Chapter II

Origin, Development, and Management of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church

Introduction

Management is primarily a task of planning, co-ordinating, motivating, and controlling the efforts of others towards a specific objective. F.W. Taylor and Henry Fayol are considered to be the major contributors of the management thought. The duty of the manager is to convert the disorganised resources into more productive purposes. Therefore, we may conclude that management is an ongoing process. Maxweber has proposed bureaucracy as an ideal type of large organisation, and the Roman Catholic Church is a real important example for the adoption of this principle.

Among the Roman Catholics, Syro-Malabar Catholics claim that they are the lineal descendants of St. Thomas, the Apostle. From the early centuries this Church had a close contact with the East Syrian Church and they had adopted the Syrian liturgy in their worship. However when the Portuguese missionaries came to India the Syro-Malabarians were compelled to obey the Latin prelates. To overcome the situation, the Syrian Christians had to make a continuous struggle for many years. In this critical situation various leaders took initiative to help the St. Thomas Christians to keep their identity and their co-ordinated effort became fruitful. At present the Syro-Malabar Church draws the attention of the entire world. In this study an attempt is made to
examine the management aspect of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church. In this endeavour the researcher is making an effort to analyse the history, origin, development and management of this prominent Church in Kerala.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA.

The origin of Christianity in India according to tradition goes back to the apostolate of St. Thomas. There are two views among the scholars about the origin of Christianity in India. According to one view, the foundation of the Church in India was laid by St. Thomas the apostle, or even by two apostles, St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew. The other view relates to the arrival of certain merchants and missionaries of the East Syrian or Persian Church. In AD 52 St. Thomas arrived by ship and landed at a place called “Malankara” close to the harbor city of ‘Cranganore’ or ‘Kodungallore.’ He met the ruler of that area, the emperor of Chera Empire to seek the permission to preach the new Christian faith which he wanted to proclaim.

In and around ‘Cranganore’, he converted a few of the members of the high caste Hindu families to Christianity. In course of time he established seven ancient Churches in and around ‘Cranganore, Palayur Parur, Kollam, Kokkamangalam, Niranam and Chayal. He had also ordained priests and consecrated Bishops from some leading families to foster the spiritual affairs of the communities in his absence. People from all sections of the society embraced Christianity with thrill, because of the simple teachings of Jesus Christ, as expounded by the Apostle St. Thomas.
Source: In the steps of St. Thomas (Rt. Rev. Herman D’Souza)
The Apocryphal Acts of Judas Thomas (Around 3rd Century A.D) though a legend, indicates the first and second century traditions of the early christian community. Numerous fragmentary passages in other writings of the third and fourth, and following centuries speak unambiguous terms about this Indian mission. From the fourth century onwards the major Churches are unanimous in their writing about the tradition.

The tradition identifies that in 72 A.D, the Apostle St. Thomas suffered Martyrdom at Chennai and his body was buried in Mylapore. Later his mortal remains were transferred to the West (Edessa) where they were honourably deposited and venerated.

There are various views about the origin of the St. Thomas Christians. According to one version, the origin is entirely the grand success of the apostolate of St. Thomas on the Malabar Coast. The other view records the springing up of a community of fresh converts, who settled on the coromandel coast, and migrated into Malabar and settled down at various places. Other versions combine these views and say that the community of the Christians of Malabar Coast, consisted of Christians converted by the Apostle Thomas in Malabar and those who emigrated from Mylapore. Almost all the Portuguese records on the tradition agree that there had been once a flourishing community of Christians on the Coromandel Coast and at one time or another had migrated to Malabar.
There is another tradition that, another apostle of Christ, St. Bartholomew also preached the christian faith in India in the first century. But majority of authors disagree with this claim. There are no strong traditions to affirm this claim.\textsuperscript{8}

In addition to the Syro-Malabar Catholic Community there are the Latin Catholics and the Syro-Malankara Catholics are the other two rites in the Indian Church. There are other non-Catholic Christian denomination in India. This study is restricted to Syro-Malabar Catholic Church only.

**The Origin and Development of the Syro-Malabar Church**

The Church which is generally known as Syro-Malabar today is not distinct from the most ancient Indian Church of the St. Thomas Christians. For a long time the Syro-Malabar Church was relegated to the middle of Malabar, the South West Coast of India\textsuperscript{9}. It followed the East Syrian Liturgy, the Syro-Malabar Church was also known as Indo-Chaldean or Chaldeo-Indian, but later it was named Chaldeo-Malabar, and this designation is still in use\textsuperscript{10}. The prefix "Syro" is used because this Church has been following the syrian liturgy from early times.

The Syro-Malabar Church of Kerala is a formidable formal organisation. It has a population of about 35 lakhs faithful\textsuperscript{11} Language-wise, Culture-wise and Divine worship-wise, it is a well-united organisation. Being the most ancient Christian Church that is culturally well-integrated
with the Indian society, it possesses many indigenous features of the
traditional socio religious organisations in India. It is a particular section of
the Oriental Church and autonomous, It is historically established that the
number of these Churches or rites belong to different castes in their origin
and today they are distinguishable not only by the different social custom
they practice\textsuperscript{12} but also by the unequal levels of social status to the Caldean
Persian Church. The Scholarly view is that it was St. Thomas one of the
twelve apostles of Jesus Christ who established the Christian Church in India
generally and in Kerala particularly. There does not exist any scientifically
authentic written records to establish unambiguously this claim. What we
have are a few apocryphal writings, fragmentary references and legends
recorded at a much later period\textsuperscript{13}.

Thus from traditions, apocryphal and fragmentary writings we can
hold that St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Christs landed by ship at
Crangannore around 52 A.D He converted a few members of the high -caste
families to Christianity. He is also believed to have ordained priests and
consecrated Bishops from some leading families to look after the spiritual
affairs of the communities in his absence\textsuperscript{14}.

