelites had a natural split due to the division of the vicariates, the bishops were particular that the candidates and religious from their vicariate should be returned to their own vicariate. In the case of FCC, when two candidates from Trichur were trained in Changanacherry with the permission of the Bishop Rev. Dr. John Menacherry, efforts were made to start the congregation in the Trichur diocese also. By begging alms in different parishes, Fr. Antony Kavunkal completed the construction of the first FCC convent in Karuvannur and soon the religious were given the charge of the native school.¹⁹⁰ In order to educate the sisters to start higher educational institutions, the bishop got permission from the Raja of Cochin to give education, first to the religious

and then to girls in the Caste Lower Secondary School Irinjalakuda. Later when it was found that it was difficult to reach Irinjalakuda, the bishop made arrangements to get free education to the religious in the Trichur Govt. Victoria Jubilee Girls H.S and for the accommodation a Study House itself was set up in 1917 at Trichur. So solution was made to overcome the problem of deficiency of teachers in the schools of the vicariate. Likewise when it was decided to start FCC in the Ernakulam Vicariate, on the persuasion of the Mother of Mattakara convent, who belonged to the Vaikom parish, Bishop of Ernakulum Archdiocese requested the Bishop of Changanacherry to send two sisters having T.T.C along with those who come to start the house. Similar interest was taken by the Bishop of Ernakulam to start SABS and SHC in the diocese. Most of the chronicles have written that the religious who came over to the place after a long journey were received in pomp and pleasure and they were led to the church and convent in procession. Instances are many to quote the requests and contribution of the lay people to start convents and schools in their parish.

It is important to note that the convents were started in the traditional Christian belt and a look at the 19th century convents shows the antiquity of these parishes. Another important aspect worthy to note is that many of the early convents were situated on the banks of the rivers having access to inland transport system. Contacts with these

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193 Apart from the convent chronicles, Mangalapatram (wishes on auspicious occasions) given to Mar Thomas Kurialacherry, by different parishes, requests him to start more convents and schools while praising and thanking him for the establishments of schools in different parts of the diocese. These documents are kept in Mar Kurialacherry Museum, Vikas, Changanacherry.
194 Koonammavu (1837), Mutholy (1856), Vaikom (1809), Changanacherry (1017), Arakuzha (999), Ambazhakad (300), Pulincunnu (1557), Karukutty (1829), Ollur (1718) and Kayalpuram (1878)
convents were easy through these routes. But when roads and transport facilities developed many of the early convents having access to inland transport lost its importance or became difficult to be reached. In later years, in order to overcome the geographical restraints many convents were established at places accessible by road or transport facilities, near towns or administrative units. Convents in the town were the halting stations for the religious, not only for the members of the concerned congregation but also of other congregations or of other Christian denominations.

Foundation of schools along with convents evidently indicates the social role, the religious had in a patriarchal society. Already restricted in mobility and education, women education suffered from the restriction that no Catholic should be send to non-catholic institutions. In these contexts women religious congregations intentionally founded to give both religious and secular education was made use of by the community, so that the Nazrani girls could be brought up according to the prevalent social norms. The patriarchal ideology is that a group within the community to mould their women folk ensemble the whole phenomenon.

195 Arakuzha, one of the oldest Christian centre of Kerala had the fourth branch of the Carmelite convent. It was easy to reach there through water, but if the sisters wanted to come over to Vazhakulam, where there was a Carmelite monastery and also the resting place of Mar Louis Pazheparambil, the Bishop of Ernakulam, it was difficult to meet each other and the journey to Vazhakulam was tedious for them. So in order to overcome the problem a convent was started at Vazhakulam (1927). Likewise the school there had no recognition and so the sisters took the students to Muvattupuzha Government School in order to write the exam. The food and accommodation of the sisters and students were a problem for them on exam days. Also they had to go to Ernakulam for ecclesiastical as well as administrative purposes. With all these intentions has started the CMC convent in Muvattupuzha (1936); Vazhakulam Carmelitha Madam Nalagamam, Vol.1,1914-1966, p.1; Muvattupuzha Carmelitha Madam Nalagamam, Vol.1,1936-1958, p. 1.

196 About the origin of the FCC convent Kizhakambalam has described, though one Government School and a Brahmin School was in the neighbourhood, the Christians were illiterate due to the ban on education in a non-Catholic institution., FCC Ernakulam Athirupathayil, Op.cit., p. 325.
The response of the religious to the historical needs of the community reveals the process through which they crossed the threshold and found an alternative to the traditional roles. Women had constraints to move around or to be out in the society. The absence of educational institutions also prevented their entry into the public space. In these circumstances the establishment of congregations provided them with opportunity to cross the limits of the domestic space and opened new opportunities so far denied to Nazrani women. In theory the religious had abandoned everything in this world and the renouncer should not have any contact with the material world. The material world is out of their realm and it is symbolised with the stripping of the old dress and the wearing of the new one, denoting the identity of the particular order, receipt of new name instead of old one and embracing poverty and chastity denying worldly pleasures. The vow of chastity denied them the freedom of the physical world but this vow itself had given them the freedom to act in the world. They were not of the society but they were above and beyond the conventional laws. The religious conformed to their own laws often contradicted with the accepted social norms. This gave them added prestige and freedom to act independently which was otherwise impossible. The religious did what the lay women could not. They were restricted in some areas but not in other areas. The identity being religious gave them permission as well as recognition to reach out to the public space. This indeed helped them to assert the type of women hood they aspired of.

All the four congregations had to meet their livelihood challenges. The spaces conceded to them were also connected with this. The apostolic activities gave sanction to the nuns to work in the schools and orphanages, run by them or by the parish. They could
go for begging or make house visits. All these activities were apostolic, income generating and spaces for social contact. Schools and boarding run by them were meant for the self-sustenance of the sisters. When they went for begging in pairs, with the permission of the mother and the bishop, they were utilising the resources of the community for themselves. The demarcated boundaries and permitted places gave these women spaces for social contacts, which attracted many to this vocation as well as created a mentality to support their services. The social ambiance they could create helped them to get grants from the government and support from the side of the authorities.197

The emergence of women religious congregations at a period of historical importance, apart from being satisfying the spiritual needs of a person, was intended to satisfy societal needs. Though women religious congregations established in Kerala had been directly affected by the medieval western monastic practices, it was introduced with an indigenous blend. The apostolic activities carried out by the women religious made their way of life more appealing to the community that they gave sanction to start more congregations and convents. Women who made a slippage from the social reproduction were made productive by the community by engaging them in the apostolic activities. Women on the other hand, could accomplish a life other than a familial one and make themselves visible in the social scenario which was otherwise difficult to realize.

197 References about the visit of religious to Raja of Cochin and Travancore and the donations they got from the Raja in the form of money and material, especially wood for the construction of the convent is mentioned in the convent records. The acceptance of the religious even outside the community is proven by these incidents.