**Early Times**

The Church established by St. Thomas, the apostle, did not perish after
his death but it continued and developed and was well established. This
Church came to be known to the posterity as “The St. Thomas Christian
Community”. Most of the authors use this title to refer to the undivided community till the 17th century

This St. Thomas Christian Community of Kerala also called “The Malankara Church” had great affinity and interaction with the Persian Church. Today that region is a part of Iraq. Since the Chaldeans were the original inhabitants of this region, it was also known as Chaldea. This Chaldea in the ancient times was a part of the Babylonian empire. Between the ancient and modern times, it was also known by the name Mesopotamia. Communication between Mesopotamia and the southern end of India was comparatively easy. The abundance of spices especially pepper in Malabar kept a constant touch with Malabar

There is a tradition that the apostle St. Thomas sent Addai, one of the 72 disciples of Jesus to Eddessa, and that Addai’s disciple Mari and Agai founded the Church of Selucia – Cteisphon.

There can be no exposition on the history and discipline of the St. Thomas Christian Community without a reference to its relations with Chaldean Church. At the same time it may be noted that the Church of the St. Thomas Christians was neither an integral part nor an outcome of the Church of Mesopotamia (Chaldea) and that the relations of the former with the latter were for practical, but not for doctrinal purpose. The dependence of the Malankara Church on the chaldean Church was for administrative, liturgical and spiritual requirements only.
Thomas of Cana

More direct relations between the Persian Church and the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala were established in later years (centuries). Tradition is very strong in Malabar about the arrival in the year 345 A.D. of a certain Syrian Merchant by name “Thomas of Cana” who was accompanied by one Bishop, some clergy and about 400 Christians who colonized some parts of Malabar. They came from “Uraha” (Edesa) in Persia.

Thomas Cana is said to have obtained, from the local rulers, a copper plate granting many privileges to the Christians. According to Joseph Chazhikat in his original Malayalam book, ‘The History of the Suddist’ the goals of the Canai group led by Thomas of Cana were to establish mercantile connection between Syria and the Malabar coast and to renew and strengthen the Christian Church of Kerala. Around 825 A.D. (9th / 10th Century) along with the well-known merchant leader, Sapporiso, Mar Proth (Aphror) and Mar Sabor, two Bishops and their followers from the East reached the harbour town of Kollam, (Quilon). The Bishops established a Parish Church at Kollam, and ministered the spiritual and liturgical needs of the faithful. Their followers engaged themselves in mercantile activities. They travelled by sea route and landed in the harbour town of Kodungallor.

In his book Dr. Jacob Kollaprambil, the Church historian, remarks that the Catholicos of Selucia-Ctesiphon came to know that the St. Thomas Christians of the Malabar coast did not have a hierarchy to look after their
spiritual, liturgical and ecclesial needs. So he commissioned Thomas of Cana and his group to go to the Malabar coast to establish mercantile connection, but basically to renew and strengthen the Christian Church there and to look into the spiritual needs of the Christian faithful\textsuperscript{21}. By longstanding traditions this Knanaya Community is a very strong cultural entity. According to one way of division of the St. Thomas Christians, the descendants of the converts of St. Thomas are known as Northists and the descendants of the 72 families led by Cana Thoma are considered the Southists. The Northists, and Southists together form what we call to day the St. Thomas Catholic Christian Community of Kerala. Another tradition for the origin of Northists and Southists is that the St. Thomas Christians who originated and flourished nearby Cranganur lived on either side of a river there and the banks were on the south and north and they came to be known as the Southists and Northists\textsuperscript{22}

**The arrival of Portuguese**

It is believed that from the time of Thomas of Cana, Syrian fathers used to come to Malabar by order of the Catholicos of the East to look after the spiritual affairs of the Christians here. There are some references about the relationship between the Persian Church and the St. Thomas Christian Church of Malabar. After Cosmos indicopleutes (520 –525) who speaks of Christians in India\textsuperscript{23} a certain periodeutus by name “Bogh” seems to have visited India as a deligate of the Chaldean Patriarch, Ezechiel (557 –581)\textsuperscript{24}
The Chaldean patriarch Sabriso I (596 –604) is said to have received presents from the faithful of India.25

E. Ham Bye, a reputed and well known Church Historian in India and an authority of the St. Thomas Christian Church of India, and the Chaldean Patriarch Ishoyab – II (628 –646) had sent Priests and Bishops to India26

But none of these hints give any clear evidence of the hierarchical relationship between the St. Thomas Christian Church of India and the Chaldean Church. There seems to have been only spiritual affairs of the St. Thomas Christian Church periodically taken care of but no ecclesiastical jurisdiction or hierarchical connections attempted at any time.

The letters of the two Persian Patriarchs, Mar Ishoyab – III (647/ 8 or 650/ 1) and Mar Timothy 1 (780 or 789 –823) do mention the juridical dependence of the Indian Church on the East Syrian of Persian Church. The same Ishoyab – III or his successor Slibazha (714 –728) is said to have elevated the Indian Church to the status of a metropolitan around the end of seventh century, or at the beginning of the eighth century.27From the end of the 10th century there is no tradition, no historical records and no documentary evidence to show any relation ship or contact between the Persian and Syro-Malabar Church.28

From 16th century we have reliable documents regarding the Christian Church in India. According to the documents of the early parts of
16th century and specifically from the records of a certain Indian by name Joseph, there did exist contact and good relationship between the St. Thomas Christian Church of Kerala and the Persian Church. These historical documents mention that the Syro-Malabar Christians invited and welcomed Bishops from Persia with great reverence and devotion. These Bishops, acted as spiritual leaders of the community. Apart from the Bishops, there was an Archdeacon to look after the temporal affairs of the community. He was also known as “Jathikkukartavian” literally “Lord of race or the Lord of the nation.”

The Synod of Selucia in 410 AD under Mar Isaac instituted the position and power of the Office of the Archdeacon in the Church. According to Canon 15 of that Synod “every Bishop should have an Archdeacon. He should be a holy, intelligent and merciful man and must be well informed of the Church He is the tongue and right hand of the Bishop. He should supervise over the clerics.”

The office of the Archdeacon of the Syro-Malabar Church in effect was more than the office of Archdeacon of the Chaldean Church in Persia. Ibn-at Tayyib (XI –C) quotes the Chaldean Patriarch Mar Timothy I (VIII –C) addressing the “Archdeacon of India” as the “Head of the Faithful of India”. He had the title like “Archdeacon of India”, Archdeacon and Gate of All – India” “Governor of India” and so on. In fact in effect, this Archdeacon of the Malabar Church was even more powerful in the Malabar Church than the
Chaldean metropolitan in Persia. He was the president of the “General Yogam” (Assembly) of the Christian and was the executor of its decisions. All the heads of the Christian families participated in the Yogam. The Yogam functioned at the local, regional and common levels. The St.Thomas Christians used to maintain a joint family system. Like the family lineage of the Hindu Brahmins, that of the St. Thomas Christians was of a Patriarchal nature.

The community organisation in South India, during early Christian centuries was according to the system of “Manram”, a kind of autonomous village administrative body, whose members being the heads of the families in the village. The Yogam of the Malabar Church had its origin in this Manram system. The ecclesiastical organisation under the leadership of the Archdeacon gave the Christians unity and growth as well as political power. They formed a form of Christian Republic

When the Portuguese arrived on the Malabar coast, what was the status here was the custom of dual government. Politically they submitted to the Hindu rules, ecclesiastically they were governed by the Archdeacon in all that their Christian faith life, Spiritual needs and liturgical life. Though the followers of the Christian faith adhered to the Christian doctrines, they followed many of the Hindu cultural and social customs that were not in any way contrary to the Christian faith. In this way they did not deviate from the main social stream of life of the people of the land. They did not in any way
appear odd with the main stream of life of their non-Christian fellow citizens. They lived in a harmonious social life with the vast majority of their Hindu Brethren. There existed perfect social and cultural harmony and ideal religious tolerance with hardly any visible communal tensions.

**Portuguese Period – From 1498**

The coming of the Portuguese to India was a turning point and an epoch making event both from the political history and from the Church history aspects of our country. It was in the year 1498 that Vasco de Gama came by the sea route and landed at the harbor town of “Kappad” near modern Calicut or Kozhikode. Along with him a certain number of outstanding merchants, zealous missionaries and a contingent of Army Officers and soldiers too came.

In the beginning, the relationship between the Portuguese and the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar coast was very cordial. The Malabar Christians treated the Portuguese as friends and fellow believers since they were Roman Catholic Christians.

But this happy situation did not last long. The Portuguese Missionaries engaged in pastoral work among the Syro-Malabar Christians. The Portuguese were staunch Roman Catholics who identified Roman Catholic faith with the Latin rite. To them whatever was not Latin rite was heretical or at least schismatic. The Indian traditions that the Syro-Malabar
Christians followed, for centuries was considered superstitious by the 
Portuguese. Their Padroado Latin Jurisdiction was their ultimate authority, 
symbol of Orthodoxy and ideal of true faith. They had recourse to every 
means to impose the Latin rite and authority of the Padroado jurisdiction on 
the Syro-Malabar Christians. They wanted to do away with the Chaldean rite 
and jurisdiction of the patriarch of the East.

The St. Thomas Christians of the Syro-Malabar Church were not ready 
to change their centuries old customs and traditions, but they were prepared 
to tolerate the Latin rite customs and tradition along with theirs, but not ready 
to accept the Latin rite as their own. They insisted that the “Law of Thomas” 
was different in the way of practice from the “Law of Peter” which means 
their liturgical customs and traditions are different from the Law of the Latin 
Church in the manner of observance but in essence from faith point of view 
not different and hence needed no change.

What made the relationship with the Portuguese missionaries and 
political power worse was the attempt of the Portuguese administration in 
India, to block the relationship of the Syro-Malabar Church and the Persian 
Patriarch and trying to impose the Latin rite on the Syro-Malabar Church by 
replacing the Chaldean rite with the Latin rite. At the time of the arrival of 
the Portuguese on the Malabar coast, the Bishop who was looking after 
Syro-Malabar Church was one Mar Jacob. This Bishop passed away in 
around 1550 A.D. The Portuguese made all efforts and exerted all their
political and administrative powers to prevent a new Chaldean Bishop from Persia being contacted and arrived in India. One Mar Abraham, a Chaldean Bishop, managed to arrive in the Malabar coast, inspite of all the preventive tactics of the Portuguese. Once he arrived, he had to suffer severe opposition and constant threats of deportation from the Portuguese authorities both civil and ecclesiastical. But he managed to guide, administer and look after the spiritual and liturgical needs of the St. Thomas Christians till his death in 1597 AD.

A Spanish Jesuit, Fr. Rose by name, was commissioned to correct the prayer books used by the Syro–Malabar Christians. He started the work of corrections and he pointed out that many of the words and phrases used by the Syro–Malabar Christians in their books were not the correct and orthodox faith expressions and indicated that they were trained with heretical expressions. He informed Rome likewise. Fr. Rose contention was that Mar Abraham had heretical tendencies. Accordingly Pope Clement VIII issued a brief on 27th January 1595 on Mar Abraham. The Arch Bishop of Goa was told to make an enquiry on the orthodoxy of Mar Abraham. Again on January 21st 1597 Pope Clement VIII wrote a second letter. The content of this letter was that if Mar Abraham died without nominating an administrator, then the Arch Bishop of Goa has the right and authority to appoint an administrator for the Syro–Malabar Church.

In this confusing and doubtful circumstances and in the light of the two above mentioned papal briefs, the Archbishop of Goa Dom. Alexis De
Menezes, made canonical visits to the Syro–Malabar Church visiting the parishes, and after the death of Mar Abraham in 1597 AD summoned the now well-known “Udayamperur” Synod to study the working and administrative and liturgical practices of the Syro–Malabar Christians of the St. Thomas Church in Kerala. This Synod was held in the Church of Diamper (Udayamperur) in 1599.38

The Synod of Udayamperur - 1599. A.D

Udayamperur is near the harbour town of Kochi. Arch Bishop Dom Alexis de Menezes Summoned a Church general meeting or Yogam of the Syro–Malabar Christians at Udayamperur with the help and cooperation of some leading Jesuit Fathers who were well known for their Theological and Liturgical standing. The Special Synod came to be known to the posterity of Syro-Malabar Christians as the “Famous” (or infamous, depending on one who looks at) Udayamperur Synod. The purpose of this synod was an attempt to Latinize, the centuries old (almost 15 centuries) customs, liturgical traditions and cultural heritage of the St. Thomas Christians or the Syro-Malabar Church of Kerala, all of a sudden in one step.

On the one hand the Synod effectively removed some of the abuses arising out of the ignorance of the people and clarified the Catholic position and doctrines and practices leaving no room for ambiguity.
As examples of such decision can be cited the practice of usury or taxing excessive interests on loans. The synod removed many of the ordeals in the practice of the Christians faith, abolished witchcrafts or belief in magical powers, condemned the sincritic beliefs such as fatalism and transmigration that had crept into christian beliefs. Positively, the Synod gave official stamp and seal to the Latinization of the St. Thomas Christians of the Chaldean rite Syro-Malabar Church and severed it from the cultural bonds and milieu of the land. The Synod changed several sincritic religious rituals, and celebrations in the Malabar Church to fall in line with the Latin rite rituals and customs, introduced administrative rules according to the Latin Canon Law and abolished many social and cultural practices of indigenous origin which were special marks of the high social status of the St. Thomas Christians.

By the end of the 16th century A.D. the Portuguese, imposed on the Syro-Malabar Church the Latin Jurisdiction. The first Latin Prelate who exercised Jurisdiction on the Syro-Malabar Church was the Portuguese Bishop Dom Francis Roz. S.J. He was nominated to this position on Nov. 5th, 1599, as successor of Mar. Abraham. Subsequently the Latin Arch-Bishops under the Padroado Jurisdiction were appointed to govern the Syro-Malabar Church which has now become just an extension of the Latin Padroado, thus losing its own individual and independent identity. From 1599 to 1657 three Arch Bishops exercised Jurisdiction on the Syro-Malabar Church, as the extension of the Portuguese Paroado. They were,
Dom Francis Roz. S.J. (1599 – 1624 – A.D)

Dom Stephen Britto. S.J. (1624 – 1641 – A.D)

Dom Francis Gracia S.J. (1641 – 1657 – A.D)

The St. Thomas Christians disliked to be ruled by the Portuguese Latin Bishops. They did not like and so resisted the Latin rite and the Latin traditions and customs. The Syro-Malabar Archdeacon was there, but in effect, under the Latin Archbishops of the Portuguese Padrodo, this Archdeacon had no effective powers.

**Role of the Archdeacon in the Church Administration.**

All the authority and powers were centered in the hands of the Latin Archbishops. They zealously guarded their powers without sharing it with the Archdeacon. The St. Thomas Christians were absolutely dissatisfied with this situation. In fact, they used to send directions for running the affairs of their Church in the name of the Patriarch of Babylon, rebelling and rejecting the directions of the Latin Arch-bishops. They requested for a Bishop from Persia to govern them and look after their liturgical and spiritual needs.

The fundamental cause of all the troubles was the curtailing of the powers of the Archdeacon and the latinization of the Chaldean rites liturgy. The then Archdeacon George of the Cross, was ruling over the Syro-Malabar Christians, as their prince, under Mar Abraham.
The Syro-Malabarians, who were yearning for a Bishop of their own rite received in 1652 an East Syrian Bishop by the name “Ahattallah”. He was a Jacobite who had become, a Catholic in 1632. At the time of his appointment, as Bishop of the Syro-Malabar Christians, he was the Archbishop of the Catholics of Damascus. The Portuguese believed that this Ahattallah was a nestorian in his beliefs, and they deported him as a heretic to Goa Via Kochi. Then the Portuguese spread a rumor that this Ahattallah was drowned accidentally in the Sea of Kochi.

Hearing this rumor, the Syro-Malabar Christians gathered at Mattancherry under the leadership of their Archdeacon George of the Cross and pledged that they would never accept the Jesuits and Jesuit prelates imposed by the Portuguese Padrado. They took this oath publicly by holding a rope tied to a cross which was called "Coonan Kurisu” or the "Coonan Cross”. This came down in the history of St. Thomas Christians, thereafter, as the "Coonan Kurisu Sathyam” All the people gathered there touched this rope and took the pledge of loyalty to the Chaldean rite of the Syro-Malabar Church and to jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Babylon.

Archdeacon “Metropolitan”

Deceived by a false letter (Fabricated) by a certain priest twelve priests of the Syro–Malabar Church, after having renewed the aforesaid oath, on May 20th 1653, imposed their hands on the Arch Deacon George, calling him
“Metropolitan” Mar Thomas, the first. This ceremony took place at Alangat also called Mangat. They proclaimed that the fathers of St. Paul (Viz. the Jesuits) were their enemies and “The enemies of the Holy Roman Catholic Church” 41

After the Synod of Udayamperur, except the Archdeacon party, the majority of the St. Thomas Christians, submitted to the Portuguese Latin rule of the Padrodo, under protest and reservation and reluctance. The Portuguese tried to bring the Archdeacon and his followers to the Latin Catholic Communion but they failed and then they ex-communicated the Archdeacon and his party. The ex-communicated Archdeacon and his party later got themselves affiliated to the Jacobite Church of Antioch and came to be known as the Jacobites 42.

By the time, the Roman Curia, came to know and understand that the missionary activities of the Portuguese missionaries and their zealous but fanatical Latinization programme of the Syro-Malabar Christians had gone too far and beyond reasonable limits. The Catholic Church was in danger of losing a sizable section of the faithful to the heretical and schismatic factions. To set right the damage done and to bring back the Syro-Malabar Christians to the communion of Roman Catholic Faith, Rome decided to intervene directly.
Direct Intervention from Rome

The Pope sent to Malabar two apostolic Commissioners (delegates) with certain number of members well versed in ecclesiastical affairs. The two Apostolic Commissioners were two Discaleed Carmelites (OCD) Fr. Hyacinth of St. Vincent and Fr. Joseph Maria Sebastiani. They were sent under the Jurisdiction of the Congregation of Propaganda defied. They began a second line of ecclesiastical rule in the Syro-Malabar Church of Kerala, commonly known to the posterity as “Propaganda Reign”.

Archbishop Dom Gracia had died in 1659, Msgr. Joseph Maria Sebastiani reached the shores of Malabar in 1661. Being directly sent from Rome, under the jurisdiction of Propaganda de fide, independent of the portuguese padraodo Msgr.Joseph Maria Sebastiani had to face some difficulties in exercising his ecclesiastical powers over the Syro-Malabar Church.

Revolt

In 1665, Msgr. Joseph Maria Sebastiani OCD, the leader of the apostolic commissionary of propaganda fide, officially excommunicated the Archdeacon George, who had appropriated illegally the designation of Metropolitan of Syro-Malabar Church and who had pledged his loyalty to the Patriarch of Antioch, the head of the foreign Jacobite Church. The Archdeacon then officially and publicly joined with the foreign Jacobite prelate,
Mar Gregory whom he had brought to the Syro-Malabar Church from Antioch to receive valid Episcopal ordination. Mar Gregory tactfully made the Archdeacon and his adherents officially Jacobites.

This Mar Gregory arrived in Malabar when the Padrado Metropolitan was negotiating with the Jesuits for his conversion to the Roman Catholic Communion. The Jesuits were prepared to help him and to refer his case to the Holy See provided he declared that he was not a Bishop. But when he saw Mar Gregory he changed his mind and said publicly that Mar Gregory was indeed a patriarch sent by Rome. Mar Gregory conducted himself externally in such a manner, so that the general faithful Christians of the Syro-Malabar Church would take him for a catholic. He however did not give up the use of leavened bread in celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The Syro-Malabarians were using unleavened bread then. From all this, it is clear that the followers of the Padrado Metropolitan, as a body, were Catholics and were in good faith and wanted to remain in the Roman Catholic Communion, but they were slowly drawn into Schism.

This group of followers of the Archdeacon and Mar Gregory, constituted themselves, in course of time, into a Schismatic Church and adopted the west Syrian liturgy of the foreign Jacobites of Antioch. They were called and their later followers were called and are still today called “Puthunkuttukar” (The followers of the new way). Those who conserved and persevered in their old faith accepting the Roman Catholic communion
alliance, though with reservation and hesitation and their later faithful followers were called and are still called today “pazhakuttukar” (the followers of the old way) These are the present Syro-Malabarians since the Syro-Malabarians are the pazhakuttukar “of the followers of the ancient Orthodox catholic faith and their liturgy is the Syro-Malabar rite. This term Syro-Malabar rite was used for both the groups, Infact the two groups are of comparatively recent origin. To day the Syro-Malabar Church and Syro-Malabar rite are identified with the pazhakuttukar. “They are the most ancient Indian Church known also by the name “St. Thomas Christians” or the Syro-Malabar Church”.47

For a long period of time, the Malabar Church was administered and ruled by foreign Latin Rite Bishops. On two short periods in between two local Bishops governed the Syro-Malabar Church .They were first Bishop Chandy Parambil under the guidance of propaganda fide and second Fr. Thomas Peremakkal as governor under the padroado. Even during these short periods, efforts to get indigenous Bishops continued. In the second half of the 18th Century, two representatives chosen by the community looked after the affairs of the Syro-Malabar Church. After Several and prolonged deliberations the Syro-Malabar Church assembly (Yogam) resolved in the year 1778 to send a delegation to Rome and to Lisbon, headed by Malpan Joseph Cariatil. Though this Malpan Joseph Cariatil was consecrated Bishop at Lisbon, he could not rule the Syro-Malabar faithful as he, on his way back died in Goa in 1786, under mysterious circumstances.48
Thomas Paremakkal kept a journal of their journey. This journal is the famous Varthamana Pusthakam. Following the death of Bishop Kariattil, Thomas Paremakkal was made the administrator (Governador) of Kodungallur. After the death of Paremakkal, the rule and administration of the Syro-Malabar Church fell into the hands of foreign Latin rite Bishops.

In the last Century (i.e.) 19th Century, the community having been frustrated in its attempt to obtain oriental Bishops, almost permanently split into two groups, twice. This was during the ministry of two Chaldean Bishops Rokos and Melus who came to the Syro-Malabar Church of Kerala. They persuaded large sections of the Syro-Malabar faithful to their schismatic and heretical fold. Inspite of the able leadership of some local loyal catholic priests to suppress this illegal and schismatic fold, the Church suffered some permanent though minor divisions.49

Erection of Vicariates

Knowing that any continued connections with the Chaldean Church of Persia would create more trouble for the Syro-Malabar Church, the representatives of the faithful started contacting the Catholic Church authorities in Rome and began to send their memorandums and petitions direct to Rome. The Holy Father took notice of the continued petitions send by the Syro-Malabar Church. The then Vicar Apostolic of the Latin Diocese of Varapuzha was one Mgr. Leonard Louis. In 1877, Rome appointed one Mar
Celline Theresa, as the coadjutor Bishop of Varapuzha. He was entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the spiritual and liturgical needs of the Syro-Malabar Christians and to administer and govern the Syro-Malabar Church directly under the guidance of the Vicar Apostolic of Varapuzha, subject to the directives from Rome. In 1886, the Cragannore diocese ceased to exist.

**Erection of the Syro-Malabar Vicariate**

In 1887 the Holy See erected for the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church two Apostolic Vicariates. One was the Apostolic Vicariate of Trichur, with Bishop Adolph Medlycott, an Anglo-Indian as the Apostolic Vicar. The second was the Apostolic Vicariate of Kottayam with Bishop Charles Lavinge, a French Jesuit, as the Apostolic Vicar. Even though these two Apostolic Vicariates were erected to administer and rule the Syro-Malabar Church, it was still on the look out for indigenous (Local) Bishops.

Finally, in 1896 the Holy See erected three Apostolic Vicariates under the direct control of Propaganda Fide. They were Apostolic Vicariates of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry. Three Apostolic Vicars were appointed to each of these Vicariates Mar John Menacherry for Trichur, Mar Aloysius Pazheparambil for Ernakulam, and Mar Mathew Makil for Changanacherry. All the three were Indians and thus the search for Indigenous Bishops for the Syro-Malabar Church was fulfilled.
In 1911, a New Apostolic Vicariate was erected at Kottayam exclusively for the Sudhist or Southists a culturally distinct group in the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church.

Mar Mathew Makil was transferred to Kottyam as the Vicar Apostolic of this exclusive group of Syro-Malabar Catholics – the Sudhists. Mar Thomas Kurialcherry was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Changanacherry. Thus under Indigenous Bishops, the Syro-Malabar Catholics began to make rapid progress in all aspects of their Christian life.

**Erection of Syro-Malabar Hierarchy**

The Holy See, restored their Hierarchy in 1923 with Ernakulam as the Metropolitan See and Changanacherry and Kottayam as Suffragons. At the consistory of 20th December 1923 Pope Pius XI created the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy. It was a long struggle till 1923, when the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy was established. It has now been entrusted to the indigenous Syro-Malabar Bishops and their clergy. Under this highly organised and well administered indigenous hierarchy the Syro-Malabar Church has thus justified and proved worthy of the trust placed in it by the two great popes, Leo XIII and Pius XI\(^5\).

**Present Situation**

The Syro-Malabar Church grew by leaps and bounds since the time it was given its own hierarchy, as an independently administered local Church.
under the guidance and in ecclesiastical obedience to Rome. This growth was both quantitative and qualitative. According to the age-old oriental Church tradition, they should have a common head, immediately after the Pope, normally with the title of Patriarch or Major Archbishop. The Oriental Code of Canon Law was promulgated in October 1990. As the code came into force the Syro-Malabar Church found itself in a difficult situation because it was not a “Sui Juris” Church in the sense of the code.

A pontifical commission was appointed on 4th September 1992 with Archbishop Thomas White, the Apostolic Nuncio to New Zealand as chairman and Prof.Rev.Fr.Robert Taft. S.J. and Rev.Fr.Michael Angelo Batiz O.C.D. as members and Rev.Fr.Sarthi as the secretary. The Commission held extensive consultation in the Syro-Malabar Church of Kerala, visiting all the eparchies in the provinces of Changanacherry and Ernakulam.

On 16th December 1992 Pope John Paul II decided to raise the Syro-Malabar Church to a Major Archiepiscopal “Sui Juris” Church and signed the Papal Decree and Metropolitan of Ernakulam was appointed Major Archbishop.

On 29th January 1993, the then Apostolic Pro-nuncio of India, Archbishop George Sur read the Papal decision to raise the Syro-Malabar Church as a Major Archiepiscopal Church. The title of the head of the
Syro-Malabar Church henceforth in the “Major Archbishop of Ernakulam – Angamaly”. The jurisdiction of Syro-Malabar Church is limited to the provinces of Changanacherry, Ernakulam, Trissur and Thellissery. Archbishop Abraham Kattumana was appointed the pontifical delegate to the Syro-Malabar Church with all the powers of Major Archbishop. The special powers vested with the Pontifical delegate were to call the synod of the Syro-Malabar Bishops to prepare the particular laws of Syro-Malabar Catholic Church. Since a new situation was coming into existence the necessary structures were to be created with the powers of the Major Archbishop as envisaged in CCEO.

Two of the major prerogatives of an Archiepiscopate were not granted to Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopate Church and its synod, namely, the right to elect and appoint its own Bishops and the right to formulate its own liturgy. These two important privileges and rights are still reserved to the Pope.

Once the Syro-Malabar Church was raised to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church with the above-mentioned reservations, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church was installed in a colorful and impressive religious ceremony on 20th May 1993. The Synod has already established the necessary administrative structures and formulated specific laws regarding all major matters.
Different Periods in the History of the Syro-Malabar Church

a) *The Early Syriac or Aramaic Period. (1st to 6th Centuries)*

This was indeed a formation period. The Church had, according to tradition, an organisation and set-up, shaped more or less by the apostolic teachings, Jewish customs, local socio-religious factors and influence of the Syrian Churches of the Middle East.

b) *The Chaldean Period (from the 7th Century till the end of the 16th Century)*.

The community was governed by Metropolitans sent from the Church of Persia. In India, they were helped by an Archdeacon chosen from among the St. Thomas Christian clergy.

c) *The Latin Period (from the 17th Century till the end of the 19th Century)*

During this period, the Church was governed by Prelates of the Latin rite till 1653. The entire St. Thomas Christian Community presented one solid body united by a common rite. The uncompromising policy of the Latin prelates who contravened several of the time-honoured customs of the community forced a part of the community to break away and join the ‘Jacobite’ Church (West-Syrian) of Antioch. A section of them is now known by the name of Malankara Orthodox, another Jacobite Church and a third group called the Marthoma Church, an offshoot from the Separated brethren.
The major section of the community which wanted to continue under the See of Rome was looked after by one or the other of two Catholic jurisdictions that of Cranganore under the Portuguese Padroado and that of the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar under the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of Faith.\textsuperscript{53}

\textit{d). The Modern Period (With the prelates of the Syro-Malabar rite, a Community Since 1896 to 2002).}

There are now one Major Archbishop, Four Archdioceses and Fourteen Eparchies in proper Territory and Ten Eparchies outside proper Territory. All the prelates are directly sub-ordinate to the Holy See\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{Significant dates in the history of S.M.C.C.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52 A.D</td>
<td>Arrival of St. Thomas, The Apostle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>St. Thomas Martyrdom near Mylapore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>345</td>
<td>Arrival of Thomas of Cana in Kerala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1498</td>
<td>Vasco-da-Gama Arrived at Kozhikode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1502</td>
<td>Vasco-da-Gama Arrived at Kochi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1523</td>
<td>The Portuguese excavate the tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1597</td>
<td>Mar Abraham, the last of the East-Syrian Bishops, dies Angamaly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1599</td>
<td>Synod of Diamper (Udayamperur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1653</td>
<td>The Coonan cross Oath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1658</td>
<td>Joseph Maria Sebastiani OCD made Vicar Apostolic of Malabar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1663</td>
<td>Bishop Chandy Parambil appointed Vicar Apostolic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>St. Thomas Christians come under double jurisdiction. The propaganda represented by the Carmelite Vicar Apostolic of Varapuzha and the Padroado represented by the Archbishop of Kodungallur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1782</td>
<td>Kariattil consecrated in Lisbon as Archbishop of Kodungallur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1786</td>
<td>Kariattil dies in Goa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861 &amp;’74</td>
<td>Arrival of Rokkos and Melus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Pope Leo XIII decrees the separation of the Syro-Malabar Rite from the Latin rite. Erects two Syro-Malabar Vicariates, Thrisur and Kottayam, but appoints Latin Bishops as Vicars apostolic. The name Syro-Malabar is given to St. Thomas Catholic community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Establishment of three Syro-Malabar Vicariates Ernakulam, Changanassery and Trissur, and appointment of Indian Bishops as Vicar Apostolic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Pius X erects Kottayam for the southists (Knanities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Pius XI restores the Syro-Malabar hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Code of Canons (Canon Law) for the Oriental Churches pro-mulgated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>A Pontifical Commission visits the Syro-Malabar Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>The Syro-Malabar Church elevated to the rank of Major Archbishopric with the title Ernakulam-Angamaly. Cardinal Antony Padiyara appointed Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. Archbishop Abraham Kattumana appointed pontifical delegate to the Syro-Malabar Church with all the powers of a Major Archbishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Archbishop Abraham Kattumana dies in Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Archbishop Mar Varkey Vithayathil is appointed Apostolic Administrator of Ernakulam-Angamaly for the Syro-Malabar Church and also the apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil appointed the Second Major Archbishop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>His Eminence Antony cardinal Padiyara, Major Archbishop Emeritus expires.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Catholic Church at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Kerala</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population.</td>
<td>3562142000</td>
<td>1001636428</td>
<td>132144441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>105294000</td>
<td>15549218</td>
<td>4750230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>3.56%</td>
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## Syro-Malabar Dioceses in Kerala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL. No.</th>
<th>Dioceses</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Catholic Population</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Changanacherry</td>
<td>1250000</td>
<td>345000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>4290353</td>
<td>445377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Irinjalakuda</td>
<td>2018635</td>
<td>254863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kanjirappally</td>
<td>1820000</td>
<td>158000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kothamamgalam</td>
<td>1104450</td>
<td>489700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kottayam</td>
<td>25406218</td>
<td>143383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Manathavady</td>
<td>8800000</td>
<td>163500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Palai</td>
<td>663000</td>
<td>338000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Palghat</td>
<td>29011000</td>
<td>65075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Thalasserry</td>
<td>2850000</td>
<td>287700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Thamarassery</td>
<td>4293363</td>
<td>117105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Thrissur</td>
<td>2403829</td>
<td>431000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>83910848</strong></td>
<td><strong>3238703</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sl No.</td>
<td>Dioceses</td>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>Catholic Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bathery</td>
<td>15000000</td>
<td>23431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thiruvalla</td>
<td>1487000</td>
<td>42951</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Trivandrum</td>
<td>8000000</td>
<td>209428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15087094</strong></td>
<td><strong>275810</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Dioceses</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Catholic Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Alleppey</td>
<td>690000</td>
<td>135000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Calicut</td>
<td>10880710</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Cochin</td>
<td>648355</td>
<td>164714</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Kannur</td>
<td>2251727</td>
<td>37000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Kottappuram</td>
<td>2839533</td>
<td>78886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Punalur</td>
<td>2386846</td>
<td>38657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Quilon</td>
<td>4399941</td>
<td>204948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Thiruvananthapuram</td>
<td>1752867</td>
<td>203262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Varapoly</td>
<td>2346520</td>
<td>266060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Vijayapuram</td>
<td>4900000</td>
<td>81365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3096499</strong></td>
<td><strong>1235717</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Catholic Directory of India –1998; Published by the C.B.C.I. of New Delhi
Conclusion

In 52 A.D. St. Thomas one of the twelve apostles of Christ landed at Kodungallor and founded the ancient St. Thomas Christian Church. Tradition is very strong about the foundation of this Church in different places of south India (Kerala). But in early centuries this Church maintained a close relation with the East Syrian Church in Syria. Even though they had a close connection with the Persian Church, they kept a distinct character in administration of the Church, and socio-cultural and spiritual life. During this period, different migrations had occurred. In 345 A.D. under the leadership of Thomas of Cana, an eminent mercantile leader, a group of Christians came here and fostered the Christian Church in Kerala.

From the 7th century till the end of the 16th century, the community was governed by the metropolitans sent by Persia and it was administered by the Archdeacon chosen from the St. Thomas Christians. Among the St. Thomas Christians during this period, the Archdeacon had a very important role. It was the Archdeacon who controlled all the spiritual and temporal affairs of the St. Thomas Christians. So, he was known as the 'Jathikkukarthavian'. The Archdeacon carried out the administration through general and local assemblies.

In 1498, the Portuguese came to Kerala. From the 17th century till the end of the 19th century, the Church was governed by Latin prelates. Even
though the St. Thomas Christians had received and welcomed the Portuguese wholeheartedly, within a short period, they had started trying to make India a Latin colony and they appointed Latin Bishops as the prelates of the St. Thomas Christians. The intensity shown by the Portuguese to Latinise or govern the St. Thomas Christians led to the Latinisation of all aspects of the St. Thomas Christians. So, for this purpose, Archbishop Alexis de Meneses and his colleagues convened the controversial Synod of Diamper in the year 1599. The manner in which the Synod was convoked and its decrees passed were a naked abuse of power by Archbishop Alexis de Meneses and his followers, and a violation of all ecclesiastical laws which existed then. He acted like a typical autocratic leader and gave no value to the opinions of others. For using unnecessary means and methods, Meneses implemented his plans among the St. Thomas Christians. With the synod of Diamper all the relationship with the Persian Church was curtailed and the St. Thomas Christians were forcibly brought under the Latin jurisdiction of padrorado. This was considered as a milestone in the life and history of the St. Thomas Christians.

This over enthusiasm to Latinize led to the famous revolt of 1653 called The "Coonan Cross Oath". This protest against remaining under the control of the prelates resulted in the division of the St. Thomas community into two. One group continued to recognise the prelates appointed by Rome, and the other group merged into the West Syrian Church of Antioch (Jacobite).
To manage the crisis that developed after the "Coonan Cross Oath". Fr. Joseph Maria Sebastiani OCD was consecrated Bishop in Rome and sent to Malabar as the Vicar Apostolic of Malabar in 1661. He was helped in his work by an Indian priest named Chandy Parambil. In 1663 A.D. Chandy Parambil was consecrated Bishop and appointed vicar Apostolic of Malabar till his death in 1687. After Chandy's death there was a period of confusion.

To overcome this situation of chaos and confusion the Malabar Christians were brought under two jurisdictions. The propaganda was represented by the Vicar Apostolic, who resided at Varapuzha and the padroado represented by the Archbishop of Kodangallor. By giving double jurisdiction, the Holy See, could manage this critical situation. This double jurisdiction continued till the year 1886 A.D.

For solving the protest on the part of the St. Thomas Christians, Pope Leo XIII decreed in 1887 and erected two Vicariates for the St. Thomas Catholics, Trichur & Kottayam and appointed two Latin Bishops. But the quest for Indian bishops continued. In 1896 three Vicariates were erected for the St. Thomas Catholics - Trichur, Ernakulam, and Changanacherry - and the pope appointed Indian bishops. In 1911 A.D. Pius X erected a separate Vicariate of Kottayam for southists.

In 1923 Pope Pius XI formally reconstituted the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy. In 1992 this Syro-Malabar Church was raised to the status of Major Archepiscopal Church with relative autonomy.
By going through the brief history about the origin, development, and management we can conclude that the St. Thomas Christians suffered much to keep their identity, but their constant protest and agitation led to good results. There were a lot of problems faced by the St. Thomas Christians. The unwanted Latinisation led to division and sub division in the Church.
Foot Notes


10) Ibid: P. 15

11) http://www.thesyromalabarChurch.org/statistics.htm


16) Ibid. PP: 29-30

17) Ibid P: 37


22) John K.U., Christian Churches of Kerala, Published by the author 1995, P: 117


30) Andrews Thazhath *The Juridical sources of the Syro-Malabar Church*

31) Jacob Kollaparambil, *Archdeacon of All- India* a historico- juridical study Rome1972, p.59
Mundadan, A.M. *16th Century Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, Bangalore Dharmaram studies, P: 146

32) Jacob Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of all India* a historico- juridical study Rome 1972, P:80, P: 223


36) Jose Kuriedath, “*Authority in the Catholic community in Kerala*”, Dharmaram Publications Bangalore, 1989, P: 7

38) Ibid. : PP:133-140


41) Ibid. P-125


43) ARSJ, Goa Malabar 49ff 204.


45) Ibid.


